



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 0207-2018, **Version:** \*

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### Res. No. 207

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to add the history of Haiti, including the Haitian Revolution and the abolition of slavery, to the public schools' Black History Month curriculum.

By Council Member Eugene

Whereas, The Republic of Haiti, located on the island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean, was originally inhabited by the indigenous Taíno people when Christopher Columbus established a Spanish settlement, which was the first colony in the New World, in 1492; and

Whereas, By 1550, only 150 out of hundreds of thousands Taíno remained on the island after being subjected to forced labor, abuse, hunger, mass killings and diseases against which they had no immunity; and

Whereas, In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Spanish began to forcibly transport large groups of enslaved Africans, most of whom came from Senegambia, Guinea and Congo-Angolan (Bantu) areas, to work in mines and on sugar plantations on Hispaniola; and

Whereas, By the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, following attacks by the British, Dutch and French and a devastating earthquake in 1591, much of Hispaniola had become unpopulated and the colony increasingly unprofitable, unstable, and neglected by the Spanish, who had become more concerned with extracting gold in present day Central America and Mexico; and

Whereas, In 1697, Spain officially ceded the western portion of Hispaniola to the French, who founded the colony of St. Domingue and created the modern day border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic on the island; and

Whereas, Over the next 100 years, St. Domingue became the most profitable colony in the Americas due to its successful slave-based sugar and coffee industries, which demanded more slave labor and eventually

created a 10-to-1 ratio of slaves to free people on the island; and

Whereas, On August 22, 1791, an organized slave rebellion, led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, broke out in St. Domingue, marking the start of a 12 year resistance, which culminated not only in the proclamation of independence but also the abolishment of slavery in Haiti; and

Whereas, On January 1, 1804, President Jean Jacques Dessalines declared the new Republic of Haiti's independence from France to become the only republic to rise from a successful slave rebellion, the world's first Black republic in the Western Hemisphere and the second independent democracy in the Americas after the United States (U.S.) in 1783; and

Whereas, As a nation borne out of a slave revolt, American political leaders, many of them slave owners, reacted to the emergence of Haiti with ambivalence and the U.S. did not officially recognize Haitian independence until 1862; and

Whereas, Haiti has a rich history that has significantly impacted geopolitical trajectory of the Western Hemisphere; and

Whereas, Haitians and their descendants have made great contributions to New York City and to the U.S. throughout its history, from major achievements in the arts, athletics, culture, music and science, to social advancement for persons of African descent, to leadership in elected offices from the local to the national level; and

Whereas, According to the U.S. Census Bureau, as of 2009, New York had second largest population of Haitian-Americans with nearly 100,000 foreign-born Haitians and more than 140,000 persons of Haitian descent living in NYC; and

Whereas, In the U.S., the month of February is observed as Black History Month, which is celebrated to highlight and remember the important achievements and contributions of African Americans, including Haitians, throughout the nation and world history; and

Whereas, Students engaged and challenged in historical thinking, consider many perspectives

and cultivate decision-making skills that will serve them well as participating citizens of a democracy; and

Whereas, The NYC Department of Education services a diverse student population and strives to create an inclusive environment that values the experience, perspective and contributions of all peoples; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon New York City Department of Education to add the history of Haiti, including the Haitian Revolution and the abolition of slavery, to the public schools' Black History Month curriculum.

CGR  
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