

JAMAICA



DR. CLAIRE NELSON

HISTORY OF NATIONAL CARIBBEAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

The Institute of Caribbean Studies' effort to establish National Caribbean American Heritage Month began in 1999 with a Letter to President Clinton asking for the recognition of August as National Caribbean American Heritage Month. Meanwhile, a now-defunct Ad-Hoc Group of Caribbean Americans lead by Doreen Thomson organized efforts to get June declared Caribbean Heritage Month in Washington DC. ICS joined forces with the AdHoc group in June 1999, but by 2000, the group dispersed. In June 2000, ICS took on the mantle of leadership, changed the name to National Caribbean American Heritage Month and began organizing events under that banner. In 2001, ICS was joined by TransAfrica Forum and the Caribbean Staff Association of the World Bank and the momentum slowly began to build. In 2004, the efforts gathered steam and an Official Campaign for June as National Caribbean American Heritage Month was launched upon the tabling of a Bill in the US Congress by Congresswoman Barbara Lee, with language provided by ICS Founder and President, Dr. Claire Nelson. ICS worked with the Office of Congresswoman Barbara Lee to galvanize support for the Bill from organizations across the country and organized events on Capitol Hill in recognition of June. The Bill was reintroduced and passed the House in June, 2005, and the Senate in February, 2006. A Proclamation making the Resolution official was signed by President Bush on June 5, 2006.

