

Some good things to know about Haiti

Written by Compiled by Professor Mahmoud El-Kati
Monday, 14 June 2010 14:57



W.E.B DuBois- One of the great minds of the 20th century was the son of a Haitian, Alfred DuBois. W.E.B DuBois was the first African to earn a PhD from Harvard, wrote the first scientific book on the trades, and was a committed activist who helped to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Jean Baptise DuSable- Was a Haitian, who founded the great city of Chicago, IL. Besides the indigenous people (Indians), he was the first Non-Indian settler on the land of the Chicago natives.

Henri Christophe- At the age of 12, he was sent with a contingent of over 2,000 Haitian soldiers to support the American Revolution at the battle of Savannah in 1779. France, which controlled Haiti at that time, was America's first ally. Christophe was later to become a major leader of the Haitian Revolution against France in 1791.

New Orleans- Many Haitians came to New Orleans and after the rebellion in Haiti they contributed mightily to the life and culture of New Orleans. They brought with them traditions of music, dance, instruments and leagues of African culture. The practice of their god, Verdun, mispronounced in English as Voodoo.

Alexander Dumas- Hailed as the Father of French Literature was the grandson to Marquis Alexandre-Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie (1710-1781), who married a Black slave from Haiti. Her name was Marie-Louise Elisabeth Labouret.

Simone Bolivar- The liberator of most of South America was supported by Haitian leaders (Alexander Petiot) with finance arms, and training in the techniques of revolutionary struggle. Haiti's revolutionary impact on the freedom of Latin America from Spain is yet to be measured.

The Louisiana Purchase (1803)- Was made possible because of the success of the Haitian Revolution against France. The great Napoleon Bonaparte had designs for capturing all of North America. Haiti disrupted this process by breaking the back of France in the western hemisphere. Napoleon was forced to sell France's territories to the U.S for \$15 million dollars. This made the U.S twice its size.

The leaders of rebellions in the United States- Several leaders of slave revolts, insurrections,

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rebellions and conspiracies had knowledge of the successful overthrow of slavery in Haiti. Gabriel Prosser in Richmond, VA (1800), Denmark Vessy in Charleston, SC (1822) and Nat Turner of South Hampton County, VA (1831) were inspired by L'Ouverture, Dessalines and Christophe.

Paul Robeson- In 1916, straight A student and Valedictorian of his class, Robeson chose the Haitian Revolution as the theme of his speech. He was one of three Black students in the entire school. His pride in African people was allowed by an enlightened school administration.

Katherine Danham- a pioneer in the creation of modern American stage dance, was a committed student and admirer of Haitian culture. Besides being a master dancer, she was also a trained anthropologist. Dunham incorporated many aspects of Haitian culture in her performances. She collected many artifacts, costumes, jewelry, paintings, headgear and trinkets. Dunham, along with another gifted African dancer, Pearl Primas, were good will ambassadors of Haitian Culture.

Did you know that?

The leaders of the Haitian Revolution made overtures to African Americans immediately after Jean Jacque Dessalines declared Haitian Independence in 1804. The Haitian government sent out an agent to Philadelphia to meet with leaders of the Black American community. The mission was to establish quasi-diplomatic relations with leaders such as James Forten, the wealthy Black sail maker, and the Rev. Richard Allen, leader of the Free African Society and the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.