



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 807

Resolution declaring January 1 as Haitian Independence Day in the city of New York.

By Council Member Eugene

Whereas, In December 1492, Italian colonist Christopher Columbus sighted the island of Hispaniola, then-named La Isla Espanola, whose native Taino and Ciboney population was enslaved by the Spanish and forced to mine for gold; and

Whereas, After gold mines were exhausted and European diseases, combined with harsh working conditions, killed a majority of the island's indigenous population, the French took control of the Western portion of the island, named Saint-Domingue, and began importing increasing numbers of enslaved Africans; and

Whereas, As enslaved Africans endured brutal workdays and suffered and died from injuries, infections, tropical diseases, malnutrition, and starvation, and as free Blacks became growingly frustrated with a racist society, revolution began, with thousands of enslaved persons, led by formerly enslaved military general Toussaint L'Ouverture, revolting against the colonial French regime in 1791; and

Whereas, The French revolutionary government abolished slavery in 1794 and, in 1801, Toussaint L'Ouverture successfully liberated Saint-Domingue from French control, but was soon after captured and extradited by militants sent on behalf of Napoleon Bonaparte, who wished to restore French rule and slavery to the region; and

Whereas, Jean-Jacques Dessalines successfully led the Haitian Revolution following General L'ouverture's arrest, defeating the French army and declaring the entire island the independent Republic of

Haiti on January 1, 1804; and

Whereas, Haiti is the first nation to be founded by formerly enslaved people and the second nation to gain independence in the Americas, which continues to serve as a great source of pride for Haitians and all people of Haitian descent; and

Whereas, Citizens of Haiti and people of Haitian descent all across the world celebrate Haitian Independence Day on January 1 to recognize Haiti's strength, resilience, and rich cultural heritage, by gathering with friends and family, preparing and dining on Haitian cuisine, and participating in parades, festivals, and concerts; and

Whereas, Hundreds of thousands of Haitian-Americans reside, worship, and engage in commerce and recreation in New York City; and

Whereas, New York has the second largest Haitian diaspora in the United States and the second major population center, with 130,000 immigrants in the state, 160,000 Haitian-Americans concentrated in the New York metropolitan area (New York City-Long Island-Northern New Jersey), according to a 2014 report from the Migration Policy Institute; and

Whereas, More than 94,000 Haitians live in New York City-with over 90,000 living in Brooklyn, alone, giving it the third highest concentration in the country, according to the Migration Policy Institute; and

Whereas, Haitian-Americans constitute the biggest immigrant group in Flatbush, Brooklyn, representing more than 20% of the foreign-born population, and nearly 11% of all Haitians in New York City live in Flatbush, making it this city's most heavily-concentrated Haitian neighborhood, according to the American Community Survey; and

Whereas, As the anti-immigrant climate in the United States further intimidates Haitian-Americans-including President Trump's alleged derogatory remarks towards Haiti, among other Caribbean, African and Latin American countries, and his administration's attempt to end Temporary Protected Status for more than 50,000 Haitians, many of whom found refuge here after Haiti's catastrophic earthquake in 2010-it is now

important to show solidarity with our Haitian-American public, while celebrating its traditions and values; and

Whereas, New York City has a history of recognizing and celebrating its Haitian community, including the designation of “Little Haiti” in Flatbush, Brooklyn, and the naming of streets in Haitian neighborhoods after prominent Haitian Revolution leaders, Jean Jacque Dessalines and Toussaint L’Ouverture; and

Whereas, Designating January 1 as Haitian Independence Day in New York City would further conserve Haitian heritage, formalize and foster relationships among residents, businesses, nonprofits, and community groups, as well as enable the showcasing, preservation, harnessing, and celebration of New York City’s religious, academic, civic, cultural, health, and commercial Haitian institutions; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York declares January 1 as Haitian Independence Day in the city of New York.

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