

2006 Haitian Heritage Month

A celebration of History, Culture and Pride

May is fast approaching and as for the past eight years, Haitians in Massachusetts and Florida will celebrate the month of May as Haitian Heritage Month.

Other than January where Haitians celebrate their independence and ancestors days, May has great historical and cultural traditions that all Haitians are proud to make aware of and to pass on to future generations.

In Haiti, May 1st has been celebrated as Labor and Agricultural Day. This is a day when workers, artisans and peasants parade in singing together: "Let's put Shoulder against Shoulder for Haiti's Development."

During the government of President Francois Duvalier, the second day of May was celebrated as Flowers' Day. Many cultural activities were held in the capital's bi-centenary plaza, decorated with flowers and the blue and red colors of the Haitian flag. Well known artists and musical groups: Ti Roro, the drummer, the Super Jazz des Jeunes, the National Folkloric Dance Troupe and so on, took part in the annual celebration.

Mothers' Day is celebrated in Haiti on the last Sunday of May. On that day, Haitians honor their mothers by wearing a red flower if the mothers are alive and a white or purple one if they are dead.

Great religious celebrations occurred during the month of May, known by Haitian Catholics, as the month of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

May reminds Haitians the historic pact signed by the Black and Mulatto officers at their May 1803 congress. As a result of that pact, those officers created the Haitian Flag on the last day of the congress, May 18, 1803. And, under that flag, they fought and expelled the French colonial army, and Haiti became the first Black independent country in the world on January 1st, 1804.

The Haitian Slave Revolution of August 14, 1791 would have never been the only successful slave revolution in the world if General Toussaint Louverture, who was born on May 20, 1743, had not use his military genius to organize and lead the slaves from victory to victory against the powerful armies of Spain, Great Britain and France.

Haitian Heritage Month is celebrated in Massachusetts and Florida with parades, flag raisings, conferences, radio and TV programs, festivals, and exhibits, etc. It's a pride-filled month for Haitians who despite their country's social, political and economic turmoil and the discrimination they suffer in many parts of the world have a great history and culture to celebrate.

U.S. Senator John F. Kerry has recognized the Month of May as Haitian Heritage Month in a citation, while Massachusetts Governors Argeo Paul Celluli, Jane Swift and Mitt Romney had proclaimed the Month long celebration in the State of Massachusetts. The Massachusetts State Senate recognizes annually the Haitian Month with citations presented by either Senator Gary Hart or Diane Wilkerson, and the State House of Representatives acknowledges the Haitian history and culture celebration with annual citations presented by State Representatives Marie St Fleur and Linda Forcena Forry.

The Mayor of the City of Boston, Thomas M. Menino proclaims every year, the Haitian Heritage Month in the City of Boston and sponsors the parade and the Boston Flag Raising. The Boston City Council recognizes the month upon City council Charles Yancey's yearly request

In Florida, the Haitian Heritage Month is recognized by Florida Congressman Kendrick B. Meek who had introduced and will reintroduce a resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives to establish the Month of May as Haitian-American Heritage Month in the United States. The month was also proclaimed and celebrated in Miami –Dade County by Mayor Alex Penelas. It was recognized by the School Board of Miami Dade County and supported by the School Board of Broward County. The Republican Party of Florida and the alliance Francaise de Miami organized several events in 2004 to acknowledge the Haitian Heritage Month.

This year, the two main events to celebrate the Haitian Heritage Month in the New England area will be: the 6th Annual Haitian American Unity Parade, which will be held on Sunday, May 21, 2006. The Parade will leave Mattapan Square at 1:00 P.M. and will continue onto Blue Hill Ave, ending on Talbot Ave. It will feature Haitian leaders, state and city officials, marching bands, delegations from schools, colleges and universities. Many youth groups, cultural, professional, and religious associations as well as, community, political and regional organizations and Haitian and American businesses will also take part.

The other event is the 11th Annual Haitian Flag Raising, which will be held on Thursday, May 18, 2006, starting at noon. There will be patriotic and cultural activities with speeches by several Haitian leaders, state and city officials.

To join in this year's celebration, call the Haitian-Americans United, Inc. H.A.U. at 617-298-2976 or the Haitian-American Health Initiatives HAPHI at 617-298-8076.