

The Right Excellent JOSEPH CHATOYER - Paramount Chief

Joseph Chatoyer, the paramount chief of the Black Caribs (Garifuna), was officially declared the first National Hero of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on March 14, 2002, in accordance with the National Heroes Act (2002). March 14 has been designated National Heroes Day in SVG and a public holiday.



Chief Chatoyer was a freedom fighter, deliberator, leader and staunch opposer of colonialism, leading the military strength as Head of the Garifuna Council and War Council.

The indigenous Garifuna population on St. Vincent succeeded in resisting European attempts at colonisation for two centuries. However, by 1770 Britain and France forced inroads on Saint Vincent.

In 1772, the Garifuna rebelled led by Chatoyer leading to the First Carib War and resulting in the British being forced to sign a treaty. This was the first time Britain had been forced to sign an accord with any indigenous population in the Americas.

It became apparent in 1795 that Britain had no intention of honouring the treaty. The Garifuna joined by French rebels lead to the Second Carib War. Chatoyer divided the island with DuValle, another chieftain. Working his way along the coast, Chatoyer met with his French supporters at Chateaubelair, and together the forces worked their way to Dorsetshire Hill, from where they would launch their attack on the Capital - Kingstown.

On March 14, 1795, a battalion of British soldiers led by General Ralph Abercromby marched on Dorsetshire Hill. That evening, Chatoyer was killed by Major Alexander Leith. Though the rebellion continued, until June, 1796, Chatoyer's death led to the desertion of the French supporters and ultimately turned the tide of the war.

A Monument (Obelisk) stands on Dorsetshire Hill, where he was killed by the British in defending his honour, way of life and in opposition of colonialism.