

Eritreans in Cincinnati Celebrated 21st Year of Independence By Eritrean National Holidays Coordinating Committee

HAPPY 21st Birthday and YEAR of INDEPENDENCE TO ALL ERITREANS ACROSS THE GLOBE!

On May 27, 2012, Eritreans and Eritrean-Americans who live in Cincinnati, Ohio, celebrated the 21st 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 21st birthday, or the 21st year anniversary of Independence Day on 27 May 2012, which was also celebrated on 24 May 2012 in Eritrea.

The celebration party took place in the northeastern suburb of Cincinnati, which is called the Walnut Hills, at a place managed by Lebanese and Maronite Groups. The decoration of the hall was fantastic.

The Theme for this year was ***“Our Independence, Our Dignity”***. There were various Tigrigna slogans on the walls of the hall.

Before the meal of the evening was served, Aboy Qeshi Haile, Head Priest of the St. Michael Eritrean Orthodox Tewahdo Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, 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 21st birthday of Eritrean Independence, which is a milestone in the growth and development of the new nation. It was estimated more than 150 people took part in the festivities.

After the meal was served, the program started with a moment of silence. Immediately after that, several young people, who are attending Tigrigna Class in the city, sang the Eritrean National Anthem,

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 stated 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.

Michael Lebasae, secretary of the local PFDJ, read the message PIA delivered in Asmara on 24 May 2012. 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.

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 Eritrean Community, local representative of the Eritrean consular affairs in the city, members of the local PFDJ, and the Executive Staff of the local Eritrean National Holidays Coordinating Committee for making this year's celebration better than last year.

This year's 21st birthday for Eritrea was beautiful and well organized. 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 humorous approach made the participants move and clap when stated that those who do not believe in Eritrean unity, independence, and cooperation live in the peripheries and are not for Eritrea and are not part of the fabric of Eritrean society. He asserted they work for the enemy of Eritrea, and not for the Eritrean people.

As a yearly tradition, The Eritrean Community Association, through its Executive Staff, Tekle Asgedom and Hadese Alem congratulated the four **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. It was noted that these graduates are the fruits and pride of the Eritrean Community in the city.

As the program progressed throughout the evening, Abraham Tesfai read humors 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.

Tekle Asgedom read a beautiful poem in Tigrigna. The title of the poem was "**Freedom, what is your color?**" He praised all of those freedom fighters who scarified their lives to make Eritrea free and independent.

During the celebration, food and drinks were served. The food was catered by Mehari Ghebreab and his family. There was a huge birthday cake that had the

following message: ***“Happy 21st Birthday, Eritrea, and Congratulations to the graduating Class of 2012!”***

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 2:30 am. Old and young danced to the beautiful melodies of Tigigna, Tigre, Saho and other cultural music. An Eritrean singer, Habtom Sbahtu, from Atlanta, Georgia, came to add more flavor to the occasion. The participants danced away the night until it was time to love the Hall!

The Organizers of the event affirm that members of the local Eritrean National Holidays Coordinating Committee: ***Hadese Alem, Sereke Gaim, Michael Lebasae, Tekle Asgedom, 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 21st birthday celebration for Eritrea 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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