

Interview with
Julien Gumbs

leader and head of the MOCSAM list



1/ How did you decide to run (again) in the territorial elections?

It must be a well reflected project before you can postulate to head a list. In a second instance you must be eligible to act, feel concerned about the future of this island and its people, above any economic consideration and at last an overlook of the accomplishments of the various policies or none policies that pretend leaders have tried for the past years.

2/ We currently talk a lot about the Saint-Martin identity, as many Saint-Martin residents feel they have lost it. As a Saint-Martin resident, do you share this feeling? Do you feel you have lost your identity?

I don't believe we have lost our identity, but we were wrong by not imposing it to the new comers and be more forceful on that point. Today we are experiencing the bitter end of the stick which is just a result of action of the present and past leader of this island, that have never define priorities in order to preserve togetherness and our identity within the republic of FRANCE. We are now seen the same ones coming back in different form or format pretending to do what they have never show interest of doing before

3/ For the past several months, there have been some very nationalistic sentiments. While on the mainland such ideas are denounced as a danger to society, here we tend to entertain them. According to you, is this less dangerous locally?

This has nothing to do with our local issues because we reason in terms of identity and not nationality. Secondly we are not racist but are victim of an isolation method by substitution in numbers that we accepted while ignoring the consequences. Now as the consequences surfaces some are having violent reactions, but we strongly believe that with a good integration policy, not only toward new comers but also for our grass root st martiners in order to understand the French setting in which we compel to live and all it tricks. Then we need a multi-annum development program with adapted training methods permitting our people to excel in a favourable economic environment with job opportunities.

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4/ We always hear that economic development should be a priority because it will create jobs, wealth, etc. Although the tax policy is attractive, it is rare to find investors interested in coming to Saint-Martin. In light of the unemployment figures, all the actions carried out so far have been a failure. If you are elected in March, what measures will you implement to create jobs? With what goals?

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Yes, indeed all is based upon economic development. Above all, it is a whole surrounding that we have to good care for and human resource is an important factor as it permits us to answer to the need of our developing economy, diminishing delinquency that has a strong tie to idleness that is feeding an insecurity feeling. In this line we are proposing to create a school of successful journey permitting those that failed into the initial scholastic system to cease the opportunity to go back on the learning bench in a more favourable condition (teaching in English in order to better, master the French and learn math and physics as well). Then we need to make sure marigot comes alive again with a greater frequentation and that is one the reasons we are carrying a marigot bay project consisting of the construction of a water break between Arago point and bluff point. This project will permit to protect the bay and the sandy ground and nettle bay people by preventing north swells and rough sea from in the bay and also permit a permanent dredging of the pear at a constant 12 meters dept. A facility to accommodate cruise ship will be constructed on the inside along the water break leaving Arago point that will be able to receive ship under any sea conditions, creating premier signs of trust toward investors that marigot will be the place to be. We will open a reflexion on the future of the marina royal complex that will need to be reconstructed in a more shopping mall style include leisure, stores, restaurants, offices, apartments and hotel. Creation of a mechanical sport ground venue combining cross bikes, go-kart track and drag strip. Creating a boardwalk around the great fish pond in french quarter, along which a few culinary and cultural boots will be constructed to taste our local dishes and discover what the reserve is all about in collaboration with natural reserve and the conservatoire du littoral. Action to preserve our environment is not and, should not, be against the population, therefore they must be able to use these areas in line with the rules and regulations. The pond will be use to creation canoe-kayak and traditional sailing schools with the construction of the boats.

In line with our new fiscal reform, we will introduce the contract 50/50 that will consist of a 50% reduction on profit tax if the company hires at least 50% of staff in compliance of a bill defining local employment for at least nine months in a year. This is just a little peace of a our fiscal reform but we believe significant enough to trigger the conditions for a economic rebound hoping that investors will cease the opportunity to intrust the future of French St Martin in order that employment could be on raise again.

5/ In terms of employment specifically, many people, including you, want to give priority to residents of Saint-Martin. This may seem fair, but we must be realistic and admit that there is a lack of skills locally, especially for senior positions. In your opinion, how can this be remedied? How can we train younger and older employees in the territory during their careers so they can advance?

Part of the answer was given in the question above to which we need to add the following ; A branch of the Université des Antilles will be opened by school year 2018/2019, not forgetting the objective for a full installation of the "CNAM" on the island. We are planning for guaranty fund of 5M€ that will serve to easy small consumer loans to a maximum of 30K€, that we would love to see serve also as a scholarship loan with 3 years postponed reimbursement that could be renewed once and on a 60 month settlement. This scholarship is totally detached from the traditional "bourse." It is regretful that today many are putting to our faces that saint martiners are not trained and competent and strangely went more than twenty years ago we claimed that the French system is failing our kids nobody lifted the little finger. How can you expect that teaching someone, maths, physics, geography etc, in a language that he or she don't or hardly masters and believe that the masses will succeed? The same way around that should have been evident some twenty years ago but it didn't stop from continuing the same failing method! Was it voluntarily done? We can legitimately ask that question but we rather move on and concentrate our energy in concrete solutions to the problems with the objective that the past don't be repeated!

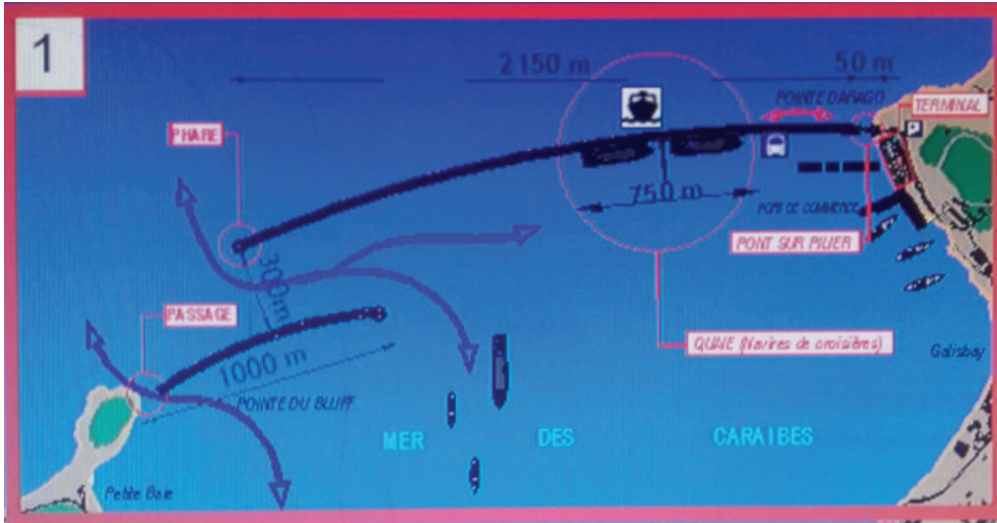
6/ As for education, the observation made over the past several years is alarming: the level is very low. For several reasons: problems at the level of the language, lack of involvement of parents in their children's education, etc. According to you, what is the first obstacle to the success of our children? And how can you remove it?

Please see answers to above questions. We will add that a prospective action, in collaboration with the chamber CCISM, need to be implemented in order to give indications on future job perspectives and orientation to better inform and guide our youths in the choice of their professional career.

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7/ Concerning the development of Marigot Bay, the current majority's plan seems not to have attracted many investors. Some have already learned from this and want a smaller-scale project. What is your position on this development?

Refer to answer to question 4, it is a must because it will serve the economic development of marigot and it is a multipurpose project.



8/ In tax matters, it is difficult for the Collectivité to collect all taxes. It is also difficult for taxpayers to pay taxes, so for years, they did not. Unpaid taxes totaled more than €20 million last year to the Collectivité. In your opinion, how can the system be more effective? Should we remove taxes? Lower the rate of certain taxes to motivate people to pay?

In terms of fiscality we are carrying a pretty ambitious program, consisting of a simplification and better efficiency. Value added tax will be generalized and the loop holes will be rectified, we will introduce a two level TGCA labeled as normal and reduced. The reduce rate of 4% will replace the actual "taxe de séjour" and the "taxe de location de voiture" and be applied to products of first necessity and electricity. The normal rate will be applied to all other activities. We will suppress the "droit au bail" and the actual "taxe routière" that could never be put into effect. Our fiscality must be useful, therefore we will introduce a pollution and road infrastructure tax that will concern all car owners, creating junk yards permitting dismantling of cars and their elimination from people back yards. We will reduce property tax (taxe foncière) by half as of January 1st 2018 before engaging a profound reform in order to make it fairer to the people. Moving towards more indirect taxation will brooding the tax base therefore increasing revenue! Indirect taxation is pay as you consume avoiding payment of big sum of money once or twice

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a year. According to our projections these measures will permit to generate some extra 10M€, sided with an economy of 2M€ in management, it is about 12M€ that will permit to finance our political program, awaiting the clarification of the disputed compensation funds with the state government. On this matter we will take the necessary time and prepare a proper file before opening new discussions. Bussiness licences will become a prium document to all commercial activity within the collectivité.

9/ For several years, ecology and more broadly the environment have been more and more important in both national and international political discourse. There was the Grenelle Environment Forum, and then recently the COP 21 and 22. Here in Saint-Martin, this topic is missing from debates. Don't you think, however, that the environment should be the common denominator of all considered and proposed actions?

You have surely notice that our fiscal policy has a useful aspect and include a certain interest for a better environment. We are not in favor of imposing with a certain consciousness of the population and also we must keep in mind that public actions are in favor of the citizen and not the other way round because he is the one that pays! Environmental aspect will therefore be gradually introduced as consciousness grows. Renewable energy must fit in our development plans also.

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10 / Everyone agrees to a cleanup of the island. Here, garbage is picked up every day, which is not the case elsewhere, even overseas, in such a small territory. What should be implemented to make the island even cleaner?

It is obvious that the island is dirty and has to be cleaned, but again we are not in favor of just cleaning without other measures because the risk that few months later the same situation will surface. It is never too late to learn and we deeply believe that basic awareness must be implemented in terms of clean environment, putting in place a paid pickup service on a forfeit base to start and most likely base on quantity or weight in the future making sure that everyone will be able to put the waste at the right place avoiding leaving it on the road sides.

11/Who would you like to face in the second round on March 26?

The team that the pools will designate.

12/ Finally, what question would you have liked to be asked?

How are we going to finance our program, detailed fiscal and financial measures.

By Fanny Fontan