



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

House of Representatives

Wednesday, June 21, 2006

Statement of Rep. Barbara Lee (CA-09) on Caribbean-American Heritage Month

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Caribbean American community in honor of the first-ever National Caribbean American Heritage Month.

On June 27, 2005, the House unanimously adopted H. Con. Res. 71, my resolution to declare June National Caribbean American Heritage Month. On February 14, 2006, the Senate followed suit, thanks to the work of Senator Schumer of New York and Arielle Goren on his staff.

And let me begin by recognizing the many people who helped realize this 2-year bipartisan, bicameral effort, because this was quite a feat. First, I want to recognize our colleague, a great leader on so many issues and especially on health care, Congresswoman DONNA CHRISTENSEN from the Caribbean, who has been tremendous in terms of bringing us together to address the issues of health disparities throughout our country and throughout the world.

Also, I would like to thank the Institute of Caribbean Studies, especially Dr. Claire Nelson and her team, for joining us in this effort from the very beginning.

And we must recognize our friends from the Caribbean diplomatic corps, who worked so hard to spread the word about this effort both at home in the Caribbean and in their embassies and consulates across the country.

There are many Members of Congress who supported this effort. In addition to early support from my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus and Friends of the Caribbean Task Force, the former chair of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, Representative Cass Ballenger, was the first Republican to endorse this bill, and his successor, Chairman DAN BURTON, was one of the first to help urge the President to issue an official proclamation.

This was truly a bipartisan effort, with, of course, our chairman Mr. HYDE of the International Relations Committee and our ranking member Mr. LANTOS, who lent their very strong support.

And, of course, we never would have done any of this without our staff. First, let me commend and thank my staff person Jamila Thompson for her leadership and for her commitment to not only this issue and this bill, but for so many of the efforts that she mounts. She has roots in the Bahamas, and she understands the importance of recognizing Caribbean Americans and their proper role and proper recognition in our country.

Also, we had many other House staff members -- Ted Brennan, Jack Scharfen, Paul Oostburg, Dan Getz, Mark Walker, and Michael Layman -- who worked in a bipartisan way to make this a reality and really to realize this dream for many, many people.

The Government Reform Committee, Chairman Tom Davis, and our Ranking Member Henry Waxman applauded the passage of this resolution last year and were instrumental in its passage.

And, of course, in the final weeks before the proclamation was issued by the White House, a coalition was formed that was very instrumental in urging the White House to officially declare June National Caribbean -American Heritage Month. This coalition included Senator Mel Martinez from Florida, Ambassador Tom Shannon, State Department's Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere, and Brian Nichols of his staff.

And the Caribbean American community was very active around this effort. It could not have been done without them. From Glenn Joseph and John Felix in Florida; to Jean Alexander, Horace Morancie, and Anthony Carter in New York; to Shorron Levy in California and so many others across the country, this became, quite frankly, an international grass-roots effort.

So I am pleased that on June 5, the President responded by officially declaring June National Caribbean American Heritage Month.

We have some phenomenal spokespersons Sheryl Lee Ralph and basketball legend Rick Fox, who are traveling throughout the country. Sheryl Lee Ralph is a woman of Caribbean descent from Jamaica actually, and is a great actress as well. Her voice on HIV and AIDS, as well as promoting and spreading the word about Caribbean American Heritage Month, will be very valuable in terms of making sure that our entire country knows about the phenomenal contributions of Caribbean Americans.

On a very personal level, my relationship with persons of Caribbean descent began with the late great former member of this body, the first African American woman elected to Congress, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm. I worked as a volunteer in her historic 1972 Presidential campaign. As a woman of Barbadian and Guyanese descent, Congresswoman Chisholm never forgot her roots and connections to the Caribbean. Her

work, whether it was fighting for equal access to education in the United States Congress or Haitian refugees in detention camps, her commitment always stemmed from her faith and her strong Caribbean values.

When the United States-Caribbean relations began to deteriorate over the war in Iraq, the coups in Haiti, and the Cuban embargo, I knew that we needed to go back and really recognize our deep and strong relations with the Caribbean. So we need to send a message of goodwill to the Caribbean American community.

Soon I will be introducing the Shirley Chisholm Caribbean Educational Exchange Act of 2006 to provide existing and expanded educational exchanges between our country and the Caribbean.

This legislation has two components:

First it supports and expands existing primary and secondary training programs currently operating in the Caribbean.

And second it establishes the Shirley Chisholm Educational Exchange program structure for U.S. and Caribbean high school, undergraduate and graduate students, and professional scholars.

I would like to close by reminding those here in Congress and others watching at home that during Caribbean-American Heritage Month, each of us should look to the past and to the future in recognizing the strong role of the Caribbean and the Caribbean-American community in United States history.

Thank you. Mr. Speaker. This process was really an exercise in democracy, and I ask unanimous consent to insert into the congressional record a list of organizations from across the country that supported this effort:

The Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and CARICOM Foreign Ministers included the following statement in their joint press release issued at the conclusion of the US-CARICOM Ministerial Meeting held in The Bahamas in March 2006:

"The Ministers and the Secretary of State welcomed the recent resolution of the U.S. Congress to commemorate Caribbean American Heritage Month in June. The resolution is a recognition of the deep and lasting human ties that bind the United States and the Caribbean."

This bi-partisan effort to create a National Caribbean -American Heritage Month is supported by Ambassador Albert Ramdin, Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States, the Caucus of CARICOM Ambassadors in Washington, DC and the following organizations:

The Institute for Caribbean Studies, DC; Caribbean -Central American Action, DC; Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce of Florida, Inc.; The West Indian American

Day Carnival Association, NY; Caribbean -American Cultural Association, Inc. of North America (CACANA), FL; Caribbean -American Center of New York; Conference of Heads of Caribbean Organizations of Central Florida; TnT International, Inc.; The Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry--Greater Washington Area Network; South Florida Caribbean Diaspora Task Force; Trinidad & Tobago Working Women's Committee, DC; Caribbean Association of World Bank Group and IMF Staff, DC; Caribbean American Chamber Commerce and Industry, Inc. (CACCI), NY; Global Exchange, CA; Caribbean Peoples International Collective, NY (CPIC); The St. Lucia Nationals Association; Andrea M. Ewart, P.C; Dominica Academy of Arts & Sciences, DC; Metro Atlanta Caribbean Cultural Arts Centre, Inc. (MACCA); The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA); The Caribbean Voice, NY; Northern California Caribbean American Heritage Month Committee; Central Florida's Caribbean Sun Newspaper; The Guyanese Society of St. Louis; The Caribbean Club in Mount Vernon, NY; Caribbean Professional Networking Series, DC; Caribbean World Arts & Culture, Inc.; St. Kitts and Nevis Association of Metropolitan Washington; The West Indian Social Club of Hartford, Inc.; The Inter-American Economic Council; Sunrise Symphony Steelpan Corporation; Barbados Assoc. of Central Florida; Jamaican American Association of Central Florida; Grenadian-American Educational and Cultural Organization of Central Florida, Inc.; Caribbean and Floridian Association, Inc. (CAFA); Guyanese American Cultural Association of Central Florida; Orlando Carnival Association, Inc.; Alliance of Guyanese Expatriates of Central Florida; Caribbean Students' Association at the University of Central Florida; Jamaican/American Partners in Education, GA; Central Florida Cricket League; Caribbean Bar Association (Central Florida Chapter); Antigua and Barbuda Association of Central Florida; Association of Asian Cultural Festivals, Inc.; Caribbean Community Connection of Orlando, Inc.; Trinidad & Tobago Association of Central Florida; Suriname American Network; Haitian American Support Group of Central Florida, Inc.; Caribbean -Guyana Institute for Democracy; The Indo-Caribbean Council, NY; The Haitian American Historical Society, FL; Caribbean American Intercultural Organization; Sistas-With Style, CA; Dominican American National Roundtable, DC; West Indian Social Club of Hartford, Inc.; Caribbean American Society of Hartford; The Ballentine Group; Jamaica Progressive League; St. Lucian American Society of Hartford. Mico Alumni Association Inc.; Guyanese American Cultural Association; Connecticut Haitian American Organization, Inc.; Barbados American Society of Hartford; Sportsmen Athletic Club & Cricket Hall of Fame; Cultural Dance Troupe of the West Indies; Trinidad and Tobago Steel Symphony; Jamaica Ex-Policeman Association of Connecticut; West Indian American Newspaper; Center for Urban & Caribbean Research; CAYASCO, Inc.; Martin Luther King Jr. Soccer League; Morancie Family Reunion, Inc., NY; Tropical Paradise Restaurant and Juice Bar, NY; Jamaica Nationals Association, DC; Medgar Evers College, NY; Carriacou Charitable Health Services, Inc., NY; The Caribbean World News Network, NY; The Shirley Chisholm Cultural Institute for Children, Inc., DC; Caribbean Research Center, NY; Montserrat Progressive Society of NY, Inc.; The Georgia Caribbean - American Heritage Month Planning Committee, GA; Ainsley Gill & Associates LLC, DC; SOCA Warriors United, NY; The Black Diaspora, NY; Sunrise Symphony Steelpan Orchestra, Inc., NY; Gloria's In & Out Restaurant, NY; Virgin Islands Association, DC; CCB International, Inc., NJ; TATUCA, NY; Callaloo Magazine, NY; Department of African American Studies, Ohio University; Hannah's Place International, NY; Guyana

Folk Festival, DC; Caribbean Sunshine Awards, NJ; Trinidad and Tobago Business Association, Inc., NY; RAJHUMARI Center for Indo-Caribbean Arts & Culture, NY; Mauby Media Services, NY; Merrymakers Cultural Association, NY; Caribbean People's Association, NJ; Trin-American Social & Cultural Association, DC; Trinidadian and Tobagonians Inc., NY; Gasparillo Group, NY; Trinidad and Tobago Association of Washington, MA; Caribbean Journal, NY; St. Anthony's Spiritual Baptist Church, PA; Friends of the Caribbean, Inc., DC; The International Consortium of Caribbean Professionals (ICCP); Tropicalfete.com, NY; St. Louis-Georgetown Sisters Cities Committee, MO; Virgin Islands Association of the District of Columbia (VIA); Patterson Dental Clinic, NJ; Barbados American Society of Hartford, Inc.; TransAfrica Forum, DC; Caribbean -African-American Hotline, Ads, News, Gospel & Global Events (411XCHANGE), NY; Belizean Information & Services International, NY; St. Vincent and the Grenadines Nationals Association of Washington, DC; eCaroh Caribbean Emporium, MA; Caribbean American Weekly (CAW), NY; Council of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Organizations U.S.A., Inc., NY; St. Vincent Benevolent Association; Bequia United Progressive Organization, Inc.; Chateaubelair Development Organization; Club St. Vincent, Inc.; Canouan United Social Organization, Inc.; Friends of the St. Vincent Grammar School; Girls High School Alumnae; Hairoun Sports Club; St. Vincent and the Grenadines Humanitarian Organization; Mas Productions Unlimited; Striders Social and Cultural Organization; St. Vincent and the Grenadines Ex-Police Association; St. Vincent and the Grenadines Ex-Teachers Association; St. Vincent and the Grenadines Nurses Association; United Vincie Cultural Group of Brooklyn; Concerned Americans for Racial Equality, NY; Benevolent Missions of Atlanta, Inc. (BMA); Barbados Association of Greater Houston; Bahamian Junkanoo Association of Metropolitan DC.; The National Coalition on Caribbean Affairs (NCOCA), MD

H. CON. RES. 71 COSPONSORS (81) DURING THE 109TH CONGRESS

Reps. Becerra, Berkley, Berman, S. Bishop, C. Brown, S. Brown, Bordallo, Burton, Butterfield, Capuano, Carson, Christensen, W.L. Clay, Clyburn, Conyers, Crowley, Cummings, D. Davis, J. Davis, Delahunt, Engel, Faleomavaega, Farr, Fattah, Feeney, Ford, Fortuno, B. Frank, A. Green, Grijalva, Gutierrez, A. Hastings, Honda, Jackson-Lee, Jefferson, E. B. Johnson, Tubbs Jones, Kaptur, Kilpatrick, Kucinich, Kuhl, Lantos, Lewis, Lofgren, Maloney, McCarthy, McDermott, McGovern, McKinney, McCollum, Meek, Meeks, Menendez, Millender-McDonald, G. Moore, Nadler, Napolitano, Norton, Owens, Pallone, Payne, Rangel, Rush, T. Ryan, Serrano, D. Scott, Schakowsky, Shimkus, Slaughter, Solis, B. Thompson, Towns, Van Hollen, Velázquez, Waters, Watt, Weiner, Wexler, Woolsey, Wynn

H. RES. 570 CO-SPONSORS DURING THE 108TH CONGRESS (65)

Reps. Payne, Ney, Christensen, Ballenger, Owens, Rangel, Serrano, Hastings (FL), Tubbs Jones, McDermott, Meek (FL), Clyburn, Capuano, Watt, Lewis, A. Davis, B. Scott, S. Bishop, B. Thompson, Norton, Eddie Bernice Johnson, Waters, Cummings, Kilpatrick, Rush, Lofgren, Towns, Grijalva, D. Scott, Majette, Weiner, Meeks (NY), Acevedo-Vilá, Conyers, Kucinich, Wynn, Jackson-Lee, Sweeney, Berman, Delahunt, Woolsey, Feeney, Shimkus, Van Hollen, Engel, Deutsch, Watson, Ballance, Menendez,

Berkley, Jefferson, Ruppersberger, Lantos, Maloney, Israel, Maloney, Gonzalez, Lacy Clay, Wexler, Ros-Lehtinen, Ford, Jackson, Millender-McDonald, C. Brown, D. Moore.

Caribbean -American Heritage Month, 2006--By the President of the United States of America--A Proclamation

During Caribbean -American Heritage Month, we celebrate the great contributions of Caribbean Americans to the fabric of our Nation, and we pay tribute to the common culture and bonds of friendship that unite the United States and the Caribbean countries.

Our Nation has thrived as a country of immigrants, and we are more vibrant and hopeful because of the talent, faith, and values of Caribbean Americans. For centuries, Caribbean Americans have enriched our society and added to the strength of America. They have been leaders in government, sports, entertainment, the arts, and many other fields.

During the month of June, we also honor the friendship between the United States and the Caribbean countries. We are united by our common values and shared history, and I join all Americans in celebrating the rich Caribbean heritage and the many ways in which Caribbean Americans have helped shape this Nation.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2006 as Caribbean -American Heritage Month. I encourage all Americans to learn more about the history of Caribbean Americans and their contributions to our Nation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of June, in the year of our Lord two thousand six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirtieth.

GEORGE W. BUSH.

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Statement of Rep. Donna Christian Christensen (Virgin Islands) on Caribbean-American Heritage Month

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the contributions of my fellow Caribbean-Americans as we celebrate the first Caribbean Heritage Month. I want to begin by commending the gentlewoman from California (Ms. *Lee*) who I was privileged to join in introducing H. Res. 71, which expressed the sense of Congress that there should be established a Caribbean-American Heritage Month, and also to commend and applaud Dr. Claire Nelson and the staff and members of the Institute for Caribbean Studies, and to thank President Bush for making it official by signing the proclamation proclaiming June 2006 as Caribbean-American Heritage Month.

Mr. Speaker, I am a Caribbean-American, with family ties to Cuba, Antigua, the Virgin Islands and the U.S., and consider this achievement an important one. The contributions of the people of the Caribbean, which go back even before the birth of this Nation, span every field from sports to entertainment, politics, art and culture to labor organizing, and all are significant and need to be made known to all Americans.

One of the most important persons of Caribbean descent in the founding of this country was Alexander Hamilton, a general in the American Revolution and our first Secretary of State. He was born on the island of Nevis and raised in St. Croix.

In the struggle to end our enslavement, which I am sure was greatly inspired by the successful Haitian revolution; it is noteworthy that Denmark Vessey also came here from St. Thomas in the now U.S. Virgin Islands by way of the Guadeloupe to lead an unsuccessful, but the largest slave rebellion that was ever planned in this country.

The ongoing fight for emancipation and liberation, my fellow Virgin Islander Edward Blyden, along with George Padmore, Marcus Garvey and Claude McKay, were among the first West Indian Americans to become well known and well respected leaders in the African American struggle for racial equality.

Others from the Virgin Islands who also had their roots in other Caribbean islands, like Ashley Totten and Frank Crosswaith, who were born on St. Croix, helped to found some of the major labor unions still operating today. J. Raymond Jones from St. Thomas, also known as the Silver Fox, ran New York City politics in the 1900s, and those are only a few.

Other famous West Indian Americans include former U.S. representative and first female presidential candidate Shirley Chisholm; Franklin Thomas, former head of the Ford Foundation; Federal Judge Constance Baker Motley, the first black woman appointed to the Federal judiciary; activists such as Stokely Carmichael, Kwame Toure, Roy Innis, Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan; as well as world renowned actor Sidney Poitier; civil rights activist and singer Harry Belafonte; Earl Greaves, philanthropist, businessman and publisher of Black Enterprise; and now Colin Powell, the first black U.S. Secretary of State, all have made impressive contributions to this country.

Mr. Speaker, the small islands of the Caribbean also wield a cultural influence that have spread to the remote corners of the world. Our culture, notably the music, calypso, reggae, Afro-Cuban and their derivatives, which were created by and large by a people who were long considered marginalized, has spread far and wide and enjoys extensive popularity today.

But more than just our musical influence, Nobel prizes for literature have gone to poets St. Jean Perse of Guadeloupe and Derek Walcott of St. Lucia from among a number of highly regarded Caribbean writers.

Moreover, internationally admired painters Winfred Lam of Cuba and Leroy Clarke of Trinidad and Tobago and Haiti's "naive" artists took inspiration from a complex cosmology born from West African religions and Christianity. And Trinidad and Tobago's carnival was the basis for the breathtaking costumed parades designed by Peter Minshall of Guyana and Trinidad for the Barcelona, the Atlanta and the St. Lake City Olympics.

The most important contribution of all, however, remains the close ties between this country and the nations of the Caribbean. Those ties are not only ties of geography, but of history, and most important of the common ideals of freedom, justice and democracy which guides our nations.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed fitting and proper that we honor the contributions of the people of the Caribbean to our history and culture.

Indeed, if providence had not made it possible for our Founding Father, Alexander Hamilton, to New York from my home island of St. Croix to further his education and work in New York City, we might not be celebrating the founding of this Nation next week, and instead, have remained a colony of the United Kingdom even today.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleague who was here earlier, Ms. *Lee*, to pay tribute to the Caribbean-Americans who have given so much to this country, and to once

again thank her and thank the members and the leaders of Institute for Caribbean Studies and to thank the President for the proclamation which named this month, June 2006, Caribbean-American Heritage Month.

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Statement of Rep. Charles B. Rangel (NY-15) on Caribbean-American Heritage Month

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend President Bush for his support of the resolution that acknowledges the contributions of Caribbean peoples in America and declares June as Caribbean Heritage Month. I also would like to congratulate the Honorable Barbara Lee for her efforts in bringing about this initiative, receiving 81 co-sponsors and getting this monumental legislation passed in both chambers of Congress. As one of the co-sponsors, I am extremely proud to be a part of the effort to recognize the Caribbean - Americans nationwide who have been a colorful thread of our Nation's fabric.

This proclamation recognizes the millions of Caribbean peoples in the United States for their contributions to American society since its foundation. As a representative of a large Caribbean constituency, I have always felt the need to advocate on behalf of this distinctive community while educating others that Caribbean cultures have influenced our educational and political structures as well as popular culture.

Since 1619, immigrants from the Caribbean islands began to populate America, bringing with them elements of cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. I appreciate the emphasis that this resolution places on shedding light on our Nation's history as many great political thinkers, such as President Alexander Hamilton, were born in the Caribbean. This little known fact was largely unheard of because of the taboos, discrimination and racism that existed in our country's past.

Today, as our Nation's third border, Caribbean nations and our relations with them are fundamental to our interdependent successes in sharing medical advancements, fighting terrorism and promoting diversity appreciation.

In celebration of Caribbean Heritage month, this June, I will promote participation in local festivities. I am glad to support activities such as parades, carnivals and festivals that are being held in my district and nationwide in true Island fashion and flair.

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Statement of Rep. Eliot L. Engel (NY-17) on Caribbean-American Heritage Month

Mr. Speaker, as an original co-sponsor of H. Con. Res. 71 and Ranking Member of the House International Relations Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, I rise to pay tribute to the designation of June as National Caribbean -American Heritage Month. I also congratulate Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) for her successful leadership in ensuring unanimous passage of H. Con. Res. 71 in both the House and Senate, and extend my thanks to the numerous bipartisan cosponsors who helped make passage possible. Caribbean -American Heritage month honors the tremendous contributions of Caribbean -Americans to our Nation's fabric, and recognizes that our nations are bound together by cultural ties, social and economic links, and common values.

People of Caribbean heritage are found in every State of the Union, including large populations, in New York, and have been contributing to our Nation's success since the American colonies. My constituents of Caribbean heritage have contributed to our great country in the fields of education, fine arts, business, literature, journalism, sports, fashion, politics, government, the military, music, science, technology, and other areas, and help illustrate the ongoing contribution of immigrants and their descendants to our Nation's fabric and success. Caribbean -Americans enrich and strengthen our society.

I encourage all citizens to participate in the celebration of Caribbean -American Heritage month and to learn more about the contributions of Caribbean -Americans and our strong ties to Caribbean nations. I also congratulate and join Caribbean -Americans in their celebration of their rich heritage.

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