



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Craig M. Johnson

2-year-old Elmont Girl Trapped in Post-Earthquake Haiti Returns Home

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Brianna Dacius, a 2-year-old Elmont girl who had been trapped in Haiti following January's devastating earthquake, returned home and has been reunited with her family, Senator Craig M. Johnson, (D-Nassau), announced.

Fabuola Pierre-Paul, and her husband, Jean Dacius, were reunited with their daughter at John F. Kennedy International Airport last night. Senator Johnson provided the money for the ticket home.

Her arrival ended three months of anguish for the family that began with the Jan. 12 earthquake and was prolonged by the lengthy process to get Brianna, an American citizen, home.

"I am relieved my daughter is back in my arms and that this very long, trying, and frustrating time for our family is over," Fabuola Pierre-Paul said. "I thank Senator Johnson for his help in bringing Brianna home. I would also like to thank Senator Chuck Schumer and Congresswoman Caroline McCarthy for their assistance, as well as the members of the community and the media who have provided their help during this ordeal."

"As the father of a little girl, I could not imagine the months of agony that Brianna's parents had to endure," Senator Johnson said. "I am proud to have helped get her home. It was simply the right thing to do."

Brianna's mother had taken her to Haiti to visit the child's grandmother before the earthquake. Fabuola Pierre-Paul had returned to the United States, while Brianna stayed with her grandmother for an extended vacation. When the natural disaster hit, it destroyed the grandmother's home, forcing her and Brianna onto the streets of earthquake-ravaged Port-au-Prince.

Brianna's passport was in her parents' possession, adding to the many logistical and bureaucratic hurdles that prevented the child's swift return.

Senator Johnson became involved in this matter after it was brought to his office's attention by Argo Civic Association President Mimi Pierre-Johnson. Senator Schumer and U.S. Rep. McCarthy's offices were contacted and they assisted in efforts to convince the State Department to allow Brianna to return home via a military aircraft.

However, once commercial flights were re-established in Haiti, the State Department told Brianna's parents that a military flight was no longer an option. Senator Johnson agreed to cover the cost Brianna's plane ride home from his own funds.

Senator Johnson praised Mimi Pierre-Johnson (no relation) for her assistance throughout this process.

“She has been a great friend to Brianna's family and a tremendous resource throughout this situation,” Senator Johnson said. “The residents of the Argo neighborhood and the greater Elmont community are very fortunate to have an advocate like Mimi Pierre-Johnson working for them.”