

AfroPanamanian Newsletter



English opens doors. Read the Newsletter

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July 2011

Donation

MARCUS GARVEY



Controversy

Anecdotes

Poetry

LOS AMIGOS :
Por la superación de la Etnia Negra

A group of friends, in Panama, decided to join forces to work on the rescue of values, customs and cultural traditions bequeathed to us through our ancestors. These have been displaced by others, thus losing a large part of our Black Heritage. We are evaluating all these forgotten traditions and values and highlighting figures as examples for future generations.

“For Black history to be done right, we must do it ourselves.” Edward Gaskin

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**The editor is not responsible for the
opinions expressed by our collaborators**

Cover Page: The stamp which appears on the cover was proposed to the Canal Zone Government by Mr. George W. Westerman (r.i.p.) accepted and used as a 10 cent postage stamp for years. Permission for its continuous use was given by his grandnephew, Cecil Reynolds.

Editorial



In commemorating 14 Jullet it should not be hard to remember that Françoise Dominique Toussaint is a corner stone in the freedom of blacks in the New World. Known as L'Ouverture for his ability to appear and disappear, the military and political role he played, led to the independence of Haiti, and served as a model for the other latin colonies in the American continent to follow.

He was a mighty man, stood up to Napoleon and defeated him twice. The success of the Haitian Revolution shook the institution of slavery, and the establishment of Haiti as an independent black state, transformed an entire society of slaves into a free, self-governing people.

Though he was not there to see it come to reality, the French couldn't go against the military might he created, that eventually led Haiti to it's independence from France in 1804.

He should be considered an outstanding hero in black history.

***This year, 2011, declared by the UN the
“Year of the Afrodescendant”, is a an
opportunity to give him the merit he deserves.***

FEEDBACK (from our June issue)

Dear Readers:

Sorry about the technological booboo, when sending out the Newsletter. Glad to see that you are really interested.

Yes, I do look forward to reading the newsletter. I find it a very interesting learning experience.

Thanks to all.

EAG

Inez, this is excellent. Who ever gave you this information is right on the ball. Do you have it in print? I remember all the stores on Calidonia even Victor who worked at the Aurora in Santana. He always gave good prices especially when purchasing shoes for the school year. LOL

Miriam

Dear Sirs, at Afropanamiannewsletter.com. I am very proud of the steps you are taking in demanding the deserved respect for our AfroPanamian presense in Panamá, and equally, the recognition of our accomplishments that has made this country what it is today.

Bless You....EdnKing

Thank you for your nostalgic walk down “memory lane” in recounting a shopping experience on *Avenida Central*. I would include Ben Betesh store, where we would buy cloth for a pants cut or for a suit. The vendor would stand on the sidewalk practically pulling us youngsters to come in, and the radio announcements would say “if it isn’t Ben Betesh don’t buy it, don’t even touch it...”

Best regards, Winston George



Dear Editors:

This issue of your publication was truly a stroll down memory lane.

I was startled to see the photo of the Canal Zone Police on Motorcycle__it brought back a flood of memories; my dad was a member of the Canal Zone Police Force way back then (1940s). When the issue surfaced about equal pay for equal work, the Black policemen were reclassified as "guards", with a change in their uniform.

Professor Emily Butcher’s Glee Club both delighted and inspired us with their extraordinary performances of varied musical offerings. The strains of CHRISTMAS BELLS are ringing in my mind as I pen (on the computer) this note.

Mr. Edward Gaskin was principal of the La Boca Elementary School when I was a student there (grades 4 through 6)! He inspired respect/awe in us children, and as an adult I had the privilege of conversing with him. He certainly was an icon in the Canal Zone labor movement, and what an orator!

And the walk up and down Central Avenue__ the stores (you neglected to mention Zig Zag and Normandy, two of my favorites), the restaurants (I occasionally lunched at Lynn’s while a university student), Central Theater. . . .

What fun to reminisce! I do appreciate your fine newsletter.

Kind regards,

Marion Clarke Martin, MD

*We hope to be able to cause this pleasure often and also to give our young people who become aware of these writings a clear picture of what life was like in our days and those of our ancestors. **The staff***

***Kwanzaa: a cultural holiday,
not a religious one, will be celebrated
right after Christmas each year.
LOS AMIGOS invite other organizations to take one
of the days so that all seven can be celebrated.
Ours will be Dec. 30.***

OLDEN DAYS SAYINGS

Times are hard these days. Some people are “**boxing about**” “**here and there**” “**from pillar to post**” “**fadging for a living**” with the help of civic organizations we pray they won’t “**die in despair**”. The government is of little assistance, “**promises, promises, promises**”. We can barely buy food from the Supermarkets which have replaced the commissaries. Salaries aren’t going very far these days. Even the package boys pack the small amounts we buy in many bags to fool the public.

Calypso sent by Carlos Garnett

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7TBrrz8TD4&feature=youtu.be>

Bits ‘n’ pieces

Sandra Patterson

Panamanian UN delegate George Westerman, was considered by the afro and Asians’ UN delegates to be the best candidate to occupy the vacancy left by the death of Secretary Dag Hammarhsjold (1961).

USA Congressman Adam Clayton Powell and his famous wife, pianist Hazel Scott visited Panama in 1949 and she also gave a concert here.

Notable singers Marian Anderson, noted as one of the best classical interpreters and the other, the unquestionable jazz queen, Ella Fitzgerald delighted Panamanian public with their singing.

Three Latin American countries and USA celebrate their independence anniversary this month: USA July 4th, Venezuela the 5th, Colombia the 20th and Peru on the 28th. And... Vive la France! on the 14th.

Jean Jacques Dessallines was the leader of the Haitian Revolution and the first ruler of an independent Haiti .

An unknown advice says:

“If at first you succeed, don’t take any more chances”.

Contributed by Glenroy James

Wind dah blow, rain ah fall
 Fisherman, what is your luck?
 Ah wet backside and ah empty gut

Banana bread strengthen the head
 Strengthen the backbone that getting dead

“Eat what is on your plate.” “Don’t waste food.” “The children in Biafra are starving to death and you, wasting food.” “People on the street don’t have what to eat, eat up!”

(Panamanian calypso)

**Hold on, hold on,
 The Commissary book done gone,
 Things now-a-days
 Are getting so hard
 You can’t buy butter nor you can’t buy lard,
 So hold on, hold on, hold on ...**

Mama’s Scrap Book

Sandra Patterson

I found this curious recipe (and other things) in what’s left of my mother’s Scrap Book. It is signed by Lucille Taylor who said “try it, you’ll like it”.

Here goes: The pie recipe below is unique in several ways; first, whenever you eat a big slice, you will NOT feel guilty because there is no cholesterol factor to worry about; there are NO CALORIES to count. Even though it is highly nutritious, it is NON FATTENING, that is why it is called the MIRACLE PIE. Secondly, after a daily diet of this pie, you will be delighted with your new look and actions!

MIRACLE PIE

3 cups	of counting your blessings
3½ cups	of forgiveness
3½ cups	of correcting mistakes
3 cups	Of saying kind and loving words to others
4 cups	of prayers a day.. add more as needed
5 cups	of God’s word read each day
5 cups	of service to God, your church and country
1½ cups	of smiles for seasonings
½ teaspoon	Of a tear

METHOD:

Gather all the ingredients together before you go to bed. Mix them until well blended. You may have to add more prayer, but don’t worry, you can NEVER add too much. Place the mixture in an easily accessible place and it will be ready by morning. Start your day with a BIG SLICE for breakfast and eat more during the day. REMEMBER, there will be no adverse reactions.

THE UNTOLD STORY

What is the Future for Black-owned Businesses in Panama?

The West Indians came to Panama in the late XIX and early XX Century as people from all over the world migrate to the United States in search of a better living and are once more coming to Panama for the expansion of the Canal. There were job opportunities, both within the construction of the Canal and peripheral services that were needed: shoemakers, tailors, cabinetmakers, blacksmiths, boxing and horse trainers.

The West Indian welders were what we called "tapo hueco", since they were the ones who soldered the holes in our cooking pots. We now have pot covers without the pots and pots without handles, and no one to fix them.

Bullen was the man who took care of the funerals. The lodges kept him busy.

They were the coachies and taxi drivers in the 5th of May area and in Colon.



During the World Wars other nationalities came, running from their insecure homelands. **They began as door to door vendors**

The Spaniards were the "scissors grinders" and the framed picture vendors. The Hindu were the bedspread and tablecloth vendors. They have all gone into big business.

The Chinese were the vegetable gardeners, cornerstore shopkeepers and laundry operators. They are still on the corners, although some have gone into big business. The Italians and Greek are in the restaurant business.

So, where are we, the Black community? For some time the owners of Black businesses started a Black Chamber of Commerce, Where is it? **What is the future for Black-owned businesses?**

NAMES OF WEST INDIANS WHO OWNED HOMES

In **Pueblo Nuevo, Rio Abajo, Parque Lefevre, Carrasquilla, Juan Diaz and San Francisco** from the 30's - '40s: Harris, Pawvey, Drew, Vallee, Weatherburn, Seale, Tappin, Dudley, Holness, Edwards, Isaac, Henry, Griffith, Smith, Morgan, Piggott, Austin, Wray, Woods, Barnett, Bradley, Ramsey, Jordan, Best, Greaves, Mason, Thomas, Neblett, Clark, Clarke, Thompson, Stone, Mitchell, Marquis, Williams, Taitt, Bennett, Hinds, Graham, Carter, Peart, Boyce, Davis, Patterson, Lawrence, Conliffe, McCarthy, Jackson, Osborne, Cherry, Wiltshire, Haylett, Sealy, Gumbs, Inniss, Olton, Atherley, Barker, Williams, Brown, Barnabas, McInnis, Murray, Ogg, Darby, Willock, Small, Foster, Campbell, Gittens, Rice Hendricks, Rountree, De Gans, Botello, Frederick, Larrier, Clement, Graves, Layne, Spence, Knix, Thorne, Phillips, King, Soley, Poyser, Paul, Young, Moore, Gilling, Anderson, Douglass, Weatherborne, Drew, Vallee, Cragwell, Mosely, Weeks, Heslop, O'neal, Gaul



The John Dykes story has several messages to our young people. Our West Indians did not come to Panama as slaves. They had abilities.

White people living on the Canal Zone had freedom in the whole territory of Panama, our people, were not free to transit the Canal Zone, mainly our children were harassed for even picking up a mango from under the tree (more loitering & vagrancy). Even cars needed a CZ license plate.

Seeing that the White men took John Dykes over to the Canal Zone, we could infer that they were the instigators in the hoax. If that was Dykes' only means of income, then he was beholdng to the White men after that, since he lost his job.

Horse racing (another version)

Sandra Patterson

In an article written for the Review (spring 1974), a magazine published by the (former) Panama Canal, the late José T. Tuñón said he was told that at the beginning of the XX century horse races were held on Bella Vista Beach (now Cinta Costera) from the old Yacht Club to the Matasnillo river (off Bennigan's) near Punta Paitilla, except during the dry season when they were held in Las Sabanas.

Only native horses participated in these races that took place mostly on Sundays or whenever horse owners decided to have them. As the races gained popularity, horses were imported from Jamaica. The need for a race track was prompted and the site chosen at a former ranch called Juan Franco (actual Galerías Obarrio) on a land owned by General Nicanor De Obarrio.

After much goings and comings, the new race track was opened in 1922 with credits of its success going to Don Raul Espinosa who purchased horses abroad and divided them among those interested in racing. And... believe it or not! most were purchased by West Indians who paid back Don Raul with the winnings at the track. Juan Franco became a favorite spot for this sport goers.

As years went by and the sport became more popular, owners and fans claimed the need of a new racetrack. The idea came up formally in 1946 but was not heeded by the government. When Colonel José Antonio Remon Cantera, an avid fan, assumed the Presidency of the Republic in 1952, he started the construction of the new race track on the outskirts of the city, on the historical site where Charles Lindbergh landed his Spirit of St Louis in 1928.

Unfortunately President Remon was assassinated in 1955 at Juan Franco and did not see the new race track come to reality, but his successor, President Ricardo Arias Espinosa, named it after him and inaugurated it on July 14 1956..

CLUB WINDSOR

By Ines V. Sealy

One of our Afrodescendant entrepreneurs was Marcos Adolphus Wilson (R.I.P.), whom we lost on April 27, this year.

At his Club Windsor in 1957, I saw and enjoyed the “Auntie Roochie” jokes of Jamaican humorist,



“Miss Lou”, Louise Bennett.

http://www.jis.gov.jm/special_sections/MissLou/colonizationInReverse.html

Club Windsor was located in the area of *Cabo Verde, Ave. Nacional*, better known in those days as “Automobile Row”, because most of the automobile distributors were located on that street or on the street down by the *Juan Demostenes Arosemena* stadium (now known as Frangipani road).

Imagine, it was surrounded by schools, but was not a problem. In those days, school children were not interested in entering bars. They had their *saraos* and night of funs.

ON THE YEAR OF THE AFRODESCENDANT 2011

Excerpts from an article contributed by Donaldo Benito

Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's remarks on the "International Year of People of African Descent"... states:

"The year seeks to strengthen political commitment to eradicating discrimination against people of African descent... to pay tribute to the vast contributions made by people of African descent to the advancement of the political, economic, social and cultural development of all our societies..."

The international community has affirmed that the transatlantic slave trade was an appalling tragedy not only because of its barbarism but also because of its magnitude, organized nature and negation of the essential humanity of the victims."



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & REDRESS

The fact that the world family of nations has universally acknowledged the truth of our time of great tribulation is a good thing. To actually set aside a year to work toward solutions... goes beyond talk and ...*serves towards* ...the mental change necessary for... *redress*.

OPPORTUNITY OFFERED BY THE US EMBASSY:

INDES/GDI Scholarship to Promote Development for Communities of African Descent

African descendants in Latin America represent approximately one-third of the population and have made a significant contribution to the culture and the history of their nations. Although often overlooked in the past, the role and importance of these communities is rising in part because the development of African descendants is a key component to closing the economic and social gaps in many countries throughout the region.

The International Year aims to foster greater recognition of the African presence in the world through the strengthening of national actions and international cooperation to promote the participation of the African descendants in the economic, social, political, and cultural lives in their nations.

Throughout 2011 INDES will offer two half scholarships for all of their virtual online courses to individuals specifically working to promote development in communities of African descent.

For further information on the Inter-American Development Bank's work promoting African descent development please visit our webpage at :

<http://www.iadb.org/es/temas/genero-y-diversidad/scholarship,3487.html> (Spanish)

<http://www.iadb.org/en/topics/gender-and-diversity/development-in-african-descendant-communities,2606.html>

MARCUS GARVEY:
the Unionist, The Entrepreneur

By Ines V. Sealy

Based on the Book THE MARCUS GARVEY AND UNIVERSAL NEGRO IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION PAPERS. Edited by Robert A. Hill, published by the Univ. of CA Press

Although born in Jamaica in 1887, this guy left footprints and made history in many countries, until he died in London June 10, 1940.

Printing & publishing was his thing, but mainly to decry the injustices against Blacks all over the world. From Jamaica he began a Black movement called Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914 which he took to the United States, Panama, Costa Rica, (where he headquartered the Black Star Line Navigation Company). He also launched an organization that he hoped would raise money to help create job opportunities for the rural poor in Jamaica.

”During its heyday the UNIA claimed as members Black Muslim leader Elijah Mohammed and the father of Malcolm X.. Indebted to the perseverance and dedication of Garvey’s Pan-African struggle, Malcolm X wrote, ‘Each time you see another independent nation on the African continent you know Marcus Garvey is alive’.”¹

In 1919 Garvey formed the Black Star Navigation and Trading Company. With \$10,000,000 invested by his supporters Garvey purchased two steamships, *Shadyside* and *Kanawha*, to take African descendants to Africa. The company ran out of money after making several trips to Africa.



Steamship Shadyside

Like the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) in the United States, Garvey campaigned against lynching, Jim Crow laws, denial of black voting rights and racial discrimination. “Despite limited success in his lifetime, Garvey has become an international symbol of black freedom. The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., called him ‘the first man, on a mass scale to give millions of Negroes a sense of dignity and destiny’.”²

More recently, Garvey has become an inspirational figure within the Jamaican Rastafarian religious movement.

In 1964 the Jamaican government proclaimed Garvey a national hero. His legacy served as an integral force in the “Black is Beautiful” consciousness (*USA*) of the 1960’s.

1. Contemporary Black Biography | 1992 | Cohassey, John
2. Ibid.