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Desmond Roberts is Chairman of the Editorial Board of the Diaspora Times.

HOUSTON: WE HAVE A PROBLEM!



Try as he might with caps and egotistical references to turnout for his visit, no one could take the spotlight away from the horrific flooding that Hurricane Harvey delivered on Houston and several of the Texas Gulf towns and cities. Having visited this fourth largest city in the United States three years ago (as well as the Gulf of Mexico town of Galveston), with a friend Krishna Singh and his daughter Kaydia, the scale of the disaster was heart wrenching. Despite the Houston Police Chief's attempt at Trump-like hyperbole on the "flood of biblical proportions", the frequency of 1,000 year, worst ever, 100 year floods and other weather driven disasters should give Guyanese pause and have us examine practical mitigating actions in the short and long term. Houston,

a metro area that boasts a GDP of US \$449 Billion, suffered a flood area larger than the state of New Jersey. The city was central to the early aerospace industry, bringing into popular usage, and now apt phrase, 'Houston, we have a problem'.

I listened to a radio interview a few days ago on actions that corporations and New York City itself are taking to adjust building codes and the changes in the use of space, anticipating flooding of lower levels. Different floor material being used at the lower levels; pumping, generating and data management equipment will now be stored on higher floors, in response to the destruction Hurricane Sandy wrought almost five years ago. Although these are reactive

EDITORIAL

changes, they are being made in parallel with activist policies to reduce harmful emissions, notwithstanding the retrograde but powerful outlier efforts to ignore science.

The irony of the historic flooding in Houston lies in its pre-eminence in fossil fuel refining and administration in the United States. Wikipedia states: "The Houston metropolitan area comprises the largest concentration of petrochemical manufacturing in the world, including for synthetic rubber, insecticides, and fertilizers. It is the world's leading center for oilfield equipment construction, with the city of Houston home to more than 3,000 energy-related businesses, including many of the top oil and gas exploration and production firms and petroleum pipeline operators. As of 2011, 23 companies on the Fortune 500 list have their headquarters in, or around, Houston."

Houston is also home to Exxon Mobil, the humungous oil company that is spearheading Guyana's entry into the oil industry. Lest we only show official sympathy with the city of Houston and its most wealthy business scion, we might reflect on and plan to resolve Guyana's own dilemma if the low-lying coast were to experience even a fraction of the week of rainfall on Houston. While Hurricane Katrina released 6.5 trillion gallons of rain on Mississippi and Louisiana, Harvey dumped 50 inches of rain (27 trillion gallons) on the Houston Metro area.

In one of the better planning documents publicized in Guyana in recent years, the Minister of Agriculture, Noel Holder,



indicated there were detailed plans to develop the Intermediate Savannahs of Guyana. If the plans were to be operationalized it would focus much of Guyana's new agricultural investment off the coast. One of the prescient recommendations of the Minister was that we consider moving away from the coast if we anticipate more severe weather than the all-regions floods we experienced in June. We have already seen what can happen during the 2005 floods on the coast. We need all hands on deck to have this ambitious program fructify in all of its social, economic, education, engineering, agriculture, energy, security, housing and environmental aspects. Guyana should not be cautious in mobilizing the skills of its People of Guyanese (PGO) origin – a term that Dr. Dhanpaul Narine suggested at the Diaspora Engagement Conference in July was akin to PIO used by the government of India for its all-embracing Diasporic Indians - to assist the effort. Planning should not be restricted to the Savannahs but must include the coastlands as well as our mountainous areas and

forestry covered riverine treasures.

Guyana can benchmark the efforts of countries like Nigeria and Brazil that have moved their capitals away from the former trading posts on the coast to more central and higher areas inland. We can also take note of the prognostications for Bangladesh and other low lying states and islands. The Burnham government had made this analysis and took many decisions based on the need for a focus on hinterland development and occupation: The Guyana National Service; upgrading of the Mahdia Triangle; the attempt to re-orient the Matthews Ridge-Kaituma area and strengthening relations with Brazil inter alia.

If these unnatural natural events do not get us undertaking a serious southern trek in Guyana, we would not have made optimum use of the windfall wealth that might come our way within the next five years. I am not sure if we have even five years to plan for our own survival.

By Desmond Roberts

THINGS THAT BOTHER ME

By Kojo Nnamdi



“Diaspora Desires”

It bothers me that in the diaspora, we often see two Guyanas simultaneously.

The Guyana of our birth, of which we are proud. Our native land, where growing up was wonderful: in a remarkably diverse culture that produced, well, us.

And then there’s the other Guyana. The one we will never live in again.

The first Guyana is what made us so proud of the young Guyanese students who performed so well in the recently held Robotics competition in Washington DC, where they placed tenth out of a possible 157 countries. That’s the Guyana we’re proud of.

The Guyana in which those brilliant students will NOT be living ten years from now, after they’ve finished their education at elite colleges and universities in the US and Europe? That’s the Guyana whose future we’re reluctant to confront. Or live in.

We know the brainpower that exists within Guyana. We also know, and may be a part of, the brain drain that has damaged the country. It’s one thing to give back, as so many Guyanese in all walks of life in the diaspora do: from college professors who collaborate with the University of Guyana, or acquire scholarships for Guyanese students abroad, to everyday Guyanese abroad who send money, clothing, books and anything they feel will help struggling families and children in Guyana.

But how can we help Guyana to retain its best scholars in STEM disciplines especially, AFTER they have received higher education abroad. We know that the Guyana economy will not, in the foreseeable future, be able to provide them with salaries competitive with what they can earn abroad. We also know that if Guyana is to move boldly into the future, it needs the minds of our best young scholars. And while patriotism might be the ideal motivator for their return, it has not proven to be the most effective. Patriotism doesn’t provide a great career, comfort, disposable income, good schools and safe neighborhoods. A rich economy and good governance can create those conditions.

The general expectation is that the production of oil in Guyana has the potential to provide the much needed wealth. But for whom? If government and opposition can agree on one thing, it should be that much of the benefit of an oil economy should be set aside for the future scholars and technicians who will lead it. Future guarantees that training and certification in the areas necessary for development will be compensated competitively, not only nor especially in terms of salary, but in terms of benefits available, need to be in place before students even venture abroad.

We’re talking about the nation’s future here, not about whose long service to what political party needs to be compensated, not about how those of us living overseas, and living large, need



Robotics Team being greeted by the First Lady at CJIA

ridiculous offers from the Guyana government so that we can match our well established lifestyles abroad.

No. We all need to be thinking about future plans for those teenagers so successful, in the Robotics competition, not just patting ourselves on the back and boasting to our foreign friends about how smart Guyanese are, which is what so many of us are doing.

And that bothers me.

By Kojo Nnamdi

Kojo Nnamdi is the renowned radio host of the NPR Washington affiliate WAMU FM

THINGS THAT BOTHER ME

THE 'GUYANESE MAFIA' IN THE UK

It was me or Prince Charles who invented the 'Guyanese mafia' moniker. Whoever, it has stuck firmly to a group of people who have become prominent in British public life. They are all of Guyanese origin.

First, forget your preconceptions about the 'Mafia' term. It is not pejorative, but simply refers to a group of people who share a common feature – In this case Guyanese heritage and stick together to a greater or lesser degree. In Britain, we have the 'Oxbridge mafia' (those who attended Oxford or Cambridge universities), the 'BBC Mafia' (who worked for 'Auntie' and in Wales the 'Taffia' - Taffys and the Mafia put together.



Dr. David Dabydeen, Author, Professor and Diplomat

Purists who object to the term are in a minority, especially amongst the 'Mafia' themselves.

There are two generations of 'mafia'; the elders like Herman Ouseley, later Sir Herman and now Lord Ouseley. He chaired the Commission on Racial Equality. Sir Shirdath 'Sonny' Ramphal steered the Commonwealth Secretariat through some choppy waters over Rhodesia/Zimbabwe (aided by fellow Guyanese Professor Bishnodat Persaud). E.R. Braithwaite brought his London East End schoolroom to the page and screen in 'To Sir with Love'; Cy Grant brought the music of the Caribbean to British TV screens; Norman Beaton the power of his acting to screen and stage and Michael

Abbensetts his writing to the stage and screen. Bernie Grant became one of the first Black British Members of Parliament in 1987 for Tottenham in North London where many of the Guyanese had settled.

The Guyanese diaspora in the UK is small - as few as



40,000 strong. The Conservative governments saw to that with Acts severely restricting Caribbean immigration in 1963 and 1968. Despite that, the Guyanese soon made their presence felt in their new 'homeland'

But it was the election of Tony Blair and 'New Labour' in 1987 that truly opened up the field to the new, younger 'Mafia'. Baroness Amos first became a member of the House of Lords, then the first black female member of the Cabinet as head of the Department for International Development (DFID), then leader of The Lords and then to the wider world as a very senior UN official. Today, she is the Principal of the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London. The girl from Wakenaam has made it to Westminster and beyond.

Trevor Phillips followed in her wake with senior posts at London Weekend Television, the London Assembly, the Commission for Racial Equality (almost a Guyanese sinecure) then back to making sometimes controversial television programmes. Today, he is President of the John Lewis Partnership which runs hundreds of stores. Trevor, like Valerie, is at the centre of most 'GM' spiders webs.

So too others - Lord Waheed Alli. A Trini-Guyanese. Openly Labour, openly Muslim and

openly Gay. He made his fortune in breakfast television. Colleen Harris, to whom the term Guyanese Mafia was first applied by the Prince of Wales, was his Press Secretary; and before that, to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

When Bernie Grant died in 2000, who was there to take over his seat but young David Lammy of firm Guyanese extraction though born in London. He is still an MP and, on the way up the political greasy pole, has had minor government ministerial jobs. This summer he was back in Guyana twice. He dislikes the 'GM' moniker.

Outside of politics, the 'GM' have shone in academia - Professors David Dabydeen (literature), Clem Seecharran (History) and Cynthia Pine (dentistry) in the van. Writing is in the Guyanese blood with the grand-daddy of them all Sir Wilson Harris still alive and well in Chelmsford, Essex.

Surprisingly too, in the military Air Commodore David Case rose to be the highest ranking black man in the RAF and in the forces overall. Today, he develops the Typhoon fighter aircraft in Germany.

Some came out of the woodwork once I started writing about the 'GM'. Sir Dexter Hutt is a much feted secondary school headmaster in the English Midlands. He is out of Mackenzie. Dr Raj Persaud (son of Bishnodat) became the best

known psychiatrist in Britain thanks to constant exposure on radio, TV and the tabloid press. But, then, like Icarus, he flew too close to the sun and got his wings burned.

When David Dabydeen and I invented awards in the Tower hotel in 2000 to salute the Guyanese, they became the Guyana High Commission (UK) awards. They saluted more hidden heroes and ran for three iterations in Croydon - the other place in London the Guyanese settled. I uncovered some great stories - like the power lifter who put his success down to 'plenty dhall and rice' but then he imploded in a cloud of egotism and sloth. They are due to be revived by the new London High Commissioner Hamley Case (David's cousin) in 2018....and then there is this year's 'Brexit Queen' Gina Miller, daughter of the former Attorney General Doodnauth Singh SC, who stopped the British government in its tracks over Article 50 to leave the EU. She is now a celebrity with all the good and bad attention that severe online trolling brings.

To say nothing of the up and coming 'Young Guyanese mafia' in high places in the City, finance and education. They are now showing their talent.

So, from the small acorns in South America, big names have emerged. Why? Simple. The

Guyanese education system, its emphasis on the importance of learning and the import of that with the families when they came to the UK. As an example, Valerie Amos' father asked her where the 'missing 4%' was when she brought home a history mark of 96%!!

Plenty books, plenty studying, plenty achievement. The 'Guyanese mafia' deserve their fame.

By John Mair



John Mair was born in British Guiana in 1950. He won the Demerara scholarship in 1961 then emigrated to the UK. He is a graduate of the LSE, Sussex and Leeds University and spent most of his professional life as a television producer for the BBC, ITV and Channel Four. Today, he is the most published author on British Journalism and media with twenty edited books to his name. The latest on 'Brexit, Trump and the Media' published in July 2017. He frequently returns to his mother's land, most recently to the Diaspora Engagement Conference in July.

IN THE NEWS FOR AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 2017

HOUSING

Housing policy has always been of prime and crucial political importance in any country. In Guyana, noted was the role of the Sugar Industry Labour and Welfare Fund (SILWF) and Bookers management in the upgrade of sugar workers' logies to cheap and well built homes and recreation centers around the estates. The pre-independence PPP British Guiana government also supported lower income housing schemes. The post-independence Burnham governments also launched a variety of lower and middle income housing projects utilizing funding through dedicated housing financial institutions, self-help and credit unions. Later PPP governments favoured middle income housing and then set major policy on giving out land for individual development.

There has been extensive commentary on the raison d'être for this policy but it seemed to have created in the short term a burden for many land owners who were unable to develop those lands and lost both the lands and an opportunity to build substantial homes on their plots. The Granger APNU/AFC Coalition government has opted for finished buildings but with several models for lower and middle income funding and ownership and the utilization of local materials. It will be interesting to see if the capital and retail funding will materialize for this important sector of the economy. The hope is that remittances from the Diaspora will assist with payment for occupied comfortable accommodation. There are still over 20,000 applications for housing in the country.



Visiting the housing models



The Diaspora Can Help

MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

Guyana has graduated another batch of doctors from Cuba, adding to the tremendous stock of primary care professionals per capita. From discussions with the Chief Medical Officer it seems that there is no shortage of doctors in Guyana; and they are stationed all across the country at clinics and hospitals. However, the problem seems to be with specialists and the training and supervision of inexperienced doctors and nurses to read imaging results, do proper diagnoses and perform specialized functions. This is where expertise in the diaspora can be of major assistance directly or through graphic distance support mechanisms. Visiting doctors of all types are useful but should be utilized for training and supervision over extended, well organized periods.



AIRFIELDS AND AIR SAFETY IN GUYANA

Colonel Egbert Field, the CEO of the Guyana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), has been making a major contribution to the aeronautical infrastructure of Guyana. A former senior officer in the Guyana Defence Force, he was among those who qualified early to fly the Beechcraft and commercial jets (Guyana Airways). He was also a highly respected professional in the civil aviation reforms in Jamaica. He is therefore excellently placed to captain the movement to upgrade Guyana's international airports (its 50th Anniversary as member of IATA) as well as its hinterland runaways. With the spate of recent crashes of small aircraft in the hinterland of Guyana, Colonel Field has been cracking down on the practice of air shuttles that are favoured by miners,

IN THE NEWS FOR AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 2017 CONT'D

especially for fuel and rations to their remote sites and airfields. Guyana's wide open hinterland has also attracted deliveries of illicit drugs at hastily constructed airstrips. While the resources of the GCAA are limited it is trying to bring order to an industry that is vital to our tourism, hinterland development, travel and medical evacuation services. Here is another skilled returnee making a difference.



Doing a Great Job



THE UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA UPGRADES

The recently officially installed Vice Chancellor of the University of Guyana, Dr. Ivelaw Griffith, unveiled a number of new programs and initiatives during his brain child The Diaspora Engagement Conference) and his Investiture Ceremony at Turkeyen. With a focus on research, collaboration and upgrading of the university's facilities, the focus will be on STEM and business subjects to lend intellectual and academic support to Guyana's plans for optimizing the use of oil revenues.

Bringing substance, style and new ideas from the Diaspora.



Indian company seeks to help Guyana's stone industry



The Visitors Travel by Bus into the Quarries on the Mazaruni River



Mr. Brian Tiwari describes the quarrying process.

A POSITIVE LEGACY

By **Joshua P. Chowritmootoo**



President L F S Burnham (20 February 1923 - 6 August 1985)

The late President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, is, has been and will be the single most remembered Guyanese of all time. Burnham died 32 years ago. No other person in the country's history has left such an indelible mark. Everywhere in Guyana, there are landmarks of physical and social infrastructure reflecting Burnham's commitment to eradicating poverty, and to raising the political consciousness of the Guyanese people.

Burnham had influenced the incipient struggle for our independence, independent of the global struggle against imperialism and colonialism. His fight for Guyana's independence began with an innate conviction, not a mere ideological commitment. That came later - to reinforce his intellectual conviction to fight against the suppression of peoples in the Southern Hemisphere and elsewhere. Forbes Burnham's legacy is powerful in the Guyanese and the former colonial

world. To deny Forbes Burnham's contribution to the anti-colonial struggles is historical revisionism.

At the time when Guyana stood as a stalwart in the Non-Aligned Movement and as pressure from Western interests escalated, Forbes Burnham announced the Feed, Clothe and House (FCH) the Nation policy program for Guyana. As innocent and innocuous as the policy appeared, it was a defence against economic imperialism. Guyana, a nation of less than a million souls, initiated a nation building strategy that tried to break the stranglehold of Western economic domination. This led to the further economic squeeze led by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs). The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) made stipulations that made development financing repressive.

Forbes Burnham did not capitulate. However, the economic consequence was severe. The Guyanese people suffered but persevered. Use of local materials for value-added goods led to the rushed purchase of the glass factory (Guyana sand - silica) which never functioned but the clay brick factory produced lots of clay blocks for roads and for government and other buildings. The Bel-Lu clay brick factory was eventually abandoned by a subsequent government. Cotton was grown at Kimbia for local and Trinidad textile mills, reviving a nineteenth century product for which colonial Guiana was noted. A National Service policy, the foundation for youth development, was implemented on the initiative of the visionary Burnham. The National Service gave youth exposure to Guyana's extensive hinterland, showing youth how the skills and experience given could be expressed as personal creativity or in entrepreneurship. Israel and Switzerland are today better off for their persistence with their countries' National Service programs.

Education from nursery to university and health care were free and available to all. During all of Forbes Burnham's governance, Guyana boasted one of the highest literacy levels in the world. The University of Guyana enjoyed its newly constructed home at the Turkeyen campus.

Every community in the country was developed. The entire coast saw universal potable water, microwave telephone communications and better quality roads, bridges and airports. Improvements in health care for and education of Guyana's hinterland brothers bettered the condition of indigenous groups in Australia, New Zealand and all of Central and South America. Many of our Amerindians began to fill the roles of professionals within and outside of their communities.

There was mixed success with our Grow More Food campaign. Our local black eye and mung peas, palm and coconut oil, rice and corn flour were considered inferior to Canadian split peas and wheaten flour; today the truth of the health benefits of our produce has been revealed. We ate low priced local fish and shrimp and our own pig tails and saltfish and dried fruit and herbal teas and pineapple chunks (and juice), coffee and marmalade and jelly and a long list of local foods and materials. Our international waters boast not only oil reserves but one of the world's richest fishing grounds.

We must learn from history and from others. Several oil rich countries have abandoned their agricultural programs, becoming dependent on oil revenues, losing food security and stable internal prices, to their detriment. We too lost the opportunity to strengthen the diversification of our economy during the FCH policy programs of Forbes Burnham.

Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham has bestowed upon Guyana a legacy of persistence in the face of economic difficulties. He instilled in Guyanese of all persuasions and beliefs that to be truly independent, the country must be self-sufficient and individuals must be self-reliant, depending upon our own national personal and natural resources for our economic survival. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." (George Santayana December 1863 - September 1952.)

By **Joshua P. Chowritmootoo**

Author; Poet; Activist; Politician (former Regional Minister, Guyana)



Photo Credit: Nigel Seebarran
The Mausoleum

We must honor one of Guyana's greatest sons, a true patriot, the Father of our nation, Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham.



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TASTE OF GUYANA - ANOTHER TREAT IN BARBADOS

Stories and Pictures by Peter Haynes

The Guyanese Association of Barbados Inc. (GABI) "Taste of Guyana" in 2016 one of the highlights of Guyana's Independence Jubilee Celebrations in Barbados has literally grown in popularity that it has become an event not only for Guyanese resident in Barbados, but it is now well attended by Barbadian and other CARICOM residents. On Sunday, August 13, 2017, over 2,000 persons turned up at the famous Kensington Oval to enjoy all the now famous Guyanese dishes.

The event was the best in terms of the multi-ethnic and cultural attendance since its inception ten years ago. This was an observance made by many GABI Past Presidents and former Executive members, who for many years worked feverishly to build social cohesion among Guyanese ethnic groups in Barbados.

The crowd was treated, to a three-hour cultural presentation. The highlight of the show was the performance by famous Guyanese recording artiste Aubrey Mann who was recalled for an encore of "Stealing Love on the Side" a crowd favorite.

Also thrilling the crowd was ten-year-old Indian dancer Raveena Ganesh, popular Indian songsters Navindra and Radhika Singh. A new feature of GABI's Taste of Guyana, was the introduction of the Roraima Singers. This folk group was formed and performed at the Barbados 50th Independence Anniversary celebrations last year.

A performance of folk songs and popular soca songs by the 'Pan Magic' duo of Roger Gibbs and his wife

Reggae, Soca and Chutney songs were presented by "Krish Vybbz", "Ras Shem Der Anchor Boss", "Mr.Veejay" and soca recording favourite "Ryan T.

Dr. Nicole Moore-Clarke, President of GABI said that she was excited by the attendance by the large number of Guyanese, Barbadian and CARICOM residents and felt assured that "Taste of Guyana" will continue to grow, especially based on the popularity of Guyanese dishes.

She praised members of the Royal Barbados Police Force and the private security services, who made the event incident-free, especially in the light of the recent violent incidents on the neighbouring Spring Garden Highway at Barbados' Crop Over Festival. The team of Volunteers, including the members of the Guyana Student Association - U.W.I Cave Hill, were thanked for their services during the eight-hour event. Dr Moore-Clarke also extended thanks to the management of the Kensington Oval Management Inc. for the use of the famous cricket venue.



The massive crowd was not disappointed as the vendors fulfilled their billing with the varied Curry dishes, Puri and Bussup-shirt, Metem-gee, Cook-up and Fried Rice, Chow-Mien, Baked and Fried Chicken, the popular Guyanese pastries - including salara, turn-over, patties, pine tarts, cheese rolls, cheese straws and metai. There was also Chicken foot, Black and White Pudding and Souse. The Guyanese were particular happy to be served the souse 'a la Guyana' as against the Barbadian method.

Sylvia was well received. Dancin' Africa delivered three performances including a "Zumba" dance to the tune 'Basodee'.



Dr. Moore also expressed GABI's gratitude to the many sponsors, who included Caribbean Airlines for their return airline ticket to Guyana; Ocean Two Hotel who presented a three-day vacation for two; Banks Holdings and FLOW.

Stories and Pictures by Peter Haynes

THINKING DIASPORA

By Dr. Henry Jeffrey

Dr. Henry Jeffrey is a former Professor of Politics at the University of Guyana and held ministerial portfolios in Housing, Health and of Education in the People Progressive Party government. He is a weekly columnist (Wednesdays - FUTURE NOTES) for the Stabroek News newspaper.



Please excuse me if I am somewhat jaded by all the talk and little action surrounding diaspora involvement. Vocal elements in the diaspora bemoaned their exclusion from and disappointment with the pace of promised change (SN: 01/10/2016); government ministers were promising a diaspora policy (07/01/2017); the University of Guyana has just held a conference with the theme 'dreaming and doing diaspora engagement'; some have accused the government of attempting to divide and rule the diaspora community (SN: 12/05/2017), and so on. Also contributing to my wariness is an awareness that courting the diaspora, particularly at election time, has been a feature on the agenda of all the contesting parties who do little when they come to government.

The first diaspora conference of which I can remember was organised by Forbes Burnham at the Kuru Kuru Cooperative College in about 1976. In those days, even if some of them were found to live in abandoned railway stations and other odd places in the UK, the diaspora was allowed the vote and so it was a very important element in the PNC elections manipulation strategy. This conference was only a couple of years after the very disruptive 1974 'Declaration of Sophia', in which Burnham announced that 'It was also decided that the party should assume unapologetically its paramouncy over the government which is merely one of its executive

arms' and that 'the Co-operative will be the principal institution for giving the masses the control of our economy, ... and will be the mechanism for making the little man a real man.'

This ideological departure was being widely criticised and Prime Minister Burnham and his deputy, Dr. Ptolemy Reid, wanted to provide unfiltered information to all those, regardless of political affiliation, who returned to Guyana that August. Newspaper and radio advertisements announced the conference and free transportation was provided at strategic locations across the country. The conference was very well attended, but needless to say, the vast majority of those who were addressed and feted by Burnham and Dr. Reid were PNC supporters, and this divisiveness remains a feature of the Guyanese diaspora.

The effort by the PNC to keep in touch with the diaspora, if not particularly substantial, was many-sided and persistent, and under the Economic Recovery Programme, Desmond Hoyte revived an early 1970s party policy of employing skilled members of the Guyanese diaspora. Of course, as he was doing so, opposition forces, with the PPP in the forefront, were making significant use of the lobbying capacity of their diaspora supporters to influence Washington to aid them in their effort to remove the PNC from government, and success came in 1992. As I have argued elsewhere, sufficient effort was not made by the PPP/C to harness the enthusiasm generated

by its taking office in 1992 or thereafter (The Diaspora has a significant role in nation building. SN: 28/09/2011).

Generally, the diaspora, who were in the past considered traitors by some for deserting their homeland, are now viewed as heroes, and this is not surprising given their contribution to personal and national wealth. According to the World Bank, in 2016, the Guyana diaspora contributed 8.6% or about US\$300 million to the GDP. Of course, some 93% of tertiary educated Guyanese emigrate, and what the cost benefit of such an exchange is has yet to be established. However, this contribution, coupled with the revolution in communications means that diaspora engagement is now far more flexible, and few countries now put the emphasis on their citizens returning home. They now 'reach out to their populations abroad in an additional number of ways, through institutional change, philanthropy, tourism, knowledge networks, capital funds, etc.' (A comparative analysis of diaspora policies. Political Geography, July, 2014).

This government did receive sizable support from the diaspora during the last election campaign, and now many feel that the latter has not been given the level of attention its contribution deserves (Diaspora members disappointed by manner in which Guyana government is treating them. SN: 01/10/2016). I believe that this can be largely explained by the fact that, for the most part, the diaspora is only a

reflection of a Guyanese society in which electoral alliances, in terms of votes and/or material support, are more or less quite safe and thus our politicians will treat the diaspora no more respectfully than its local compatriots.

Indeed, this way of considering the issue raises the question about the possibility of having a successful diaspora policy in such a divisive environment where, in my view, national pride is relatively weak. Jamaica's diaspora intervention is usually touted as a regional benchmark of success and Jamaicans are arguably the most nationalistic of Caribbean peoples. What is the causal relationship here and what does it mean for Guyana? This is not to deny the need for a diaspora policy, but these kinds of considerations will certainly help to define our expectations and even more importantly, suggests that the regime should avoid contributing to discord if it is to optimize its interventions.

In the run-up to the 2011 election, the AFC, now a partner in the government, was all over the diaspora and its Action Plan was quite effusive in its comments, some of which are still quite relevant as the basis for a reasonable diaspora plan. The Action Plan promised to: 'Conduct a global survey in the diaspora to determine their skills, talent and investment potential and their requirements for investing

in Guyana; provide a healthy investment climate for the diaspora by addressing crime, taxes, corruption, health, government support and social infrastructure; promote diasporal representation in the National Assembly and explore the reintroduction of diasporal voting at general elections; develop the diaspora exchange programme which would entail importing skilled members of the Diaspora on a contractual basis to transfer knowledge and talent to the local population. ... pay competitive salaries to Guyanese scientists, researchers, teachers, professors, engineers, doctors and other professionals who are willing to return; ... establish a true one-stop investment agency that will proactively identify investment projects and seek out potential investors in the diaspora; ... make re-migration more attractive; set aside land for the development of retirement neighbourhoods at competitive price.'

Some of these promises are clearly unrealistic – 'The AFC will pay competitive salaries to Guyanese scientists, researchers' etc. – and now that the AFC is in coalition with the PNC, others are utopian – the promise to 'explore the reintroduction of diasporal voting at general elections' is most likely to remain at the stage of exploration, but we shall see. Nonetheless, reflecting upon these promises

makes obvious the point that nearly half way through the term of the coalition government, even with a president who claims to love and respect the diaspora, not much has been accomplished to realise the ambitions and expectations raised by the regime and its constituent parts.

This administration usually makes much about its drafting or having policies in various areas, and it is doing so here again. Among other things, to effectively drive change one cannot keep one's policy directions secretly locked in one's head, and it is, therefore, good that the government is committed to providing such guidelines. However, a policy that is not effectively implemented is a waste of paper and one need not wait for a policy document to begin to make significant practical interventions. henryjeffrey@yahoo.com

By Dr. Henry Jeffrey

This Henry Jeffrey's feature article first appeared on August 2, 2017 in the Stabroek News (Future Notes) column.



Spectacular Guyana Troupe

Popular Art Exhibition



Guyana Teaches Steelpan in Barbados

finding that silver lining in Guyana

down the road

PHOTOS CREDITED TO MONDALE SMITH

Dear Editor:

A chorus representing a broad spectrum of individuals grows larger and louder with each passing day, which believes that incarcerating citizens, especially those from poor communities, for possessing or using small amounts of marijuana is unjust, unproductive and unwise. It is time that we normalize and reform the laws pertaining to marijuana use and implement the rehabilitation and treatment provisions as contained in sections 65 to 72 of the 1988 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Act (NDPA).

While we applaud, and view as essential, the efforts of Michael Carrington, a Member of Parliament, to propose and bring to the National Assembly, legislation to amend sections of the NDPA, these moves do not address sufficiently the issue and would require a more comprehensive reform of the current system.

For instance, certain exemptions from fines and prosecution should be extended to those who use marijuana for religious purposes. These would include as a sacrament in adherence to the Rastafarian faith and for events to celebrate/observe the Rastafarian faith. Other exemptions should encompass medical or therapeutic purposes as recommended or prescribed by a registered medical doctor; for purposes of scientific research conducted by an accredited tertiary institution; and for international visitors to purchase lawfully for medical or therapeutic purposes. Moreover, the establishment of a licensing authority should regulate these recommendations, issue licenses and permits and ensure that regulations do not contravene Guyana's international obligations.

Additionally, while the NDPA contains legal provisions for strengthening mental health and counseling institutions and services with the establishment of rehabilitation centers, a 'Rehabilitation Fund' and an 'Advisory Council for Rehabilitation of Narcotic Addicts', too few rehab centers have been set up across the country. In addition, no actions have yet been carried out to conform with the law as it relates to the rehabilitation fund and the advisory council. In this regard, the NDPA should contain specific clauses mandating the government to direct a percentage of revenues towards implementing these mandates.

It is our collective obligation as Guyanese citizens to step forward and support efforts to help end the punitive measures that have resulted in more harm than good to our society and which have caused many families much excessive pain and suffering, in both emotional and financial impacts. We hope that everyone will join us as we intensify an enlightened approach of advocacy for a more just and sensible legal framework when it comes to the issues and circumstances of marijuana use and rehabilitation services.

**Faithfully,
Nicole Cole
Chontelle Sewett
Keoma Griffith
Ras Leon Saul
Clinton Urling
For Society of Marijuana
Advocates for Reform and
Treatment (SMART)**

Diaspora Corner

Jamal Lewis Receives Prestigious NIH MIRA Grant

(DAVIS, Calif. August 31, 2017) Jamal Lewis has received a National Institutes of Health of Maximizing Investigators' Research Award (MIRA) for New and Early Stage Investigators.

The grant, which will support the Lewis lab's work to understand and exploit the phenomenon of vomocytosis, is \$1.9 million over the next five years.

Professor Lewis's research program is seeking to develop a universally-deployable, microparticle vaccine platform as an effective, long-lasting prophylactic against infectious agents.

Additionally, the research and development of this platform system has the potential to significantly transform the treatment of other immune-related conditions.



Dr. Jamal Lewis is the son of Mr. Leslie Lewis, former Agricultural Engineer at the Mahaica- Mahaicony- Abary (MMA) scheme and Dr. Dawn Lewis, formerly of the Institute of Applied Science and Technology (IAST) of Guyana. She is a professor at the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU).

The Prime Minister and Vice Chancellor UG and others attending the Ithica Emancipation Day Celebrations with Bernard Rollins.



Photo Credit to Nigel Seebarran
1823 Monument on Carifesta Avenue

President David Granger carrying the torch



GUYANA SPORTS PLANNING MUST INCLUDE THE DIASPORA

By Chris Thompson

If Guyana is to match the sporting achievements of St. Kitts, Barbados, Grenada, the Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago and of course Jamaica among others in the Caribbean, it is imperative that a comprehensive sports policy be adumbrated and the vision publicly announced early and clearly.

As former Prime Minister, Hamilton Green, used to say, "Don't 'make sport' with Sport."

As a collective, we need to state where Guyana wishes to take its separate sporting disciplines; and by when. For example, how many medals must its track and field athletes aim for in the year 2024; can its footballers qualify for the 2022 World Cup in Moscow; how can our boxers regain their dominance in the Caribbean and internationally before the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo? And similar questions need to be asked for all the other disciplines. These goals must encompass both local and diaspora athletes and be individually determined by national associations based on their actual developmental positions currently. These aims and objectives must be realistic and achievable. And we must prioritize and focus the use of our resources – human and material.

Towards this end, a national sports planning committee should be formed, comprising elements from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, the several sporting bodies, the Guyana Olympic Association, the National Sports Commission and the Private Sector.

The Government must also assume a pivotal supportive role to both its commitment to sports and the objectives of the planning committee. These supports must translate into the provision of generous and realistic budget allocations in addition to subsidized access to sporting equipment. National associations should undertake continual fundraising to complement these central government injections as well as obtain dedicated private sector sponsors.

In the light of this sports infrastructure and support, not only would Guyana have its goals and objectives set out and administered, but it would also have access to adequate and necessary funding in order to:

- a. develop local sporting facilities to international standards in high schools, the university and in public spaces.
- b. create and expand local sporting activities to include our diaspora athletes
- c. invite diaspora athletes to represent Guyana in local, regional and international events
- d. send local athletes to regional and international competitions
- e. employ the technical expertise required to train our athletes locally and in the diaspora
- f. increase the regularity of competitions between local athletes and those from the diaspora
- g. Provide some administrative and financial assistance to athletes as necessary.

However, the local planning committee should be mirrored by a similar committee in the diaspora. Even though the diaspora sports planning committee may not have direct contact with the government, at least it will have an appointed or selected representative for each of the sporting disciplines, coordinating the activities and administration of both the diaspora athletes and the logistical arrangements with the local sports committee. These officials would be clear on the overall vision and mission and be encouraged to raise funds to supplement small stipends and transportation etc expenses for themselves and their athletes. They would also liaison with clubs, high schools and universities and be aware of athletes' schedules and their performances.

In conclusion, unless the Guyana Government significantly contributes to the development of sports, unless there is the formation of a national sports planning committee, unless there is parallel formation of a diaspora sports planning committee to liaison closely with the local one, it would be extremely difficult to get diaspora athletes to succeed at the regional, international and global levels.

On the other hand, with these arrangements in place, local and diaspora athletes in their sports disciplines would be able to compete optimally to bring glory to Guyana.



Chris Thompson is a former Special Forces officer in the Guyana Defence Force and is now Chairman of the Guyana Association of Private Security Organizations (GAPSO).



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**WHO TOLD THE OTHER
"YOU'RE THE GREATEST."**

DIASPORA news

Dear Readers and Supporters

The Editorial Board and Editor of the Diaspora Times thank you for your continued interest in the innovative and cutting edge stories that we try to publish every month.

We are creating a website that we hope will be the 'Go To' site in the social media and internet firmament. We will carry features and issues on the Guyanese, Caribbean and wider set of national diasporas, with illuminating stories on how best Diasporas can be utilized to the mutual benefit of members and their countries. We will also highlight the achievements of those abroad as well as important developments in-country.

The website will carry blogs and links to other sites, especially with informational and investment content. We hope to make it an active and interactive site that we hope you will visit and feel compelled to contribute to, on one level or another.

The site will be fully operational by November 28.

Best wishes and again our sincere thanks for your continued support.

Desmond Roberts
Editor

DIASPORA

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NEW BOOK – ABOUT WHOEVER

By Karen Sinclair

About Whoever

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by

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Author Karen Sinclair earned her Master of Science degree from The City University in London, England, Bachelor of Social Sciences degree from the University of Guyana and Certificate in Lay Ministry from the United Methodist Church in America. Karen lives in New Jersey, USA.

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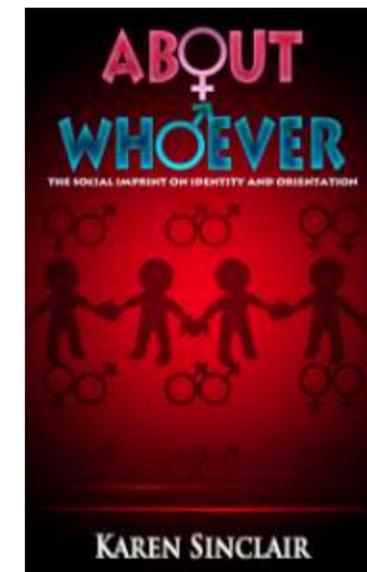
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Sinclair is an Analyst who contributes in the social sciences and humanities. Her recent book, **About Whoever, The social imprint on Identity and orientation**, attempts to bridge the gulf separating conflicting views on the matter using techniques of analysis. In addition to the social analysis in **About Whoever**, Karen has written other books including *Little Polka Sock*, an illustrated children's story book that seeks to support socioemotional nurturing through story telling. It is her vision to contribute to progress and harmony in various dimensions of human life. Karen lives in New Jersey, USA, with her family.

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