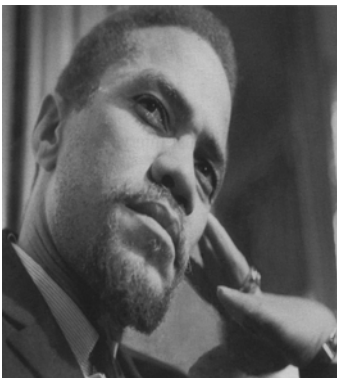


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CMC
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WASHINGTON, DC, USA (CMC) - United States President Barack Obama has declared June as National Caribbean-American Heritage Month.

In a proclamation issued by the White House on Tuesday, Obama noted the "lasting contributions" made by Caribbean Americans to the United States' culture and history, stating that June has been set aside to "honour their cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and social diversity.

"Generations of immigrants have preserved the traditions of their homelands and these traditions have defined our nation's identity," he said, adding that Caribbean-Americans bring a "unique and vibrant culture" to America.

"This multilingual and multiethnic tradition has strengthened our social fabric and enriched the diversity of our nation."

Obama said while many Americans have Caribbean roots, "some Caribbean-Americans were forced to our country as slaves; others arrived of their own volition.

"All have sought the promise of a brighter tomorrow for themselves and their children. In their pursuit of success, Caribbean-Americans exhibit the traits all Americans prize - determination, a devotion to community, and patriotism."

Obama said Caribbean Americans have made their mark in every facet of US society, ranging from art to athletics and science to service, and that they have also safeguarded the United States by being members of the Armed Forces.

He also recognised the "critical relationship" the United States maintains with Caribbean countries, noting that in a world of increasing communication and connectivity, "this friendship has become even more important.

"We are neighbours, partners and friends; we share the same aspirations for our children; and we strive for the very same freedoms. Together, we can meet the common challenges we face.

"Now, therefore, I, Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2009 as National Caribbean-American Heritage Month."

Obama urged all Americans to commemorate June by "learning more about the history and culture of Caribbean Americans".