

## **Eritreans in Cincinnati Celebrated 18<sup>th</sup> Year of Independence**

### **By Ogbazgy A. Asmerom**

## **HAPPY 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday and YEAR of INDEPENDENCE TO ALL ERITREANS ACROSS THE GLOBE!**

On May 24, 2009, Eritreans and Eritrean-Americans who live in Cincinnati, Ohio, celebrated the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and Anniversary of Eritrean Independence Day with great fanfare and enthusiasm.

Due to the hard-working efforts, commitment, and dedication of the new local Eritrean National Holidays Coordinating Committee, it was possible to celebrate Eritrea's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, or the 18<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of Independence Day, on May 24, 2009, which happened to be the same day celebration that took place in Eritrea.

The celebration party took place in the northwestern suburb of Cincinnati, which is called the city of Mt. Healthy. The decoration of the hall was fantastic. More than what has been expected came to celebrate the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday of Eritrean Independence, which is a milestone in the growth and development of the nation.

Azieb Mehreteab, chairperson of the Eritrean Community welcomed the participants. She also praised the dedication, energy, and commitment shown by the Executive staff of the Eritrean Community, local representative of the Eritrean consular affairs in the city, members of the local PFDJ, and the Executive Staff of the new Eritrean National Holidays Coordinating Committee for making this year's celebration better than last year.

Hadese Alem Ghebrezgiabher, chairperson of the National Holidays Coordinating Committee, welcomed the members of the community. He briefly stated what independence and freedom meant to all Eritreans.

This year's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday for Eritrea was the best of all the other birthdays the residents of the city have observed or celebrated. This year showed Eritrea "becoming an adult, standing strong and self-confident, and marching forward to do more and achieve more as an adult or grown up nation." It really was a memorable day for all of those who came to celebrate and enjoy the party. Many participants have commented by stating that this year was the best of all parties.

Abraham Tesfai, through his skills and the aid of his laptop, was able to lead the audience in singing the Eritrean National Anthem in Tigrigna. A Latin version of the national anthem was given to the young people to follow in the singing of the Tigrigna version.

The Independence Day message for 2009 issued by the Eritrean Embassy for the residents of North America was read to the audience. The main message was that all Eritreans at home and abroad must be vigilant, resilient, and united, showing a sense of purpose and commitment to see better days in Eritrea and help their motherland develop. Following the message of the Eritrean embassy, a taped ERI-TV live broadcast of President Isaias Afwerki's address to the nation was shown to the audience. Due to modern technology and the availability of DVD/laptop, it was possible to show the taped message in its entirety.

As a yearly tradition, The Eritrean Community Association, through its Executive Staff, **Azieb Mehreteab**, and **Azmarina Seltene** awarded monetary gifts to **nine Eritrean students** who graduated from High School and College during the current school year. The Executive staff congratulated all of the graduates and wished them the best. These graduates are the fruits and pride of the Eritrean Community in the city.

As the program progressed throughout the evening, **Abraham Tesfai** read humorous news items about local events and the community of Eritreans in the city. Because of his humorous skills, the audience was bursting in laughter and applause.

Based on the feedback gathered from those who participated in the celebration, the audience liked his humorous presentation.

Another occasion that really made an impression was the reading and presentation of several points about Eritrean history and what has been paid to usher Eritrean independence. **Arsiema Haile**, 11, read how Eritrea became independent. Her father, **Haile Ghebregus**, paraphrased a prepared text, which pointed out **not to be greedy and not forget** about what has been paid for Eritrean to be independent. Later, **Delina Ermias**, 6, read a short history of Eritrea. **Yodit Mehari Ghebreab**, 18, a college Student in New York City, read a poem called "**Eritrean pride.**" She pointed out that to be an Eritrean is good and gives someone a sense of belonging and pride. **Tekle Asgedom** read a beautiful poem in Tigrigna. The title of the poem was "**Yohanna Eritrea, Hagerey!**" He praised all of those freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives to make Eritrea free and independent.

As the program of the night progressed to the morning hours, three items, Kerar, XebHi Derho, and a T-Shirt were donated to be sold on an auction basis. The three items netted more than **\$350.00**, which will be used to support the families of Eritrean martyrs.

During the celebration, food and drinks were served. There was a huge birthday cake that had the following message: "**Happy 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Eritrea!**"

Michael Mebrahtu, the local Eritrean DJ, spent the whole evening entertaining the audience. Michael played several cultural and musical selections that depict the richness of Eritrean melodies. The party continued until 12:30 am. Old and young danced to the beautiful melodies of Tigigna, Tigre, Saho and other cultural music

The writer of the story affirms that members of the New Eritrean National Holidays Coordinating Committee: ***Hadese Alem Ghebrezgiabher, Mehari Tesfai, Neghisty Tewelde, Zaid Tesfai, and Zegeye Ghebremariam Maru*** did an excellent job in planning, organizing, and executing the events of the party. They have shown what it means to work together and in unison. Each member of the Committee was given a unique task to perform, and each one has performed very well.

Based on the feedback received from some of the participants of the Independence Day party, this year's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration for Eritrea was the best of all. 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!

**Note:** Digital photos and pictures of the celebration party will be posted later.

THE END