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For Immediate Release

# THE CARIBBEAN SUNSHINE AWARDS SUPPORTS AIMS OF AYITI OUI BY COMMEMORATING BICENTENIAL OF THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION

Teaneck, New Jersey, USA, July 16th 2003....The SUNSHINE Awards™ organization today issued the following statement:

Two hundred years ago, Africans in the Diaspora were still suffering the chains of slavery. Their blood and tears became forever part of the foreign soil to which they were then involuntarily bound. In the midst of this unimaginable misery, many of our ancestors struggled and fought for their freedom. Many failed. They were the brave and courageous children of Africa.

Supreme amongst these mainly unsung Africans were the slaves of Saint Domingue, who rose up against the cruelty of the times and eventually emerged victorious, establishing the first free nation of blacks in the Western Hemisphere. This was the birth of Haiti. This event was, and remains, an accomplishment of tremendous proportions.

The Caribbean SUNSHINE Awards together with the Consulate General of Haiti in New York has decided to support the efforts of Ayiti Oui to commemorate this monumental achievement of our African ancestors. Ayiti Oui was established by prominent individuals from throughout the African Diaspora. They share an appreciation of the historic significance of the Haitian Revolution and have joined together to heighten awareness in all communities of this event and to encourage its widespread celebration and commemoration. Ayiti Oui's website address is [AyitiOui1804.com](http://AyitiOui1804.com) and its email address is [info@AyitiOui.com](mailto:info@AyitiOui.com).

Randall Robinson of Ayiti Oui had this to say: "Gil Figaro and the Caribbean Sunshine Awards are to be commended for their energy and vision. They are taking the lead in ensuring that the unprecedented phenomenon we now refer to as the Haitian Revolution is celebrated in the spirit of pride and joy that it deserves. Haiti's slave revolutionaries delivered that massive blow that marked the beginning of the end of slavery throughout the New World, and the descendents of that revolution are being honored by the Caribbean Sunshine Awards this year. In inviting members of the African Diaspora to honor Haiti, its history, and its people, Gil Figaro and the Caribbean Sunshine Awards are in fact inviting the African Diaspora to honor the best in ourselves."

The Consul General of Haiti in New York, Mr. Harry Fouché, is looking forward to the many ways in which the Haitian Revolution will be commemorated in New York, as well as in all Haitian communities around the world. He said, "I look forward to being a part of this grand event, as we celebrate the bicentennial of Haiti I urge all to remember the sacrifices of our ancestors and also the contributions made by Haiti and her people during those two centuries. Lest we forget, Haiti is still paying a price for the bold rebellion leading to its independence. Let us all stand with Haiti. I congratulate the Caribbean Sunshine Awards and its Founder, Gil Figaro, for their initiative."

The Caribbean SUNSHINE Awards is particularly proud to be a part of this special initiative to pay tribute to the people of Haiti, to celebrate the origins of their nation and to honor the men of extraordinary talent and courage, who made it all a reality. The names Boukman, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henri Christophe and Alexandre Petion are forever etched in the annals of time.

The year 2004 will mark the bicentennial of the Haitian Revolution. While this event will be of particular importance to the people of Haiti, all of us with African and Caribbean heritage will share their pride as we celebrate together this significant and historic event.

The Fifteenth Annual Caribbean SUNSHINE Awards will take place on September 27, 2003, at the New York Sheraton Hotel, 811 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10019. The program will begin at 6:00pm and will pay special tribute to the people of Haiti. The theme is "One Family, One Caribbean." The Awards 2003 Student Recognition Program will recognize the academic excellence of two Haitian students. The top performing male and female high school students, and a chaperone, will be provided with roundtrip airline tickets to New York, where they will participate as presenters at the Fifteenth Annual Caribbean SUNSHINE Awards. While in New York, they will also be taken on cultural and academic tours, including universities, museums and the United Nations.

The Calypso King of the World, the Mighty Sparrow is also very excited about this year's Caribbean Sunshine Awards dedication to the celebration of the bicentennial of the Haitian Revolution. In a telephone interview he said, "I am very happy to be a part of history and to join the Caribbean Sunshine Awards in bringing to the forefront the Haitian Revolution. We must all recognize with dignity and pride the courage and determination of our ancestors. Thanks to Gil Figaro and his organization for appreciating and recognizing our ancestors and history in a very special way."

Dr. Hollis "Chalkdust" Liverpool, the co-founder of the Caribbean Sunshine Awards Hall of Fame was very excited. When contacted he said, "the Haitian Revolution represents for all of us in the Caribbean an event whereby not only the sons and daughters of slaves were freed from slavery but one that gave Africans everywhere a sense of pride, self-esteem and dignity. It allowed the enslaved people to adjust to the evils of colonialism knowing that they too, like Europeans were human beings. It is therefore important for the Caribbean Sunshine Awards to celebrate this historical event."

The Fifteenth Annual Caribbean SUNSHINE Awards has a special significance for its founder and chairman, Gilman T. Figaro, Sr. "I look back over the past 15 years and see a road which had many twists and turns, oftentimes a road strewn with difficulties and struggles. In spite of these, our organization has persevered in its commitment to Caribbean artistes and art forms and, as we approach the Fifteenth Annual Caribbean SUNSHINE Awards, I cannot help but feel a sense of shared accomplishment with members of the Caribbean community and the many

sponsors who have been so supportive over the years."

Mr. Figaro said, "fifteen years is a special milestone for the Caribbean SUNSHINE Awards and it seems only fitting that we should use this occasion to highlight the achievements of those brave and courageous African slaves whose victory over the powerful armies of Napoleon led to the creation of the nation of Haiti. I am, therefore, very pleased to join with Ayiti Qui to encourage the celebration of the bicentennial of the Haitian Revolution."

The Fifteenth Annual SUNSHINE Awards is sponsored in part by Propel Fitness Water, Hennessey, Keyspan, BWIA, Air Jamaica, The New York Carib News, Trinidad and Tobago Unit Trust Corporation and Calypsocity.