

History of the Haitian Flag

In April 1986, an eminent historian Mrs. Odette Roy-Fombrun, presented to the Haitian Society of History and Geography, an essay on the Flag and the Arms of the Republic of Haiti. In this essay, based on various researches in Haiti and abroad, Mrs. Roy-Fombrun described in a chronological manner, the creation and the history of the Haitian Flag from 1803 to date.

The Black and Red Flag with vertical stripes was the flag of Lamour Dérance and his allies, which included Cange and Magloire Ambroise. Christophe and the brigades under his command in the North adopted this same flag. On some of those flags was inscribed the following motto: Libre ou mourir (“Free or Die”).

The Blue and Red Flag with vertical stripes created by Jean Jacques Dessalines in February 1803 was the official flag of the indigenous army from February 1803 to December 1803, with the following motto: Liberté ou la mort (Liberty or Death).

These two bicolor with vertical stripes were utilized side by side during the fight for independence and deserve the respect of all peoples of Haitian descent. All existing documents from various archives describe the Blue and Red as the flag used after January 1, 1804 (Haitian Independence Day), without mentioning the Black and Red flag.

One special document, the Corbet Document allows Mrs. Roy-Fombrun to conclude that the bicolor Flag Blue and Red was the Flag of the Independence of the Republic of Haiti.

The constitution of 1805 described the Flag of the Empire of Jacques 1 (Dessalines), as the Black and red bicolor. The fact that there is no official or private

document that describe the color of the flag from may 1804 to the time of the 1805 constitution , leads Mrs. Roy-Fombrun to believe that Dessalines may have adopted the Black and Red flag either on May 18 1804, if this date is proved to be exact according to Dessalines speech regarding the Haitian Flag.

Pétion did not create any flag since the Blue and Red Flag with horizontal stripes was floating in January 1804 and the essential of the Arms of the Republic were in use in the 1790 and 1796. Pétion may have solely added them to the Independence Flag. After the death of Dessalines in 1806, the independence flag was restored. This flag remains as the Haitian Flag from 1805 to 1964 with the Arms of the Republic and the motto: L'Union Fait la Force. (In Unity there is Strength).

In 1964, President Duvalier created a new flag utilizing the flag of the Dessalines Empire (Black and red) with the Arms of the Republic without the Liberty Cap and keeping the same motto: In Unity there is Strength (L'Union Fait la Force). In 1986 with the departure of the Duvalier, the Blue and Red Flag of the Independence was restored once again as the Haitian Flag (Constitution of 1987).

As we celebrate Haitian Heritage Month in New England, we need to remember that our ancestors created this bicolor Blue and Red, as a symbol of Unity among all of us of Haitian descent to fight colonialism and live FREE FOREVER.

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