

DIASPORA

TIMES INTERNATIONAL



MARCH 2017

Cover Photo
Phagwah - National Stadium

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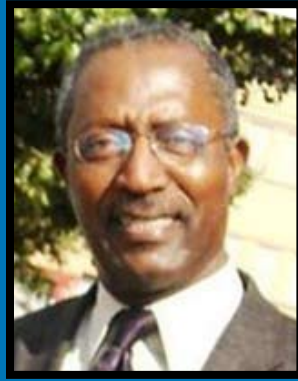
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EDITORIAL - MARCH 2017

THE NEW REALITY



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

Having recently spent a few months in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, I feel compelled (I nearly wrote 'competent') to write on the minor and not so minor things I observed during our Diaspora Times hiatus of the near childbearing period of eight months. My March 2017 editorial highlights this time of rebirth and our need for reflection on what has taken place in the interim.

The American social, political, economic and cultural milieu has been completely upended by the election to the presidency of a 'hurry up', 'keeping it real' businessman, as a result of professional politicians being both unwilling and unable to recognize that the 'middle class' American public was tired of being ignored and manipulated by a group of selfish shills for big business. The irony is that 'poor people tend to vote against their best interests': flash crowding into La Casa Blanca a slick self-promoting rich man who has now shamelessly installed a clique of generals and billionaires, uninterested in anything other than becoming more powerful and rich. Moreover, there is an attitude of 'Devil Takes the Hindmost' where Darwin's axiom is distorted to have the strongest survive. This translates to America First, regardless of the destruction of the American and global environment; making the recidivist call for outdated technology; returning to a revanchist isolationism while using force indiscriminately against weaker opponents abroad; giving the weak in America the option to access but to fend for themselves on health, housing

and education; driving out of the country the less than real and honorary whites; and unravelling and disrupting global arrangements for trade and mutual defense. All of these actions seem acceptable to the new president's supporters once the man keeps his less than thoughtful promises. But there have been early setbacks, making us long for the professional politicians; and happy that the courts are still reasonably protective of our basic standards.

What seems possible is the rebuilding of the inner cities, creating new jobs and modernizing the ageing infrastructure of the United States. Indeed, investing in upgrading and educating will allow America to maintain its economic and cultural leadership of the world.

In Guyana South, there has been a mixed scorecard. The president has been accused of installing his military friends while being uncharacteristically unmilitary in forgiving 'criminals' in the midst of a perceived upsurge in crime; being too soft on inefficient and less than transparent ministers of cabinet; and for not putting all the alleged thieving opposition and other public servants behind bars and throwing away the keys, despite a plethora of inquiries and investigations.

What I saw, however, was a president attempting to remove the burden of the unfounded claims of our neighbor to our territory thus permitting the full exploitation of our resources; central government

attempting with great patience to return power to local governments and the civil service, notwithstanding their many learning snafus over financial stewardship; laying a foundation of sanitation and properly constructed buildings and roads; restoring the events and practices we should maintain and value as a nation – national awards, constitutionally mandated commissions among others; deservingly placing emphasis on education as the centerpiece of our national policy; establishing several initiatives and organizations to train and equip youths to make meaningful contributions to the public weal; laying down taxation and other solid enforcement

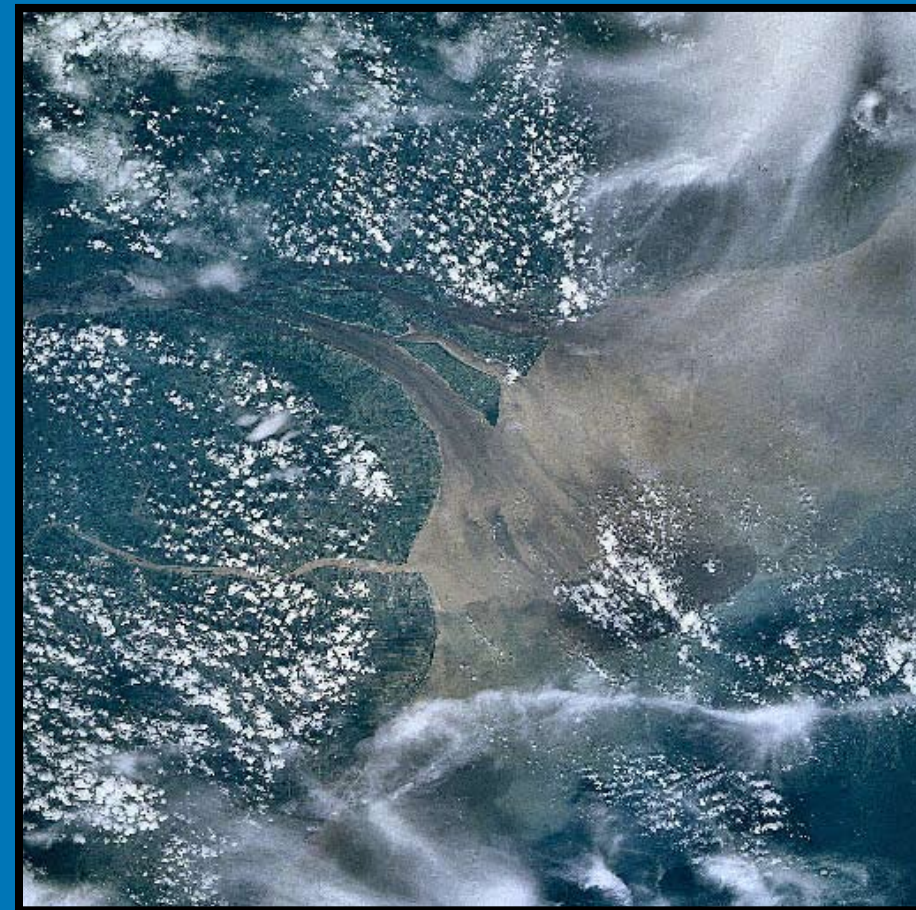
standards before windfall wealth descends upon us; and dismantling that criminal aspect of the underground economy for which Guyana had become infamous. All of these actions have been undertaken with little fanfare, so that the cleaner drains, better surfaced roads and fewer crime-sponsored executions have become base line positions that the population now takes for granted.

What has also not been quantified is the 'huge mess' that the Granger Coalition inherited that had to be sanitized and rehabilitated as funds allowed: ill-conceived and expensive projects from hydro to bandwidth to sugar factories; wildly unsuccessful and heavily

subsidized national economic actors; badly constructed buildings from schools to conference centers to housing projects to airports and airstrips; major foreign investors who had not lived up to the terms of their agreements; the disorderly ordering of materials and supplies; the deep hopelessness manifesting itself in several alarmingly violent ways; a corrupt public service based on the growing inequality in the society; a plethora of issues in the health and environmental areas.

How we can get past this tit for tat politics is a function of nationalists prepared to sacrifice political leverage and longevity to adopt a more robust, inclusive, collaborative style, including making full use of the exposure, experience and expertise of members of the Diaspora. We need every Guyanese to contribute to our successfully leapfrogging our technological and economic problems, so that we finally exploit our forever talked about but truly vast potential.

By Desmond Roberts



Part of Guyana coast as seen from spacecraft (NASA)

THINGS THAT BOTHER ME



By Kojo Nnamdi

Maybe it's because I've spent most of my professional life in Communications, but it bothers me that the Guyana government does not have an Explainer-In-Chief.

Sometimes it's possible to have a President who is an explainer-in-chief. In the US, where I live, Presidents Obama and Bill Clinton have a flair for explaining complicated issues and decisions with a great deal of clarity. President Reagan, often referred to as The Great Communicator, had a facility for explaining complex issues in simple terms. Whether one agreed with any of these individuals or not, they generally helped Americans (especially their supporters) to understand their approach to decisions.

Not so in Guyana. It bothers me that Ministers and other leaders of government institutions seem to feel no need to explain their decisions, or are defensive and dismissive when asked to do so by the media. Transparency is arguably the most important element in a government's credibility. Secrecy and opaqueness foster distrust, even in the most well-intentioned endeavours.

Look, it's unrealistic to expect every government leader or official to be a font of free flowing information. Some people are just not built that way, not trained in communications, and simply don't have that orientation.

What's not unrealistic is the expectation that in every single Ministry of Government, in

every policy making body of government, there should be empowered staff members whose expertise is Public Relations and Communications. In today's hyper-connected high speed communications environment, NOT having such staff is a prescription for disaster. That's right, disaster, which may not be a strong enough word.



Why? Because, in the world of social media, of ubiquitous cameras and recording devices, on our streets and in our pockets, optics are everything. It's no longer what a situation is, but how it looks.

So when I say "empowered staff members," I mean professionals who have the authority, coming directly from the President or the Prime Minister's Office, to say, for instance, "Mr. or Ms. Minister, what's the story behind this contract, this hire, this trip, this relationship, this event? You may have good reasons for the action taken, but unless we can explain it clearly to the public, the optics are terrible, it can embarrass the Administration, and I'm going to have to tell the President that." Or something like it.

For too long Guyana has allowed Ministers and party leaders to exercise authority over professionally trained communicators, in offices and in government controlled media. For too long Public Relations has been considered an occasionally necessary irritant. For too long there has been a political culture in which winners object that media have the nerve to question their actions, or simply dismiss such questions as media bias.

Well, media is no longer just the ink-stained wretches who toiled for the local newspaper. It's all of us, with our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts, who spread the words that might have first appeared in the newspaper or on local radio or TV, but within minutes have travelled across the world. You can try to control that, as some governments do, but the cat's out of the bag, that horse has left the barn; and those clichés are universal truths today.



Convention Centre

So until the Guyana government figures out that it needs explainers-in-chief, it will be courting disaster and catastrophe, because, one more cliché: The Road to Hell is paved with Good Intentions.

And that bothers me.

Kojo Nnamdi.

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

IN THE NEWS FOR MARCH 2017

MEETING THE DIASPORA:

President Granger, functioning as the Chairman of Caricom for 2017 and in his official capacity as President of Guyana, has met with members of the Guyanese Diaspora at several well attended functions in Barbados, St. Vincent and the Bahamas.

SHOULD PRESIDENTS SERVE MORE THAN TWO TERMS?:

The Guyana Government will appeal to the Caribbean Court of Justice hoping to overturn the majority decision last month of Guyana's Court of Appeal, which ruled that only a referendum could prevent a former president from electing to run for a third term after demitting office after two consecutive terms in office. Article 90 Sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) of the 1980 Guyana Constitution had previously seemed to have been accepted by both main political parties as limiting former presidents to just two terms, until a citizen challenged the restriction, based on Article 17 of the 2000/1 Amended constitution, on his personal choice of president.



Parliament Building

PRESIDENTIAL IMMUNITY:

With the recent 'questioning' at the Special Organized Crime Unit (SOCU) facilities of senior former members of the now opposition party (including two former presidents and a Head of the Presidential Secretariat) by members of SOCU, the question of the immunity granted presidents has been given its much deserved prominence. With members of the public holding widely differing views on what scope of actions in Articles 180 and 182 count for immunity when former presidents are in or out of office. There was an attempt to interpret and link the presidential package of benefits with his/her requirement to act with 'presidential decorum' and refrain from too direct involvement in the political fray. While the latter might not have a legal basis, it is worth considering the protocols of behavior and conduct that should be established for and expected from former presidents after finally leaving office with a substantial pension and benefits that are meant to make life comfortable for the outgoing highest office holder.

APPOINTING THE COMMISSIONER OF ELECTIONS FOR GUYANA:

The constitutional ropes held the ring once more so that the battle for the procedures to appoint the Guyana Elections Commissioner could be fought. Was a judge, judge-qualified or potentially qualified judge be the main criterion for appointing the Commissioner; or were six fit and proper judge-like persons to be nominated by the Leader of the Opposition, from among whom the president would select one to shoulder the responsibility for overseeing the proper management of the election process in 2020. The original list of six persons was woefully inadequate, so there will be another round of submissions of the names of six good men and women; or the president may be forced to find one by himself.



Elections Commission Building

OIL DON'T SPOIL:

Prime Minister Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago once famously said, "Oil Don't Spoil." However, too many cooks might make an oily broth spoil. After receiving advice from Exxon and other potential operators, businessmen of all stripes, the opposition parties, civil society, other Third World countries, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and every Guyanese from Alaska to Antarctica, the government is trying to fashion policy that provides the best financial deal for Guyanese over the long term - from exploration to exploitation of this potentially game-changing commodity. The best management advice might have come from some of the more rueful and contemplative Trinidadian officials who attended in their numbers the first Guyana Oil and Gas Association (GOGA) Conference held at the Marriott hotel from March 26 - 28, 2017.



Umana Yana

THE GUYANESE DIASPORA

By Dhanpaul Narine

The Guyanese diaspora is big, booming and articulate. We find Guyanese even in the White House. A Guyanese protected the last President of the United States and some years ago Deborah Misir rose to become Assistant Secretary of Housing in George W. Bush's administration. We are not too far from the Oval Office! Both of these individuals see themselves as Guyanese to the core. In fact, Deborah's husband is a white American, Grant Lally, who ran for Congress and describes himself as a Berbician!

There will always be a Guyanese diaspora. Diaspora, to use a colloquial expression, refers to 'scatteration'; and in the case of Guyana this won't stop. Guyanese love to 'walkabout' and are all over the world. The concern is to what extent are the unique Guyanese values and expressions, as we know them, going to endure in the new societies; a problem not uniquely Guyanese and faces other migrant societies as well.



In the New York City area, and particularly in Richmond Hill, there are over 200,000 Guyanese. This is a significant number, making Guyanese consistently the fifth largest immigrant group in the city. The Guyanese diaspora is powerful. It also ranks high as a property-owning group. Here are some of the identifiers, the bonds, the values that are uniquely Guyanese that will be transmitted to the next generation.

1. Twenty-five years ago a group of individuals (myself included) sat and planned a parade to celebrate Phagwah. The first parades were small and had 40 attendees. Today, the parade attracts over 100,000 in the streets of Queens. According to the 'New York Times' our Phagwah Parade is the biggest in North America. A few years ago NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg attended. On its planning Committee are several young persons; and the local schools and colleges attend with their banners.

2. The diaspora needs religion, culture and the economy, among other things, to sustain and nourish it. In the Queens area there are hundreds of Mandirs, churches, and mosques where both young and old worship.
3. Education is another area in which great strides are being made. Several Guyanese students top their schools and colleges and go on to good jobs. The curriculum in some of these schools include the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. Guyanese studies are taught and teachers turn up at our parades and other functions to speak with a young audience. One pleasing aspect is that Guyanese children in Queens are involved in eco-environment activity: they clean the beaches and their neighborhoods.
4. Guyanese parents and others utilise educational opportunities by attending General Educational Development (GED) classes. I have been teaching the GED for 26 years: free classes are offered by the City and schools become learning sites in the evenings. Many parents go to college to better themselves.
5. Communication is essential if the character of the home country is to be reinforced. Radio, TV and print media carry programs about Guyana and the social media make communication within the diaspora easier than before. Links with Guyana remain strong and there are never enough planes to take Guyanese home. We do need to find a reliable airline!
6. Guyanese 'DAYS' are celebrated in New York in various parks with great revelry. The last Hampshire Reunion in Baisley Park, New York, had around 10,000 persons of all ages. It is interesting to note that in London there is also a Guyana Day for the third year in a row. The organizations and associations that celebrate their 'DAYS' reconnect with their villages in Guyana and help to improve conditions there.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. The Government of Guyana must establish a Ministry or Department to handle Diaspora affairs. *(Editor's note: There is a two person division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.)*
- b. One function of that department should be to harness the talents of college graduates, encouraging voluntary work in their areas of expertise. This can last from three weeks to a month. It would be amazing to see the innovation and ideas our young people will bring to development. Eventually there may be professionals that may want to stay and make a career in Guyana and this should be encouraged. Cheddi Jagan had proposed inviting suitable Guyanese lawyers to be sworn in as magistrates to help clear the backlog of court cases. But Cheddi is no more and the idea went with him.
- c. The Diaspora needs to let the government know that it can influence policy in Guyana. Guyanese politicians are all over Brooklyn and Queens at election time, collecting money and making all kinds of promises. The diaspora should hold them to account.
- d. The Diaspora needs to make institutional linkages with the wider political system in their respective areas. In New York, the sizable Guyanese population should register to vote and to elect a Guyanese to the City Council or the State Assembly. *(Editor's note: State Assemblywoman Roxanne Persaud was elected.)*

By Dhanpaul Narine



St George's Cathedral Georgetown

FLAG



MASHRAMANI



RAISING

THE VALUE OF GUYANA'S RAINFOREST, LAST OF PRISTINE AMAZONIA; STORIES CAPT. ROY TOLD ME

By Joan Cambridge

The Guyana Rainforest environment had captured my imagination long before ever setting foot on Yukuriba Heights, or even meeting Ernest Roy Bowen jnr (Capt. Roy). I recall being fascinated by accounts of the pioneering life of gold and diamond miners depicted in The Porkknocker Magazine, edited by my late friend and colleague, the journalist Oliver Hunter. The Porkknocker was a significant information resource for creation of my children's celebration of the rainforest, a play entitled: Tingaling-a-Ling, School-Bell Ring; D Bush Tun Rain-forest.

After finding myself at Yukuriba Falls, my imagination was farther stimulated by the realization that I was actually living in the milieu of rainforest residents centuries before me; my African Ancestors who 'Came Before Columbus', before the Atlantic Slave Trade that led to the travesty of the plantation system, and consequently...the condition of marronage. I was intrigued by interpretations of the maroon experience documented in books such as Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas, edited by Richard Price, where I first read about Post Arinda.

During the Dutch occupation of Guyana, several measures were adopted to curb slave desertion, including the establishment of Posts and Forts. The Post which was responsible for the prevention of marronage, were small interior settlements controlled by a civilian or noncommissioned officer with a few white soldiers and some Amerindians. The post holders were expected to keep on good terms with the native Amerindians who were charged with helping to capture and return runaway slaves.

".. You'll find many more rocks with stories, up and down the Essequibo River. Demon Rock is the one with demons that groan like a steamer; then there's Fairmaid Rock. It is said that on a moonlit night you can see the fairmaid sitting upon Fairmaid Rock, combing her hair..."



But the Amerindians did not always co-operate. Sometimes when the runaways were tracked to their hidden hideouts, they had formed allegiances which made the job of the limited number of post holders ineffectual. Capt Roy was a certified Essequibo River Captain of an area from Bartica to Yupukari in the Rupununi. Beside the empirical aspect of nearly two decades of research in the rainforest, the most invaluable measure of my rainforest tutelage was the ability to get into a boat with him and travel up and down the river on a series of stimulating journeys of discovery. He knew exactly where to find The Post Arinda Pot and I anticipated the adventure of setting off in search of a huge copper pot buried in the bumbatika (bush thickets) of that ancient Dutch Post. Sadly, before we could make the trip Captain Roy left (too soon) to join the ancestors, taking with him his knowledge of the exact location of The Post Arinda Pot.

The wellspring of my pride in the value of our motherland is summed up not only in the rich currency of green gold and minerals, or even the potential of oil wealth; but moreover in the significance of things overlooked, simple things like the stories you find in rocks for example...

Paiwori-Kaira Rapid is located in the Essequibo 13 miles above the Potaro River. I was stunned when I first set eyes on it. Capt. Roy had told me the story of the balata boat Captain, Boucher and 35 of his crewmen – bowmen and boat hands – with inboard and outboard engines, ropes and resolute force, who labored over time on this great big boulder (the size a house), but could not dislodge it from its perch on a little rock in Paiwori-Kaira Rapid. You have to see it to believe it.

"Is a Master Mason paste that one there", Captain Roy remarked. You'll find many more rocks with stories, up and down the Essequibo River. Demon Rock is the one with demons that groan like a steamer; then there's Fairmaid Rock. It is said that on a moonlit night you can see the fairmaid sitting upon Fairmaid Rock, combing her hair.



THE VALUE OF GUYANA'S RAINFOREST, LAST OF PRISTINE AMAZONIA; STORIES CAPT. ROY TOLD ME

Downriver from here at Yukuriba Heights, just as described to me...found two huge footprints stamped on two high rocks set far apart – about twenty feet – the left footprint's on one rock...the right on the other. What in the world is that? It's called: Mantrack – "you can call it Woman track, if you want, but since I know it, we been calling it Mantrack or Footprint Rock", Capt. Roy explained....couldn't help wondering when I saw it – did the Himalayan yeti once wander over here or Big-foot, Sasquatch?

By any name you choose to call it, or whatever the explanation of its cause, nothing will ever change the fact that in our Mother Essequibo River in Guyana, you'll find two huge rocks stamped with those two footprints, like a giant's mighty gait – as old as forever.

Tiger Jump is another rock, this one in the Siparuni River; it gave its name to a balata bleeders' camp based on the simple fact that a tiger jumped from land unto that rock in the rapids. Yet another rock with a story is – Schooner Bow, named for its shape as is Paddle Rock. On the way upriver to Kurupukari, you are always warned by Amerindians in the boat, not to disrespect paddle rock by looking directly in its face; so, like they, I turned my head and looked away lest it "tek yuh shadow" – brings bad luck – torrential rain, a fever, or worse....

The name Jane Five is imprinted on a rock at Tumatumari. She was one of those bush women... an essential part of 'bush' lore, whose contribution must be acknowledged if the full, true history of our hinterland is to be told; women like Auntie Pokie who died the day President Burnham visited Kurupung during his re-election campaign in 1973. That day I stood with Forbes Burnham, with porkknockers and tributors, and my husband Julian Mayfield... The President's Senior Political Adviser, in a camp at Kurupung as one minute's silence was observed, out of respect for Auntie Pokie.



AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE REST OF THE WORLD

THE VALUE OF GUYANA'S RAINFOREST

I believe Guyanese are not fully aware of the importance of Guyana's Rainforest...its importance to the rest of the world as The Last of Pristine Amazonia, where global scientists at Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development are seeking answers to Sustainable life on Planet Earth. The tragedy of this ignorance about the scale of this resource is that we tend to be much too casual about its protection and preservation, believing that as Guyanese, we are the established, undisputed heirs to our patrimony. We need to think again. I believe also, that it's the responsibility of The Arts And The Humanities, through professionals occupying a creative space such as we are currently preparing at Yukuriba Creative Farming Community, Yukuriba Heights, to offer some added interpretations of the possibilities of the Guyana rainforest environment that could be of value to the nation's Eco Tourist Industry. We will assume the role of 'conscience' of the rainforest.

by Joan Cambridge

WHAT'S IN A NAME

By **J. Peter Chowritmootoo**

"Where are you from?"

"The Cooperative Republic of Guyana"

"What is that?"

"That is the name of the country of my birth" I continued.

"Do you know that England is not the same as Great Britain? Well, England is part of the island that is Great Britain; Great Britain is England, Scotland and Wales."

"Then, what is the United Kingdom?"

"That is England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland"

So what in a name? Plenty.

Have you ever heard of Magdalenenburg? Magdalenenburg was a Dutch sugar plantation established in the early Seventeenth century. On the 23rd of February, 1763, the enslaved Africans captured the plantation and thereafter spread a revolution to establish a country free from the dominance of a European power. It is significant to note that this was fourteen years before the American colonials fired their first shot at Concord, Massachusetts to free themselves from British colonialism, and forty five years earlier than the establishment of the first free nation of African descendants in the New World, Haiti, the second nation state in the Western Hemisphere, the United States being the first.

Names are intriguing, especially names of countries. The name The Cooperative Republic of Guyana conjures much more than a political entity; it is more than a

geo-political map designation. The Cooperative Republic of Guyana is a political philosophy enshrined in the name of our Motherland, the land of our birth.

The designation could have been Guyana, the native word that means 'land of many waters'. There are as many rivers and other streams in Suriname and Cayenne as in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. There are many more rivers in Venezuela and Brazil. In fact, the land surface of rivers and other waters in Brazil is greater than the land area of The Cooperative Republic of Guyana. So standing alone, Guyana could not suffice. The Republic of Guyana sounds feasible and, for the last two decades and more, that was the name used locally, even in our schools and international fora, to refer to the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

So what does the name 'The Cooperative Republic of Guyana' reflect?

The Cooperative Republic of Guyana speaks to me of the first of our six peoples and their early way of life and living. In today's world, human survival appears not to be as dependent upon the close interdependence shown among our first people. But the lessons of man's close relationship with his natural environment and the perpetual need to respect the relationship are embedded in the cooperative spirit of the first people.

Africans were captured and enslaved for hundreds of years in the sugar, cocoa, coffee and cotton plantations of the then colonies of Essequibo, Berbice and Demerary. When slavery ended in 1838, the freed Africans cooperatively mustered their resources - financial and human - and began the village movement. The collective communities cooperatively bought out abandoned plantations and established socio-economic entities.

With the loss of slave labor on the sugar plantation, the British plantation owners re introduced slavery and called it indentureship. They brought in Portuguese, Chinese and Indians to work their

plantations. Indians adapted and thereafter British Guiana was inundated with Indian indentured labor. The practice ended in 1917 after the inhumane practices of British plantocracy were exposed. The Indians' survival in the hostile economic environment was due primarily to parsimony and the family collectivity, the extended family, a socio familial adaptation to the cooperative endeavors of the two antecedent peoples of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

The modern struggle against British colonialism and early twentieth century brutish capitalism bred a renewed calling for cooperative endeavor. It sought to solidify the struggling masses into a cohesive economic political force. The spontaneous collectives of industrial strikes and work stoppages developed into a pseudo political cooperative, the modern trade union. It was the workers labor cooperative that germinated into the earliest political mass force that led to political independence. Today the Cooperative Republic of Guyana boasts of half century of existence. Its essence is not lost to political divisiveness and ethnic distrust. It remains steadfast as the Golden Arrowhead points its philosophical thrust to economic

independence, the end of poverty, social justice and equity in the distribution of our national resources. We must remind ourselves on every Republic Day by our personal use of our nation's name, The Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

The naming of our country was not an endeavor in politico literary niceties, nor was it an attempt to mimic a precedent. There was no racial preference to highlight one people or another. The name 'The Cooperative Republic of Guyana' gives the Six Peoples one philosophical direction, one spiritual sameness. It accentuates the pridefulness of a historical past, and reminds of a nation's task to a cohesive endeavor to weld its resources for its posterity. Its potency is in its truism. That's what in the name 'The Cooperative Republic of Guyana'. This was not a wishful dream but a vision of true visionary.

J. Peter Chowritmootoo

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

African Proverbs

WOLOF-SENEGAMBIA

- If the dog is not at home he barks not
- The house roof fights with the rain but he who is sheltered ignores it
- Without fingers the hand would be a spoon
- A woman who has lost her rivals has no sorrow
- A subjectless king is no king
- Toasted seed jump, but they always fall towards their companions
- The voice of the pigeon on the spit is not the voice of the pigeon on the tree
- There are people who place a basket on your head to see what you carry
- Teeth serve as a fence to the mouth
- The dog that has left the house has no master
- A razor cannot shave itself
- The child hates him who gives it all it wants
- Curiosity often leads men into bitterness
- He who covers himself with cotton, should not approach the fire
- The bird flies, but always returns to earth
- When the mouse laughs at the cat, there is a hole
- Trust not a woman; she will tell you what she has just told her companion
- He who puts aside his spoon to draw from the pot with his hand ,does not do so twice
- The tree which is not taller than you are, cannot shade you
- If a woman speaks two words, take one and leave the other
- It is the heart that carries one to hell or to heaven

- Whatever be thy intimacy, never give your heart to a woman
- If a man tell his secrets to his wife, she will bring him into the ways of Satan
- If thou art poor, do not make a rich man thy friend

ASHANTI

- Nobody cooks food and places it in the road to seek a guest
- The monkey says that which has gone in his belly is his; what is in his mouth is not his.
- Poverty makes a free man become a slave
- String added to string will bind even a leopard
- Though you are hungry, you do not eat with both hands
- When you see the eyes of a crab, you will say they are splinters of wood
- He whom a serpent has bitten dreads a slow worm
- Though a mouse were as big as a bullock, yet it would be the slave of the cat
- One eye does not look at the same time on a monkey and on a baboon
- If a needle could sew, it would not have a hole on its back
- The poor man’s ivory is the hog’s tooth
- When the mouth stumbles, it is worse than the foot
- A crooked stick makes us know the carpenter
- When the cat dies, the mice rejoice
- When you are not sleepy, you say “I have no sleeping place”
- If you cannot dance, you will say” the drum is not agreeable”

YORUBA

- You met a hen in the market and hastened to purchase her;had she been worth keeping, the owner would not have sold her
- He who disappoints another is unworthy to be trusted
- Peace is the father of friendship
- He who marries a beauty, marries trouble
- One who claps his hands for the fool to dance, is no better than the fool
- When the hawk hovers over the yard, the owner of the fowls feel uneasy
- No one expose fowls on top of a rock in the sight of a hawk
- With shoes one can get on in the midst of thorns
- Beg for help and you will meet with rebuff; ask for alms and you will meet with misers
- The trader never confesses that he has sold all his goods; but when asked, he will only say “Trade was a little better”
- The fly heeds not death, eating is all to him
- Consideration is the first born, calculation the next, wisdom the third
- You have not obtained the loaf, and you began to prepare your stew
- You cannot shave a man’s head in his absence
- Ordinary people are as common as grass, but good people are dearer than an eye

- A man with a cough cannot conceal himself
- A sieve never sifts flower by itself
- One monkey does not like another to get a belly full
- A sharp word is as tough as a bow-string.A sharp word cannot be cured,but a wound may.
- There is no medicine against old-age
- The bite of a sandfly is not so bad as poverty
- Poverty never visits a poor man without visiting his children also
- He who annoys another only teaches him to strenthen himself
- He who knows a matter beforehand confuses a liar
- Though a man may miss other things,he never misses his mouth
- Not to aid one in distress is to kill him in your heart
- Every man’s character is good in his own eyes
- A bribe blinds the judge’s eyes, for bribes never speak the truth
- The pot lid is always badly off, for the pot gets all the sweets and the lid nothing but the steam
- If you are not able to build a house at once,you first build a shed

From: Wit and wisdom from West Africa: A book of proverbial philosophy, idioms, enigmas,and laconisms by Sir Richard Francis Burton 1865
Publisher New York, Negro Universities Press

THE LGBTIQ STRUGGLE FOR CITIZENSHIP (IN GUYANA AND THE CARIBBEAN)

By **Vidyaratha Kissoon**

LGBTIQ – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer

On Monday 27 February 2017 Georgetown Magistrate Dylon Bess shut Ronnel Trotman out of the Courtroom. Ronnel Trotman, called Petronella, is a transgender Guyanese citizen and was the complainant in an assault case.

Less than a week after Guyanese celebrated Mashramani with 'dignity, liberty and greater Unity', citizen Petronella and other LGBTIQ citizens were reminded that Guyana's Unity excludes them.

Magistrate Dylon Bess was not sanctioned by those responsible for the Justice system. The Magistrate is working in a cultural and legal context which says that human beings are born either male or female and that normal is heterosexual. Citizens who did not find themselves in these two categories are born into a State which does not punish public officials who discriminate against them.

The laws against consensual same-sex activity and against cross-dressing for an 'improper purpose' give permission for homophobia in Guyana.

Punishment of LGBTIQ citizens is the reason for some of the records of LGBTIQ life in British Guiana.

BLISTERING THE PENIS, PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT

In 1898, the authorities on the Mersey punished Mohangoo and Nobibux for sodomy. The two men were on their way to British Guiana to work on the sugar plantations. Nobibux was put in irons and the authorities blistered Mohangoo's penis and put him to scrub the decks.

In 1903, the authorities recorded Rukmini as Hermaphrodite on the Clyde. In 1959, the Guiana Graphic wrote about an all-male 'Wedding of the Year' in Charlestown, Georgetown. In 1996, there was a report about a post-mortem in New Amsterdam which revealed that Caroline Vaughn was "half man, half woman". In 1968, Magistrate Keith Massiah sent Compton Bowen for psychiatric treatment. The police arrested and charged Christopher Bowen for wearing a miniskirt and "twisting his waist from side to side like a female." In 1978, there was some

acknowledgement that sexuality and gender identity are fluid: a 'sex-change' operation was done at the Public Hospital Georgetown. In 1979, the police arrested Wendell Brotherson and another man and charged them with buggery. The defence lawyer, Stanley Moore argued that "it was wrong for the law to seek to suppress the natural sexual urgings of individuals with homosexual tendencies."

CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES AND LEGAL CHANGE

In 2001, the first attempts were made to address Constitutional and legal change. President Jagdeo refused to assent to the Constitution Amendment bills which would include sexual orientation as grounds for protection against discrimination. In 2010, Quincy McEwan, Seon Clarke, Joseph Fraser and Seyon Persaud and SASOD filed a Constitutional challenge against the 'cross-dressing laws'. Chief Justice (ag) Ian Chang ruled that cross-dressing was illegal only for 'an improper purpose' but that did not stop Magistrate Bess from closing the Court door on Petronella.

Other cases in the Caribbean have been filed. Caleb Orozco challenged the sodomy laws in Belize. Maurice Tomlinson challenged the laws in Belize and Trinidad which state that homosexuals could not enter those countries. Maurice Tomlinson has also filed a case against the Jamaican sodomy laws. In Trinidad and Tobago, Jason Jones has also filed a case against the sodomy laws.

The political parties in the May 2015 elections in Guyana promised to address discrimination against LGBTIQ citizens. This inclusion of LGBTIQ citizens as a manifesto promise was probably a first for Caribbean elections. The political parties, though, have remained silent about the closing of the Court door on Petronella. Despite the strong activism of organisations and individuals in Guyana, there have been no serious moves by the State to recognise LGBTIQ citizens as equal to any other Guyanese.

(An interactive version of this article is at <http://churchroadman.blogspot.com/2017/03/diasporalgbtqi.html>)

NEW BOOK – ABOUT WHOEVER

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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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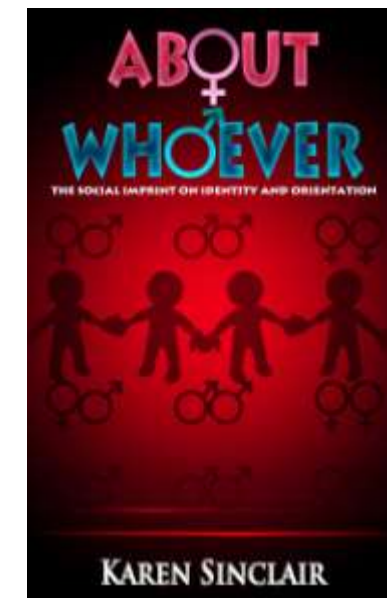
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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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REFLECTIONS ON ISRAEL



To some, mention of the name ISRAEL conjures up images of the Holy Land with place names such as Armageddon, Capernaum, The Jordan River, Nazareth, The Sea of Galilee, Mount Sinai, Old Jerusalem and revered sites such as the Wailing Wall, The Al Aksa Mosque, The Bahai Temple, The Garden of Gethsemane, The Mount of Olives and the Mount of Beatitudes. To others, ISRAEL, officially the State of Israel, is a well developed country with modern cities such as Haifa, Tel-A-Viv, Eilat and New Jerusalem, a country boasting an international hub of computer and bio-technologies; a country of world class educational and

research institutions such as the Weizmann Institute, the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Such is the emphasis on education and research that the Jewish people worldwide have produced a disproportionately large number of Nobel Prize winners. In the midst of all this, Israel has carved itself a Jewish homeland. Though beset with many wars, including the present day Palestinian conflicts, Israel has withstood the test of time and succeeded in developing its economy through a strong agricultural and industrial base.

My direct introduction to Israel began in 1963 on a four year

Israeli Government scholarship to study agricultural engineering at The Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. I returned to Israel in 2000 for a familiarization visit. June 2017 marks fifty years since my graduation from the Technion and, coincidentally, fifty years since what is now known as the Israel/ Arab six-day war.

I arrived in Israel three weeks prior to the commencement of university classes. That exposed me to my first lesson in Israeli time management. To the Dean of Foreign Students that amounted to at least one hundred and fifty man-hours of productive time. After due consultation, I was off to join a work team at a kibbutz (pl. kibbutzim). A kibbutz is simply defined as a communalistic settlement where no one owns anything but everyone owns everything. Our assigned kibbutz specialised in plantation and orchard crops. Other kibbutzim can be industrial, food processing, educational, healthcare, manufacturing etc. Members of the kibbutz serve voluntarily and are rewarded with a stipend, boarding, and modest housing. In most cases, education is free up to secondary level.

The Kibbutz working day for our team was from 5:00am to 2:00pm. Our assignment was to work in the banana plantation: cutting, loading and carrying bunches of bananas on our shoulders to a waiting trailer; some bunches weighing as much as seventy pounds. Here, my 'country boy' upbringing and my stint in the Queens College Cadet Corps at Tacama training base well equipped me for the tasks at hand. The key to success in Kibbutz life is dedication and self-reliance. The team leader has the unenviable task of leading by example, working even harder than the members of his group. So respected is the character of the kibbutznik (a member of the kibbutz) that many advance to high positions in the political, business, and military leadership of Israel.

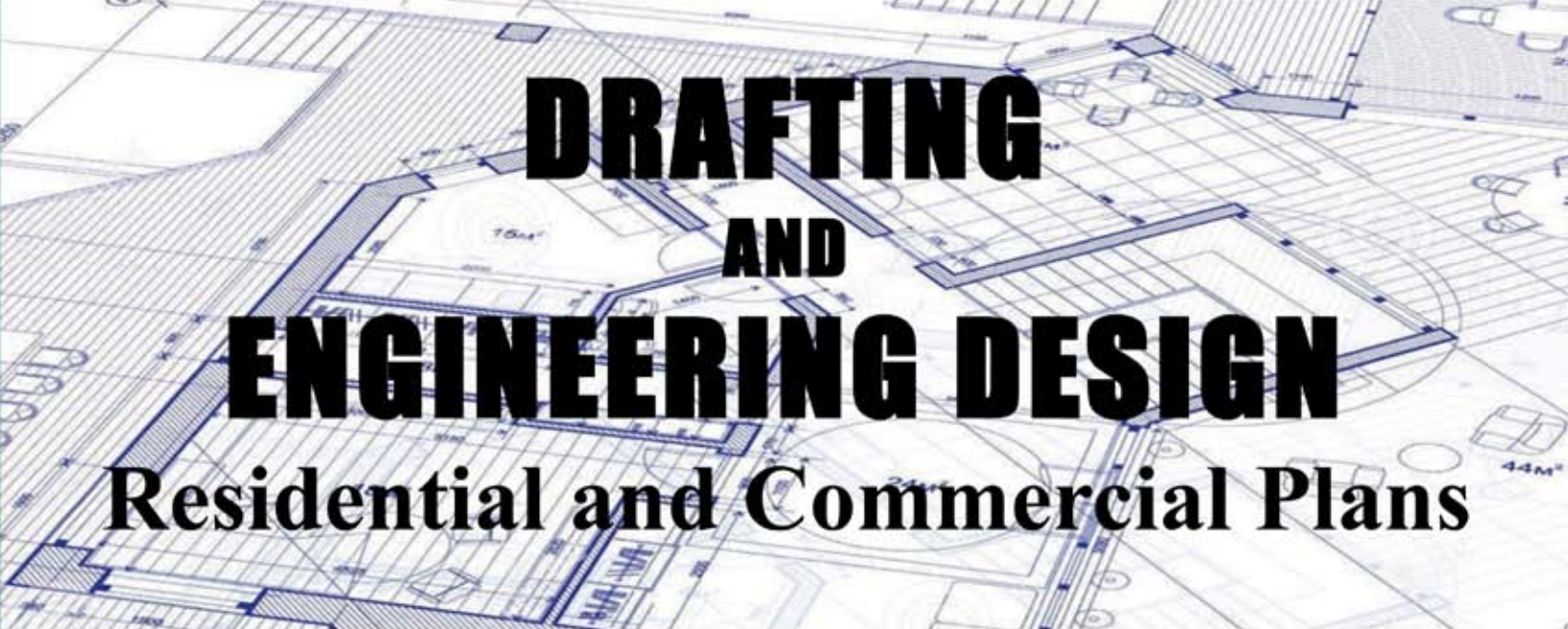
The population of Israel is about ten times that of Guyana. In area it is just about one-tenth. Its economy is technologically advanced especially in the agricultural and industrial sectors. There is military conscription for most able bodied males and females. This national service helped to create a very disciplined work force. Israel has limited natural resources in potash, copper ore and natural gas. It also has limited arable land and fresh water. To

counter these deficiencies Israel undertook a most ambitious and gigantic project of transporting fresh water from the Sea of Galilee in the north of the country to the Negev desert, a distance of about eighty miles.

Can there be future meaningful Israel/Guyana cooperation? In the private world the answer is a resounding yes. The Israeli/Palestinian conflict poses the biggest constraint in the political world. And yes, where do we stand? I know I cannot stand with power and dominance over those without it, no matter how the latter choose to fight for it. The lessons of human advances need to be properly contextualised if we are to keep advancing in ways that do not harm our collective development and not destroy the collective spirit. We all matter in the greater scheme of things.

By Abraham David





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