

AfroPanamanian Newsletter



English opens doors. Read the Newsletter.

No.8 Vol. I

September 2010

Donation

September 7, Canal Treaties Anniversary



Controversy

Anecdotes

Poetry

LOS AMIGOS :

Por la superación de la Etnia Negra

A group of friends 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.



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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 the later years of the 20th century and these first few of the 21st, technological advancements are occurring so rapidly that we haven't completely learned to manage the last one when we need to learn a new one because it became obsolete.

We seem to live absorbed by this monster, so that we have no time to share with others (I mean face to face) not even with our siblings, so that we can tell them about our people and their past, why and how they came to be here.

*And so down the drain goes the history of our ancestors. Then how can we expect **R-E-S-P-E-C-T** from other groups, if we don't keep the flame (our legacy) burning? A nice way to start is by telling them about the contributions our ancestors have made to this country, not only in the construction of the canal but in other things for instance in music, shoe shining, dressmaking, journalism... **Be proud!** They did a lot for us.*



This feedback is so dear to me, I must make a column of it.

Congratulation to you and Nando and the other members of the Afro Panamanian News Letter.

Thank you very much for such a very informative news, which is done in such a professional manner, that our ancestors would be looking down upon you and feeling proud to know that you are continuing to use their language in Panama in the 21st Century, which is ENGLISH. I applaud your group for taking such a bold step, to inform the descendants /offspring of West Indian descent in Panama and abroad.

I am tired of all these stories that are written of the WEST INDIAN HERITAGE, pictures and many articles, etc. in Spanish, a language our ancestors never spoke or were in some cases forbidden to speak.

When are we going to accept who we are, and who were our forefathers and where they came from? It's obvious, by the color of our skin, accents, our whole demeanour.(some of us know that, thank God) that we are of West Indian descent. To assimilate into a society one must be cognizant not only of his environment but also his nurturing .We hear stories that our ancestors were deprived from assimilating into the society at large, yet, some tried and succeeded.

What is very troubling to me is, that many Panamanian professionals of WI descent, who attended one of the many WI schools or other institutions of learning, today flaunt their titles and seldom want speak the language (English) or rather speak it conveniently. (Are they embarrassed to speak/write English)? I am not saying one should not speak the tongue of one's native land, but mindful of a Legacy we inherited, we should follow up and preserve it.

How can we promote our heritage when we write of it in a language that had them segregated for such a long time? The great Psychologist Piaget states, "a man's behaviour is the recreation of an experience". Let that past experience be the lesson to understand the nature of our ancestors in Panama.

It is only fitting to say, if I offended anyone, I apologize, if I **“stepped on anyone’s toes” “keep your shoes on both feet”**.

Keep up the Good work
HD

Hi Ines, I just want to say keep up the great work, you and your colleagues are doing. Your information not only serves as a way to commemorate our ancestors, but as a lesson, about our contributions to the country. I look forward to your newsletter.
Don

A substantive contribution to the literature of our heritage, culture and legacy, Ines, keep up the good works.
Dr. Marco A. Mason

OPPORTUNITIES: U.S. Embassy Scholarship program.

Scholarship Programs at the U.S. Embassy for young people, focused on offering young **Panamanians** more opportunities to learn English, attend universities in the U.S. and participate in exchange programs. Some scholarships offer courses in Panama in order to make the student more competitive in obtaining U.S., Panamanian Government and Fulbright scholarships.

- Added information:
- http://spanish.panama.usembassy.gov/programas_fulbright.html
- pancultural@state.gov

“cold like puppy nose”

“Greedy puppy always get choked”

“*fadge* for yourself”

“Gravaliteous”= “covetous”= “red eye”

“enough is enough”= “stop it”

“Do as I say but not as I do”

“happy go lucky” = nothing bothers the person

“one day, one day “ = at some time in the future, we don’t know when.

“straighten up & fly right” = sit up straight, or, do the right thing.

“If you can’t beat them, join them”

Health Issues

Upon awakening you should “wash your face and hands” and “clean your teeth”, “take a bath or shower daily”, use deodorant, “wash your hands frequently”, “wash your hands after using the toilet” remember to flush the toilet after use. “Keep your fingernails clean”.

Now, it’s time to go to the table for a meal. “Wash your hands before going to the table” “everyone must sit to table” “sit up straight” at the table, “don’t put your elbows on the table” “don’t start to eat until everyone is served”. Thank the person passing you a utensil, plate or platter. Let’s say grace, we should thank the Lord for what we are about to ingest, we may add a blessing for the cook. Use utensils from out to in. “Start out with water” to prevent choking “soup first” “salad next” “don’t drink during the meal” unless your are choking “don’t slurp your soup, cereal or drinks”, “don’t spit food back in the plate”, “chew with your mouth closed”, “take small bites of food”, “cut to size”. Don’t cut up the food all at once. Cutting bite size pieces preserves the heat in the rest of the food, especially the meat. If you must leave the table before the others are done say “excuse me”.

“Cover your mouth when you cough”, also when you sneeze or yawn. Don’t pick your nose, teeth or clean your ears in public.

Men should wear sox when wearing closed up shoes. These absorb the perspiration, preventing odors in the shoes. Men should also wear belts.

The latest style men have of wearing the pants hanging on the hips, **showing the underpants is VERY disgusting to women**. Some of the underpants are so scruffy.

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THOSE WERE THE DAYS

By Antonio Cox

8-3-2010

Back in the days there was a thing called “West Indian Pride”, The day could be “as hot as hell”, if there was an event, men wore 3-piece suits and leontene, and the women “dressed to kill”, and their kids, “sharp as a razor blade”... Easter Parade, and Debutant’s Ball... They would prepare for special events... When there was a big fight in Colon, all you could see from a far distance in the “train station” was “biscuit hats”. Those were the good old days.

Today, kids live with a “don’t care attitude”. They will say “*que carajo*”, they don’t have the pride that their ancestors once had. Their parents haven’t injected that pride into them.

Travel on Canal Waters

By Ines V. Sealy

My first touch of travel on Panama Canal Waters was in my childhood, when, my father (Lloyd Leslie Sealy), would take us to the interior or to Far Fan Beach in his 1929 Model "A" Ford (which I drove from I was 16, really the first woman driver in the Rio Abajo-Parque area).

To get to the West of the country, we had to go across the Canal on the Ferry boat. The car would drive unto the Ferry, directed by an employee, who accommodated the cars so as to make the best use of the space. Then directed them to exit the ferry, on the other shore, to avoid accidents.

There were two of them: the Porras and the Amador. When one was going, the other was coming, from La Boca to the West Bank. They skirted each other in the middle of the journey, far away from each other, I suppose, to avoid mishaps from the wake of each other. Both left their births at the same time, blowing their horns.

The Amador was used after the Bridge of the Americas was built (opened in 1962 with an invitation to walk it across) to offer transits through the Canal.

My first Canal transit was on the Amador on an outing sponsored by the Bethel Mission Church in 1963-64, under the Rev. Waldaba Stewart.

Since then, there are several boats making weekly transits, both complete and partial.

(see La Boca road to ferry on page 8)

Fact: Since the US were the ones who built the bridge, they called it Thatcher Ferry Bridge, but the Panamanians wanted it called Bridge of the Americas. The National Assembly named it officially on October 2, 1962, before it was inaugurated, but the name didn't really stick until 1979, after the Torrijos-Carter Treaties were implemented.

H.O.G.

By Lic. Sandra Patterson

HOG, no offense meant, but Panama's radio and air communications codes are HO and HP following any of these two, there are numbers and/or letters.

From the opening in 1914 of the Panama Canal until the late 30's for "canal safety", the US Armed Forces controlled all communications on the isthmus. It wasn't until 1934 when four Panamanians made the first intent to make a radio broadcast and paved the way for Panamanians to have radio stations.

Somewhere along the 40's HOG a local full English radio station with a variety of programs was created to counteract the Armed Forces radio station. In the beginning it had an all American staff; with the passage of time they left, then Ramon Levy a local journalist took over the administration and opened the door for our local West Indian descent boys to become DJ's. Remember them? The Italianos: Vince Monchini, Joe Gavini, Richie and add on Joss Russell, not an italiano but a swinger as well, that had us swaying to the music he played and complying with our requests and dedications, guest Djs and other programs. They stayed on until the station closed down. Beside them, there were other West Indian descendants as radio announcers: Dave Constable, Roy Green, Ray Oakley, Dave White, Roy Strickland, Roy Naylor, Roy Wynter and Lic. Hugo Wood.

HOG took over all the English speaking community in Panama and Colon cities including Canal Zone residents (gringos).



WHO RECEIVED THE PANAMA CANAL?*By Ines V. Sealy*

Based on the **September 7, 1977** Torrijos-Carter Treaty, the Canal was turned over to the Panamanians at 12:00 noon on December 31, 1999.

All West Indian descendents felt proud that the person designated to receive it was **Mr. Cecil Haynes** the West Indian descendent employee with the longest service to the Canal - **71 years** -.

Son of Barbadian (West Indian) parents, born in Gatun (Atlantic Canal Area) in 1913, he had been working since he was 14 years for the Canal administration (with a beginning salary of Twenty-two dollars and Fifty cents per month) and up to December 31, 1999 he was still a Canal employee.

He lived through the injustices of the Silver Roll, where there was no vacation nor sick leave, nor overtime, so, he became accustomed to being on the job everyday. As a consequence, he has never been absent nor late for work.

He received many honors and homages:

- a) Society of Friends of the Afro-West Indian Museum - During "Know your Canal" 1999.
- b) Governor's Office, Panama – 1999
- c) Mayor's Office, Panama – 1999
- d) Three letters of Congratulation from President William (Bill) Clinton, President of the USA. He also visited the White House in Washington D.C. as an invited guest of President Clinton. *(picture on page 8)*

The PC Commission named a tug after him - 1998

All West Indian descendents can be proud of his representation when his immediate boss said about him:

“He is an exemplary employee, he gets here before everyone else and always completes his work satisfactorily”. This says a lot about the training we received from our ancestors.

Mr. Haynes finally retired from Panama Canal Service on December 31, 2000 highly praised and congratulated.

IN CONCLUSION: as deceased West Indians, such as Mrs. Alice Oliver, interviewed by Luzmila George, Cpt. Clyde Smith, interviewed by Cecil Reynolds mentioned: “the hope is that Panamanians learn to protect, maintain and utilize this great treasure left to us by our ancestors”.

CONSTANT MAINTENANCE IS THE CLUE

Round-the-clock maintenance is critical to its effectiveness and efficiency.

PANAMA HAS BEGUN EXPANSION OF THE CANAL.

The Canal provides a shortcut, (reducing navigation distances by up to 10,000 miles) a relatively inexpensive passageway between these two great bodies of water, it has influenced world trade patterns, spurred growth in developed countries and has been a primary impetus for economic expansion in many remote areas of the world. It is probably the most important naval crossing of the world. Annually, more than 15,000 transit the Canal and the width and length of its design dictate the size and berth of a large part of the world's float. The larger size of ships being built (Panamax) today, mandates the expansion of the Canal. Ports on both sides of the Continent will have to be expanded to accommodate them.

Realizing this waterway entailed solving engineering problems of enormous proportions, such as: digging through the Continental Divide (approximately 8 miles); constructing the largest earth dam ever built up to that time and the Gatun Lake; designing and building the most massive canal locks (each lock chamber measures 110 feet wide by 1000 feet long) ever envisioned; constructing the largest gates ever swung (they are hollow now and can be dismantled and floated to be taken to dry dock for repairs).

More than 61 million pounds of dynamite were required and during the construction a total of 161 million cubic yards of dirt and rocks was moved.

Today, although dynamite is being used, the necessity of the amount of brute force used at that time is not necessary because of new knowledge and technology.

September

Fernando Goldson is doing research on Social Clubs in Panama from the 40's to the 70's. We'll be using excerpts from contributions received from our readers and friends. Gotten from: Hubert (Mickey) Brown, "Tony" Caesar, Ines Sealy, Sandra Patterson.

It was a tradition dating back to the 40's and 50's that any young man or woman worth their salt socially, belonged to a social club. That gave you a certain social status and made you very popular among your peers and the opposite sex. Once your club became prominent, it was one heck of a presentation card.

Some of the prominent ones that come to mind are: The White Collar Gang, Club Manchester, Club Rivoli, Club Altamira, Amigos del Pueblo, Health Bureau Club, etc. More contemporary with our time were: Club Concentricos, The Jazz Messengers, The Social Boys Club, Doncaster, Las Magníficas, Las Chicas Preferidas, Etc. Duques del Rey, Los Perfectos, Bellmar, Rio Mar, McAllister, Los Reyes, Lord Fredericks, McArlem, Los Halcones, Monopoly.

In this issue we'll be highlighting **Avanti Social Club**

What's interesting about this group, is that most of its members did not grow up together; they were from totally different neighborhoods (Chorrillo, La Boca, Colon, Bocas, San Miguel, etc.). The original membership was comprised by Antonio (Tony) Caesar, Sinclair Lane, Joslyn (Jos) Lynch, Ras Simon Knight (Mboya), Ricardo Mitchell, Elmore Powell, Oliver Allan Prince, Winston (Bunny) Smith, Handel and Ladrick Williams. The group was later joined by Franklin Hayes (Little Roy) (R.I.P.), who stayed briefly and David Small who came in when some of the guys left for the U.S.A. It is important to underline this fact, because we became a monolith and bonding group whose friendship defied space and time and lasts until today.

The first major activity held was a **Red Top Dance** at the Ebony Glow in "P" Street (in Calidonia). That turned out to be a huge success and became one of our yearly events. While we did not invent this concept or idea, it was thought of years earlier by a group in Colon, ours certainly became the most popular and best attended. There were years that the most popular cloth stores of the era, literally ran out of red fabric or anything similar-looking. Other activities included: a Queen Contest, Handicap race, Scholarships, donation to the Government-run Polio Fund.

A Federation of Social Clubs was formed along with Altamira Club, Health Bureau Club and Los Amigos del Pueblo, its first President being Antonio "Tony" Caesar.

Avanti had a good run for about Four years. As early as 1963 and subsequently over the years the members emigrated to the U.S.A., except for Elmore Powell (R.I.P.), who remained in Panama, Winston Smith, who is in Puerto Rico running a business of his own, and Frank, who has expired.

In a special issue, we'll present the full biography of each club as it was presented to us

ENGLISH SERVICES ARE BEING HELD AT 6:00 P.M. ON SUNDAYS

AT **HOSSANNA**

PASTOR ROBERT ROBINSON, OFFICIATING.

ROAD TO LA BOCA FERRY
(Thanks to a Forward from Donna Prescott)



The floating bridge to the ferry had only one lane. So the same system used at the Gamboa Bridge was used then. All the cars on one side had to wait until all the cars vacated the ferry, then they could go on.

Cecil Haynes & Family in the White House
(picture taken from *The Panama News*)

