

and this amendment went a long way to ensure this. This amendment stops the Treasury Department's roadblocks in shipping American rice to Cuba.

The Cuban people will eat rice. If we will not sell it to them, they will get it elsewhere, from countries like Vietnam, Thailand, and China. I appreciate the hard work Ms. EMERSON, the U.S. Rice Producers, and the U.S.A. Rice Federation have done toward reversing these trade restrictions. American rice is the best in the world and our Government must encourage rice trade instead of preventing such trade.

I encourage my colleagues to support the underlying bill.

ACKNOWLEDGING AFRO-DESCENDANT POPULATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 29, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to begin a formal acknowledgment of the injustices imposed on African descendants of the transatlantic slave trade in all of the Americas, with an emphasis on populations in Latin America and the Caribbean, and to encourage United States and international efforts to work to improve the situation of Afro-descendant communities in these regions.

In the 108th Congress, my colleagues and I concluded that, for too long, this country and other nations had ignored the struggle and challenges faced by Afro-descendant populations in the Americas. While the U.S. has been compelled to take steps to address our race problem in this country, we have often unintentionally forgotten or deemphasized the impact of that struggle throughout the Western Hemisphere.

The transatlantic slave trade had a devastating impact on the region's economies. While the exact events and conditions of slavery that dominated the U.S. did not necessarily permeate into Latin America and the Caribbean directly, Central and South America did have to deal with its own "peculiar institution." Slavery transforms the body politic and the institutions of power and culture. It lifts one group of nations above another group, makes some the superior to others, and discriminates against those in the minority.

In this country, it led to three centuries of segregation, discrimination, and prejudice. It remains a battle that African-Americans continue to suffer through today. Rising above the harmful effects of centuries of racism has not been easy for us; neither has it been for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 2005, the struggle of Afro-descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean continues. Representing the largest population of African descendants outside of Africa, Afro-descendants have not fared well in the region. Afro-Latinos for instance account for about 30 percent of the Latin American population and make up over 60 percent of its poor. Afro-Latinos also have extreme high rates of suicide, homicide, infant mortality, and illiteracy.

Brazil has the largest population of Afro-descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean. Shockingly, only one in three Afro-Bra-

zilians attends secondary schools. Colombia has the second largest Afro-descendant population in the region and Afro-Colombians have shorter life expectancies, limited access to medical and health care facilities, and the highest rates of illiteracy.

Our involvement, dependency, and complicity in the transatlantic slave trade require action by this country to help address the issues of Afro-descendant populations. With my House colleagues, I have introduced legislation (H. Con. Res. 175) to call for the recognition by this Congress of the struggle of Afro-descendant populations and to encourage and promote efforts to assist Afro-descendant communities. The resolution calls on the President, the Congress, and the international community to devote resources and services to help eradicate the economic and social disparities that exist in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I also must acknowledge the productive support, insights, and assistance of the Afro-Latino Working Group: The Honorable Mr. JOHN CONYERS, Mr. DONALD PAYNE, Ms. BARBARA LEE, Mr. WILLIAM JEFFERSON, and Mr. GREGORY MEEKS. Their counsel, advocacy, and commitment to these issues have been instrumental in raising the importance and awareness of this cause to me and this Congress. I appreciate their support.

I would also like to thank the number of colleagues that have extended their support to this resolution and are currently listed as co-sponsors to the legislation. They are a sign of the bipartisan and broad support of this resolution by this Chamber. Today, the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere of the International Relations Committee marked up this legislation and voted to support it. I hope the 109th Congress will give it the same attention and support.

I would like to submit the text of House Concurrent Resolution 157 for the RECORD.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Acknowledging African descendants of the transatlantic slave trade in all of the Americas with an emphasis on descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean, recognizing the injustices suffered by these African descendants, and recommending that the United States and the international community work to improve the situation of Afro-descendant communities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Whereas during Black History Month it is important that we not forget that African-Americans are not the only survivors of the transatlantic slave trade;

Whereas like the United States, many European nations benefited greatly from the colonization of Latin America and the Caribbean and their participation in the slave trade;

Whereas the story of African descendants in all of the Americas remains untold, leading them to be forgotten, made invisible, and allowed to suffer unjustly;

Whereas it is important to acknowledge that as a result of the slave trade and immigration, approximately 80,000,000 to 150,000,000 persons of African descent live in Latin America and the Caribbean, making them the largest population of persons of African descent outside of Africa;

Whereas Afro-descendants are present in most all Latin American countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela;

Whereas the size of Afro-descendant populations vary in range from less than 1 per-

cent in some countries to as much as 30 percent in Colombia and 46 percent in Brazil and make up the majority in some Spanish speaking Caribbean nations, such as Cuba and the Dominican Republic;

Whereas Afro-descendant populations have made significant economic, social, and cultural contributions to their countries and the Western Hemisphere from their unfortunate involvement in the transatlantic slave trade to their recent contributions to trade, tourism, and other industries;

Whereas although persons of African descent have made significant achievements in education, employment, economic, political, and social spheres in some countries, the vast majority are marginalized—living in impoverished communities where they are excluded from centers of education, government, and basic human rights based upon the color of their skin and ancestry;

Whereas Afro-descendants have shorter life expectancies, higher rates of infant mortality, higher incidences of HIV/AIDS, higher rates of illiteracy, and lower incomes than do other populations;

Whereas Afro-descendants encounter problems of access to healthcare, basic education, potable water, housing, land titles, credit, equal justice and representation under the law, political representation, and other economic, political, health, and basic human rights; and

Whereas skin color and ancestry have led African-Americans in the United States and African descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean to share similar injustices, leading to economic, social, health, and political inequalities: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) recognizes and honors African descendants in the Americas for their contributions to the economic, social, and cultural fabric of the countries in the Americas, particularly in Latin American and Caribbean societies;

(2) recognizes that as a result of their skin color and ancestry, African descendants in the Americas have wrongfully experienced economic, social, and political injustices;

(3) urges the President to take appropriate measures to encourage the celebration and remembrance of the achievements of African descendants in the Americas and a resolution of injustices suffered by African descendants in the Americas;

(4) encourages the United States and the international community to work to ensure that extreme poverty is eradicated, universal education is achieved, quality healthcare is made available, sustainable environmental resources, including land where applicable, is provided, and equal access to justice and representation under the law is granted in Afro-descendant communities in Latin America and the Caribbean; and

(5) encourages the United States and the international community to achieve these goals in Latin America and the Caribbean by—

(A) promoting research that focuses on identifying and eradicating racial disparities in economic, political, and social spheres;

(B) promoting, funding, and creating development programs that focus on Afro-descendant communities;

(C) providing technical support and training to Afro-descendant advocacy groups that work to uphold basic human rights in the region;

(D) promoting the creation of an international working group that focuses on problems of communities of Afro-descendants in the Americas; and

(E) promoting trade and other bilateral and multilateral agreements that take into account the needs of Afro-descendant communities.