





Estados Unidos
Race, Ethnicity, and Social Inclusion Unit in the Bureau
of Western Hemisphere Affairs of U.S. Department of
State

II. Presentaciones de las/os Expositoras/res

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Zakiya Carr Johnson

In almost every country in the Western Hemisphere, people of African descent have left an indelible mark on modern-day expression; in music, culinary arts, dance, language, literature, science, and much more. The contributions men and women of African descent made during slavery and for generations afterward are often undervalued and unrecognized. Although they make up more than one-third of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean, people of African descent have historically been and continue to be underrepresented in government, civil society, and the media.

The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs' office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs has shared African-American experiences and culture with audiences across the region by providing unique opportunities for young people, women and men of African descent to access English language programs, and take part in educational, cultural and entrepreneurial exchanges in the United States.

In 2008, the Bureau embraced the diplomacy of racial, ethnic and social inclusion and consolidated its efforts to promote equality with countries like Brazil and Colombia through bilateral Action Plans. These agreements bring together governments, civil society and private sector to share best practices and conduct people-to-people exchange on issues like equal access to justice, environmental justice, health, access to quality education, culture and communication.

Increased interest in expanding these initiatives led to the creation of the Race, Ethnicity, and Social Inclusion Unit under the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs in 2010. The Unit coordinates the Brazil and Colombia Action Plans on Racial and Ethnic Equality, and advises leadership on the implementation of related bilateral and regional initiatives. As a special part of the Unit's mandate, we are working with every office and post in the region to engage in the commemoration of the International Year for People of African Descent.

The United Nations General Assembly and the Organization of American States (OAS) have proclaimed 2011 the International Year for People of African Descent (IYPAD). The year will focus on strengthening national, regional, and international cooperation to benefit people of African descent and promote a greater knowledge of and respect for their diverse heritage and culture.

During the International Year for People of African descent, the Race, Ethnicity and Social Inclusion Unit is coordinating U.S. Department of State collaboration in host countries regionally to: promote inclusion and equal participation of people of African descent in all aspects of political, economic, social, and cultural life; explore our shared regional African Diaspora roots; create awareness of and respect for the diverse heritage, culture, and contributions of African descendants to science and technology, education, independence and civil rights movements, agriculture, language, cuisine, culture, and the arts. We will also engage multilaterally to bolster continued inter-regional dialogue and cooperation.

In the Western Hemisphere, approximately 12 million Africans were brought to the Americas over the 400 year history of the transatlantic slave trade. An estimated 90% of those enslaved Africans ended up in Latin America and the Caribbean; 5% went to the United States. Today, African descendants make up one-third of the total population in the hemisphere. They are the majority of the Caribbean population, however the largest numbers of African descendants are found in Brazil, the United States, Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador.

Despite historic discrimination and on-going exclusion and inequality, people of African descent have made significant contributions in their respective countries in the Western Hemisphere and around the world. Through initiatives like the U.S.-Brazil and the U.S.-Colombia Action Plans to Promote Racial and Ethnic Equality we have made significant progress but there is so much more to do.

President Obama stated¹ that the Year for People of African Descent is “an opportunity to recognize the myriad ways that men and women of African descent have strengthened our countries and enriched our societies.” Secretary Clinton

¹ <http://m.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/04/08/presidential-proclamation-pan-american-day-and-pan-american-week>



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expressed² that the International Year for People of African Descent is “an opportunity for all of us around the globe to celebrate the diversity of our societies and to honor the contributions that our fellow citizens of African descent make every day to the economic, social and political fabrics of our communities.”

We hope the International Year will mark a change in how people of African descent are incorporated in policies, programs, and initiatives to strengthen our relationships with our neighbors in the region.

² <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/01/155435.htm>