

Eritrean-Americans in Cincinnati Celebrated 22nd Year of Independence

By Eritrean National Holidays Coordinating Committee

HAPPY 22st Birthday and YEAR of INDEPENDENCE TO ALL ERITREANS ACROSS THE GLOBE!

On May 25, 2013, Eritreans and Eritrean-Americans who live in Cincinnati, Ohio, celebrated the 22nd birthday and Anniversary of Eritrean Independence Day with great fanfare and enthusiasm.

Due to the hard-working efforts, commitment, and dedication of the local Eritrean National Holidays Coordinating Committee, it was possible to celebrate Eritrea's 22nd anniversary of Independence Day on 25 May 2013. The main celebration also took place in Asmara, Eritrea, on 24 May 2013.

The celebration party took place in the northwestern suburb of Cincinnati, which is called Mt. Airy. The Hall was rented from a local community that runs the place. It was well-decorated by Eritrean flags.

The Theme for this year was **"Resiliency Our Shield, Work Our Dignity"**.

Before the starting of the party, there was a graduation program **for 13 high school and college students**. The number of graduates for this year was the highest the community ever produced. **Out of these, there were 7 high school, and 6 college graduates**. Within the college graduates, there were two with doctoral degrees; one in dentistry, and another in pharmacology. One college graduate received a Master's Degree in Public Health. The students attended at different colleges, such as UC, Miami University, Ohio State, and George Washington University.

Before the meal of the evening was served, Aboy Qeshi Haile, Head Priest of the St. Michael Eritrean Orthodox Church offered the opening prayer. Aboy Qeshi Haile pointed out that no one should take Eritrea's independence for granted. This independence, which caused many young people to sacrifice their lives for the sake of freedom, should be respected. As a result, Eritreans must maintain utmost respect for each other, and must maintain their unity intact. He stated "let us show a sense of unity, love and cooperation for each other".

More people, than what has been expected, came to celebrate the 22nd birthday of Eritrean Independence, which is a milestone in the growth and development of the new nation.

Hadese Alem, chairperson of the National Holidays Coordinating Committee, welcomed the members of the community. He briefly stated what independence and

freedom meant to all Eritreans. He sated those who attempt to celebrate Eritrean independence in a fake way, but do not have a sense of unity and purpose are living outside of the main stream of Eritrean solidarity.

Tekle Asgedom, chairperson of the Eritrean Community, welcomed the participants. He also praised the dedication, energy, and commitment shown by the Executive Staff of the local Eritrean National Holidays Coordinating Committee for making this year's celebration better than last year.

As part of the occasion, the Speech PIA gave in Asmara was shown to the audience via a computer hook up and power projector. ***Another thing that made the occasion unique was the reading of a Proclamation issued by the Mayor of Cincinnati, The Honorable Mark Mallory. For the 1st time, the community applied for the proclamation, and the mayor declared May 24, 2013, as Eritrean Independence Day!***

As a yearly tradition, The Eritrean Community Association, through its Executive Staff, congratulated the 13 ***Eritrean-American students*** who graduated during the current school year. The Executive staff also awarded plaques to each student. The chairperson also wished them the best and good success as they move out into the business world

As the program progressed throughout the evening, Abraham Tesfai prepared 10 General Knowledge questions on Eritrean history. Saba Mehari Tesfai won the prize. Three Tigrigna class students, ***Arsiema and Saron Haile, and Yonathan Michael*** read what independence meant to Eritrea and Eritreans.

Michael Mebrahtu, a DJ from Cincinnati, Teklit from Columbus, Ohio, playing Kerar and Wata, and Fasil from Louisville, Kentucky, playing Keyboard, spent the whole evening entertaining the audience. They played several Eritrean cultural and musical selections that depict the value and richness of the nation's melodies. The party continued until 2:30 am. Old and young danced to the beautiful melodies of Tigrigna, Tigre, Saho and other cultural music. Hence, the participants danced away the night until it was time to leave the Hall!

The members of the local Eritrean National Holidays Coordinating Committee consist of ***Asmeret Tesfai, Hadese Alem, Sereke Gaim, Michael Lebasae, Tekle Asgedom, and Zegeye Ghebremariam Maru***. The Committee did an excellent job in planning, organizing, and executing the event of the party. The event showed what it means to work together and in unison. Based on the feedback received from some of the participants of the party, this year's 22nd birthday celebration was something to remember. It is hoped that next year's party will be better than this year! The participants of the party stated that the Organizing Committee for the Eritrean National Holidays has shown its love for Eritrea, the Eritrean people, and its community!

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