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My fellow citizens,

On May 18, 1803 in the city of Arcahaie, leaders of the insurgency met together to map out their strategy for the final battle against slavery and colonialism. According to historians, Dessalines took a blue, white and red French flag, cut the white band out and ordered a woman called Catherine Flon to stitch the blue with the red. Symbolically, he united the blacks and the mulattoes by removing the white band. Under this glorious flag, Haitians have waged many battles for unity, liberty, solidarity and justice in Haiti and around the world.

Appropriately this month, we honor those who have served the cause of freedom. These heroes made the ultimate sacrifice that many of us today have never been asked to make.

Let's never forget, nor let our children forget, the cost of the war of independence. To strengthen and maintain our freedom we all need to share our stories with passion. We need to tell that we are a nation of survivors. Poverty and illiteracy cannot destroy us. To tell that the path to democracy is a difficult one, a very painful one. To tell that we're resisting. To tell that unlearning is much more difficult than learning. To tell that we are much more than numbers, statistics and projects. We need to preach this message everyday, from our desks, from your homes, in the streets, in Haiti and abroad. To anybody, to everybody. Misinformation and outright distortions are spread one to one. And that's exactly the way we have to correct the misinformation-one to one, face to face.

Today the struggle is NOT OVER YET. The lesson of the flag needs to be remembered. It tells us that united we can win the impossible battle of improving our national production, the battle of modernizing our institutions, the battle of reforming our education system. It tells us that united we can fight against the plague of division and intolerance, AGAINST VIOLENCE AND DRUGS THAT HAVE DESTROYED SO MANY YOUNG LIVES.

We salute our youth that has kept its cultural heritage and strived for a better education in the U.S. Please do not give up, you are to bring to this island of ours a new light, a new horizon and a new hope.

Marie Andrine Constant.
Consul