

Tradução não Oficial

Honorable Donnie Tuck, Mayor of Hampton

HIS EXCELLENCY, JOAQUIM DO ESPÍRITO SANTO, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Angola to the United States

Distinguish members of Tucker Family

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

First of all, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Angola, I would like to thank you for the invitation to participate in the annual ceremony in honor of the arrival of the first twenty Angolan slaves in the United States of America, and to remind you, once again, that Angola entered the pages of American history thanks to the tenacious personality, extraordinary capacity for work, and unequivocal will of the first slaves to overcome the innumerable vicissitudes of life in a context of slavery.

The transatlantic slave trade caused the movement of an immense human mass, estimated at 12 million Africans transported in slave ships, of which 11 million survived the crossing to reach the coast of the Americas.

The revision of our historical past is of utmost importance for the understanding of contemporary social problems, opening possibilities for the affirmation of our political identity and a better understanding of the historical and cultural connections of the three continents - Africa, Europe, and America - that were established across the Atlantic Ocean, with implications for the rest of the world.

Recent research opens new perspectives on African history and provides us with a different view on the implications of the demographic dimension, geographic ubiquity, and common cultural origins that enslaved people of Angolan origin shared, often before arriving in the Americas. These implications force a revision of established perceptions concerning the formation and evolution of Angolan cultural traits in North America.

From the perspective of the Belgian historian, Jan Vansina, the history of enslaved Angolans in North America is the history of "forgotten ancestors." In fact, they are the "forgotten ancestors" in the genealogy of the cultures of the new world diaspora, for the magnitude and ambiguity of their contributions in the new world diaspora have been greatly minimized and neglected to the point of becoming almost invisible.

In fact, it was in the state of Virginia, where four hundred and two years ago, the first Angolan slaves who set foot on the land of the United States of America landed, in August 1619, in the 17th century.

Today, the historical past of Angolan slaves in America, through the transatlantic commerce, can be transformed into various valences, increasing the relations of friendship and cooperation, taking advantage of the bridge of Cultural Diplomacy, towards significant and creative strategies of economic approach.

According to the President of the Republic, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, this is always "a singular opportunity for Angola to project its image and disclose the historical importance of a past that can be reused, from the perspective of economic development."

Slavery, one of the greatest tragedies in history, brought together the destiny of two countries located on distant continents, but close culturally, and our historical complementarity and human potential can be integrated and reused in various development projects in Angola.

We know that today a substantial part of the Angolan community living in the United States of America, numbering more than seven thousand Angolans, arrived here in the 1970s and 1990s to escape the war conflicts in their places of origin.

Today, peace has been achieved and the conditions have been created for a more open and fraternal dialogue toward the realization of what we think is the new Angola, based on an economic opening in which the United States of America has had and will have an extremely important role to play in this process.

Regarding the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Environment, it is important to highlight the role that the United States of America has played in supporting environment-related projects in its relationship with the Institute of Biodiversity and Conservation, concretized in the fight against poaching and wildlife trafficking in Angola.

This tribute celebrates the courage of women and men who embarked on a journey that transformed the course of history of a people and a continent. As for us, our arms are open to welcome our American brothers and sisters on their way to progress.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH