



## Legislation Text

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### Res. No. 687-A

Resolution establishing October 9th annually as New York City Haitian Day, in recognition of the historic contributions of the Haitian diaspora to the City of New York

By Council Members Eugene, Cumbo, Dickens, Espinal, Gibson, Koo, Mendez, Grodenchik, Richards, Levin and Menchaca

Whereas, Haitians have made great contributions to the City of New York and to the United States throughout its history, from major achievements in athletics, art, music and culture, to social advancement for persons of African descent, to leadership in elected offices from the local to the national level; and

Whereas, On October 9, 1779 more than 500 recruits from Saint-Domingue, a French colony which later became Haiti, fought alongside American colonial troops against the British Army during the siege of Savannah, one of the most significant foreign contributions to the Revolutionary War; and

Whereas, In the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Haitian philanthropist and freed slave, Pierre Toussaint, started an orphanage on Franklin Street in New York City for poor girls and boys, paying for their education and setting them up with jobs; and

Whereas, Toussaint also started a credit bureau, an employment agency and a refuge for priests and destitute travelers and became a resource for Haitian immigrants moving to New York City due to his ability to speak French and English; and

Whereas, Toussaint raised funds and donated much of his own money to build Old Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Mulberry Street in Manhattan, where he was the first lay person to be buried and for which he was

eventually venerated by the Catholic Church in 1996 by Pope John Paul II; and

Whereas, Activist, civil rights leader and famed writer of Haitian descent, W.E.B. Du Bois became the editor of the magazine *The Crisis* in 1910 in New York City, aimed at exposing the widespread prejudice against persons of color, and which became a major publication critiquing segregation and advocating for civil rights, women's rights and labor rights; and

Whereas, New York City native and famed artist of Haitian descent, Jean-Michel Basquiat was a leader of the neo-expressionist movement in New York City, working with other major artists including Andy Warhol, with major exhibits at the Whitney Museum of American Art; and

Whereas, Brooklyn born architects of Haitian descent, Nicole Hollant-Denis and Rodney Leon, have designed several buildings in New York City, including significant sites such as the African Burial Ground Memorial in lower Manhattan and Leon's "Arc of Return," a permanent memorial at the United Nations dedicated to the victims of slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade; and

Whereas, According to the 2009 United States Census, there are over 140,000 persons of Haitian descent living in the City of New York today; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York establishes October 9th annually as New York City Haitian Day, in recognition of the historic contributions of Haitians to the City of New York.

RM/ACK  
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