

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Delivers Remarks and Raises the Haitian Flag with Bowling Green Association

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Arthur Piccolo, Chairman, Bowling Green Association: Welcome to Bowling Green. I'm Arthur Piccolo, chairman of the Bowling Green Association, and it's a pleasure to once again welcome the Haitian community to Bowling Green, and once again, our mayor as well. I want to say a special thank you to former New York City councilman, Dr. Matthew Eugene. He is the one who began raising the Haitian flag here at Bowling Green in 2015. I also want to thank the staff of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, which did so much to produce this event today, and I always thank the Greek community, the New York Greek community, which donated the second flagpole to Bowling Green in 1996, or we would never have had the hundreds of flag raisings that we have had.

Piccolo: Every time we raise the Haitian flag here, I always say something that we all should remember. Of course, Haitians know this better than anyone else. In 1791, the only successful revolution by enslaved people began in 1791 by Haitians, the only time in human history. And in response to that, the Haitian people have suffered devastation for 200 years at the hands of the French and at the hands of the early American administration. Alexander Hamilton and other New Yorkers were strongly in support of Haitian independence. When Thomas Jefferson became president, he withdrew that support because, for the obvious reason, he and other southern US presidents were concerned that they would inspire the enslaved Americans in southern states to do the same.

Piccolo: There is no doubt that Haiti should be one of the most successful and impressive countries in the Caribbean. And I look forward, even after all that you have had to put up as Haitian people, I look forward to the day we come here, when Haiti is the successful nation and an inspiration for the entire Caribbean. And if anyone doubts how true that is, all you have to do is look at a list of the impressive amount of Haitian

Americans in this country over generations in every single endeavor, and look at the long list right now of elected officials of Haitian origin across the United States. It's impressive.

Piccolo: Now, in a moment, I'm going to turn the program over to Commissioner Castro, but first, when the mayor's here, I always like to take a moment to show our appreciation for him being here. I hope I'm not going a little bit too far here in saying the following, but I've been impressed enough and many of us should be impressed enough by our new mayor. That if we do not know, we do not know if President Biden will run for election in 2024, and I do not know if Mayor Eric Adams might decide to enter a field of a lot of candidates for the presidency. But what I do know, that with his spirit, with his energy, with his inspirational leadership, with his imagination, he will clearly be different from all the other candidates who might do so. I think I said enough. Allow me to now introduce Commissioner Castro to take over the program from here and introduce our mayor.

Commissioner Manuel Castro, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs: Thank you so much, Arthur, and thank you to the Bowling Green Association for partnering with us to put this event together. My name is Manuel Castro and I'm the commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. I'd like to first thank the elected officials here today, the community partners, and everyone who is out here to celebrate Haiti and to hear a special announcement from the mayor. But first, I would like to introduce Dr. Henry Joseph to get us started with a word of prayer.

Dr. Henry Joseph: Thank you. Thank you. Why don't we all stand for our word of prayer? Thank you.

Dr. Joseph: Dear Lord, creator of the universe, master of the visible and the invisible. We come before you this morning with a sense of gratefulness. We thank you Lord for the gift of life, for being, Father, there with us in this great city, day in, day out. We thank you for our mayor, Mr. Eric Adams. We thank you for all the elected officials. We're asking you to bless them, continue to guide them so that, Father, they can lead us according to your will. This beautiful day is a gift, this great moment is a gift, and for that, we thank you. We are asking you to bless us with your presence. May you be glorified through everything we're going to say and do. In your precious name we pray. Amen.

Commissioner Castro: Thank you so much, Dr. Joseph. You can take a seat, please. Thank you so much. Before I introduce Mayor Adams, I also want to acknowledge the presence of our great deputy mayor of Health and Human Services, Anne Williams-Isom. I'd also like to acknowledge Council Members Rita Joseph and Farah Louis. And of course, there's too many to name right now, but the presence of our amazing community-based organization partners who are out here today. Now, I'd like to introduce Israel Jean to perform the Haitian and American Anthem.

Commissioner Castro: Change of program. First, I would like to say, first of all, thank you to all the community-based organizations who are out here today. Many of you have been working closely with our office in the last six months to ensure Haitian immigrants continue to receive the services and the support they need. We, in this administration, are committed to stand with you, whether it's in celebrations such as these today or in moments of difficulty, like many of our Haitian New Yorker neighbors have been experiencing over the years. And in the last six months, I have had the chance to witness your work directly at your centers. Thank you for welcoming me and having me visit many of your organizations and meeting your members. And so with that, I'd like to introduce to you the mayor of the City of New York, Mayor Eric Adams.

[Crosstalk]

Mayor Eric Adams: First of all, I served as a borough president in Brooklyn. Everyone knew that Brooklyn was the Port-au-Prince of America. We have the largest Haitian population outside of the country, and I really saw the spirit and energy of the Haitian people when I was in Haiti right after one of the hurricanes. The resiliency goes back to the spirit of Toussaint, the great warrior and fighter, that ensured that he embodied the spirit and energy, we would rather live a lifetime in poverty than one day in slavery. And so, you want to be free and will continue to be free. The amazing benefit of having two excellent law – City Council people in Farah Louis, and which Farah is doing, both our new... old Council person and a new Council person, the energy is clear.

Mayor Adams: And let me tell you what they did. They ensure that we put funding, Councilwoman Rita Joseph, and Councilwoman Farah Louis, \$1.6 million into our budget to make sure we provide legal services for those who are coming to this country and want to navigate the entire process. Please give it up for both of them for doing so. Total of 3.2 million thus far, understanding we know when our Haitian of family members come to New York City and have to navigate the process, we want to make

sure they have the legal support to do so, and I cannot thank them enough. Amazing partners.

Mayor Adams: But this flag raising that's here with the Bowling Green Association, Arthur, and the entire team here, they used this space at the heart of our business district to say it belongs to us all. Raising this flag is raising the opportunities for all of us and I want to just say thank you to the Bowling Green Association. I've been here for so many flag raisings and I'm proud to be here today. Let's raise the flag, let's raise the Haitian people who are here and abroad and always have our heart out, to a country that has been the spirit of resiliency and freedom and fighting on behalf of what's right. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Castro: All right. Now, I would like to welcome up Israel Jean to perform the Haitian and the American national Anthem. Thank you.