

UNESCO to mark 200th anniversary of Haitian revolution

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UNESCO's regional office in Jamaica will spearhead a 12-month list of activities that will next year mark the 200th anniversary of the Haitian revolution.

The move is part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's observance of 2004 as the international year for the commemoration of the struggle against slavery and the bicentenary of the Haitian Revolution.

A task force, comprised of a cross-section of persons from various facets of Jamaican society, including the performing arts, visual arts, academia and the Maroons, last week unveiled UNESCO's plans.

Alwin Bully, task force chairman, explained that UNESCO purposely chose 2004 as the year for the commemoration of the transatlantic slave trade as it also coincided with Haiti being declared a Republic 200 years before, in January of 1804.

Another reason which influenced UNESCO's dual celebration, he said, was the recognition of "the concept of the Haitian revolution and what it stood for - equality, fraternity and liberty".

As part of its commemoration of slavery and its, abolishment, UNESCO has formed the Associated Schools Network (ASPnet) project in 100 schools in 23 countries spanning Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean and Europe. The school-based campaign has been titled "Breaking The Silence: The Transatlantic Slave Trade Education Project" and seeks to increase the awareness of the transatlantic slave trade, its causes and consequences. The ASPnet project also examines modern forms of slavery, racism, and discrimination and promotes mutual respect and intercultural dialogue.

Six schools from Portland, St Mary, and St Thomas are participants in the ASPnet programme and UNESCO is planning to involve other schools as well.

The activities scheduled to take place throughout next year include:

- . the opening of the Saffu Yard Museum in Charles Town, Portland, on January 6;
- . an exhibition titled the "Jamaica Haiti Connection" at the National Library of Jamaica on February 12; and
- . a panel discussion titled "Haitian Women and Their Contributions To The Americas" to be led by University of the West Indies professor, Verene Shepherd, at Spelman College in Atlanta, USA.

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