

**10th Annual African-American History Festival
Franklin Square Park – February 16, 2013
Mayor Van Johnson Welcome Remarks**

On behalf of the H'COLA organization and the honorable Apalachicola Board of City Commissioners - I welcome each of you to the 10th Annual African-American History Festival here in the historic North side community of Apalachicola – also known as the Hill.

We are here over this wonderful Apalachicola weekend to recount and celebrate the many contributions made to America by those who came before us - the sons and daughters of Africa.

It was because of the scars left on their bend, but not broken backs and the blood that slowly dripped from their brow that compelled our forefathers to seek out justice and equality so that all men, including Black men and Black women - could share equally and jointly in the rights of liberty and freedom.

The purpose of this annual festival is to remind African-Americans of the rich history that we have inherited, and to teach us that if we carry within ourselves the memory of the journey that our forefathers took - it will remind each of us that we are a living confirmation that their journey was not in vain.

As descendants of slaves and freedom fighters, we must wholeheartedly embrace our heritage, and in doing so - we begin the process of viewing our present as a triumph part of our past and our future full of endless possibilities. Such hope - made up the dreams of our forefathers, but was unattainable for them, but made possible to us, because they paved the road of opportunity with their dignity and humanity.

Realizing that through the years, we have made significant progress and achieved much as a people, but we still have a long ways to go. Therefore, the legacy that we leave behind must include the ability of future generations to make demands, because power has never conceded anything without demands - it never has and it never will.

We must also build up and encourage a new generation of leaders - like those from our history did for us - or soon there will be no one left to lead or continue the struggle.

For the broader community, the purpose of this celebration is to afford you with an opportunity to become exposed to a proud race of people with a rich

heritage, a people that has contributed much without acknowledgment to the successful evolution of this great country. Such exposure will in due course lead to breaking the barriers that have divided us for far too long as a community and as a nation.

For there's no nation or people on the face of this earth that has a greater respect for liberty and equality than the people of these United States of America do. Because of this, we must all work together to impede the ungodly practice of making a distinction between man and man, because in the eyes of God Almighty there is no respect of person.

This is what acknowledging and celebrating African-American history mean to me, as it should to you.

Again, I welcome you to this annual celebration and encourage you to enjoy the festivities and I pray that God bless you and keep you and May God bless the City of Apalachicola and these United States of America.

Thank you.