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African American Blues Icon Taj Mahal and his late sister the beloved diva Carole Fredericks of Paris, France honored as outstanding advocates of language and culture



With this honor, Carole Fredericks and Taj Mahal will join previous honorees including former President Jimmy Carter and the late Senator Paul Simon.

(AANEWSWIRE) Canandaigua, NY... The Award Committee of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL) selected both Carole Fredericks and Taj Mahal, siblings and natives of Springfield, Massachusetts, as recipients of the 2005 JAMES W. DODGE AWARD. Fredericks is honored for her music career in France. Mahal is recognized for his distinctive blend of French, Caribbean, Latin and African rhythms with country blues.

The Award recognizes an outstanding advocate of language and culture study outside the foreign language teaching profession. It has been presented annually since 1978 and given in memory of James W. Dodge since 1990. It has among its recipients former President Jimmy Carter, Paul Simon, Leonard A. Lauder, and Barbara Turlington. The Northeast Conference is the largest and oldest regional pedagogical meeting of foreign language educators in the United States. While it represents fourteen states, the annual Conference attracts participants and professionals from all over the country and abroad. Approximately 2,500 language educators attend each year.

The Award recognizes Ms. Fredericks posthumously for her music career in France and the subsequent language units based on her biography and recordings that were developed in the United States after her death in 2001. A two-time Grammy winner known for cross-cultural musical collaborations, Mr. Mahal has attracted a worldwide listening audience to the blues. In both their careers, Ms. Fredericks and Mr. Mahal have promoted the advantages of learning a second language and contributed to the exploration of cultures other than their own.

Carole Denise Fredericks is counted among the few Americans laid to rest in the historic Montmartre Cemetery in Paris where numerous French luminaries such as painter Edgar Degas and cinematographer François Truffaut are also buried. It is quite an honor for a woman whose name is just now being recognized in the United States.

Carole Fredericks wasn't the first African American to meet with success in France. When Ms Fredericks emigrated from the United States in 1979 at the age of 27, she added her name to a

long list of African Americans who found refuge and personal expression in the country of Napoleon, the Eiffel Tower, fine wines and cheeses. Since the 19th Century the road to Paris has been well worn by African America's crème de la crème: Frederick Douglas, Henry O. Tanner, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, Countee Cullen, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Gordon Parks, Josephine Baker, Nina Simone and so many more.

At the time of her death on June 7, 2001 the result of a heart attack at age 49, Ms. Fredericks spoke fluent French. She was a headliner act in Europe and Africa and had infused rhythm and blues as well as soul and gospel into mainstream French music. A member of Fredericks Goldman Jones, one of France's best known music groups, she was a beloved celebrity and a humanitarian. Although she was very open about her cultural roots, most of her fans had no idea that she was an American from Springfield, Massachusetts, and few in her hometown knew what she had accomplished.

A Diva's Legacy Touches American Students

But that is changing. The Fredericks family including blues icon Taj Mahal, Samuel Fredericks, Richard Fredericks, and her sister Connie Fredericks-Malone, have been using the diva's soulful songs to help thousands of American kids learn French. With support from the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF) the Fredericks family has sold music videos and lessons to hundreds of schools across America and Canada. Aptly entitled, Tant Qu'Elle Chante, Elle Vit (English: As Long As She Sings, She Lives) the language unit can be used with students in elementary school through high school and college. The unit is included among the learning materials offered by the Connecticut-France Partnership Resource Center for the Teaching of French at Yale University, and it was recently adopted by the Foreign Language Department of the Springfield, MA Public Schools for city-wide French programs. Responses have been so positive that the family published a second program this year entitled Couleurs et parfums. The second unit includes a CD and activity book and is best used with high school and college learners. For further information please contact Connie Fredericks-Malone (585.396.2995, 585 233.2426, cfm@cdfmusiclegacy.com)

Event Schedule:

Taj Mahal, Connie Fredericks-Malone Join Northeast Conference On The Teaching Of Foreign Languages To Honor Carole Fredericks

Event: DODGE Award / Taj Mahal Performance at the NECTFL Opening Session Connie Fredericks-Malone, sister of Mr. Mahal and Ms. Fredericks, will introduce the performance.

When: 10am, Friday, March 31, 2006

Where: New York Marriott Marquis Hotel, 1535 Broadway, New York

For media and event confirmation please contact Connie Fredericks-Malone (585.396.2995, 585. 233.2426, cfm@cdfmusiclegacy.com)