

# AfroPanamanian Newsletter



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*(Scissors Grinder)*

Anecdotes

Controversy

Poetry

## LOS AMIGOS :

**Por la superación de la Etnia Negra  
(Incorporated to SEAPAT EVENTOS, S.A.)**

**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***

### CREDITS

**Editor : Sandra Patterson (R.I.P)**

**Assistant: Ines V. Sealy**

#### MEMBERS

**President  
Roberto L. Alleyne**

**Treasurer  
Fernando A. Goldson**

**Others  
Ines V. Sealy  
Dilsia Alleyne  
Antonio Cox  
Roberto L. Alleyne  
Cecil V. Reynolds**

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 issued in 1951 as a 10 cent postage stamp, used for years. Permission for its continuous use was given by his grandnephew, Cecil Reynolds.

### *Editorial*

#### *ADVICE FOR LIFE*

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***The fastest way  
to change society  
is to mobilize  
the women  
of the world.***

***Charles Malik***

***Kindness is the language the blind can see and the deaf can hear.***

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January feedback

**From: (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade/BGIS) contributed by David Bulbulia  
BARBADOS TO MARK 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF PANAMA CANAL**

Disclosed by Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, David Bulbulia, during an address, delivered on behalf of Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator Maxine McClean.

The Ministry is coordinating a programme that will include the issuing of a Commemorative Stamp; an exhibition, educational tour, book launch and lecture series, all coordinated by the Barbados Museum and Historical Society.

Barbadians will also be taking part in the Great West Indian Fair in Panama and this country will be seeking to bring to conclusion, an Air Services Agreement with Panama.

**Efforts will also be made to facilitate the tracing of the ancestry of Barbadians who migrated to Panama by the Archives Department and the Ministry is planning a series of initiatives to include the youth and schools via the involvement of the Ministry of Education...**

An event sponsored in part by the Ministry, as part of the Naniki Caribbean Jazz Safari, was made all the more special given the performance of two talented Panamanians of Barbadian descent: **Reginald Boyce and Idania Dowman...**

It is expected that the third Diaspora Conference will see some 350 Barbadians from throughout the Americas, Europe and the Caribbean, including Panama, participating in a range of seminars, workshops and cultural events.

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***Jamaica Temporarily Bans Importation of Jet skis (contributed by the Chambers)***

Effective immediately, there is to be a ban on the importation of all personal watercraft, such as jet skis, until October 15, 2014 and the temporary suspension of operations across the island.

...The decision comes in the wake of a series of accidents, across the island, particularly, by Jetski operators.

The latest incident occurred in Negril a few weeks ago when an American tourist was struck in the head by an unlicensed operator who fled the scene.

"The impact of these incidents has been far-reaching and has triggered negative public commentary both locally and internationally..." (complete article)

<http://jamaica-gleaner.com/latest/article.php?id=51208>

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**DISSAPEARING THINGS:** Scissors Grinder? What is that?

Do you have a scissor that won't cut? Wish the scissor sharpeners were still around? Ah! Some of you won't even know what a scissor sharpener is.

In days gone by, the Spaniards who came to Panama started out as framed picture salesmen, peanut toasters and scissors grinders.

A versatile apparatus with a large wheel which served to roll the apparatus around, then, when they stopped to sharpen a knife, machete or scissors, the frame served to stabilize the wheel while the operator pumped to spin the wheel for sharpening.

They disappeared in the 1950's



This one is more modern, attached to a bicycle.

*Excerpts from The Guardian (Trinidad Newspaper)*

**Honours for the Birdie** (get the full story: <http://m.guardian.co.tt/carnival/2014-02-23/mighty-sparrow-mounts-napa-stage-jean-and-dinah>) *Contributed by Leticia Thomas Brereton.*

The Mighty Sparrow (Slinger Francisco) was compelled to leave his seat in the audience and mount the stage to sing a verse and chorus of Jean and Dinah when his son Sergio needed help at the National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA) on Frederick Street, Port-of-Spain, on Friday evening.

The occasion was the Anthropology of Sparrow: An Anthology of the Works of Slinger Francisco, 1956-1962, In the Age of Independence.

It was the first in a series of tributes presented by the University of T&T's Academy for Arts, Letters, Culture and Public Affairs, as a gift to the nation in celebration of UTT's tenth anniversary...

...Sparrow is also to be honoured with the nation's highest award, the Order of the Republic of T&T, the Prime Minister announced last week.

In addition, Canboulay Productions has organised an ongoing series of lectures on his work and significance. GML is the official media partner for the series, titled If Sparrow Say So....

**The final lecture took place on February 26 at 7 pm at Daaga Hall, UWI. Titled Who Taking Advantage of Who, it was presented by Prof. Patricia Mohammed and Singing Sandra.**

**Group photo of participants in the last session of the tribute to the Mighty Sparrow. Dr. Natalia Thomas Kanem was moderator.**



#### **OFFER OF EXCURSIONS**

Martha Productions and Friends are preparing an **excursion to Cuba, Nov 10 – 16, 2014**. Everyone interested please do give us a call at 391-5188, 6624-1287, 6421-2665, magic jack: [\(407\) 610-9777](tel:(407)610-9777) or send an e-mail.

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There is preparation for an excursion to Barbados in August. Contact Sheila Wilkinson at [sheilawilkinson2846@hotmail.com](mailto:sheilawilkinson2846@hotmail.com)

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Contact Silvia Murray Keene for an excursion to Costa Rica at the end of August. [silviamk21@yahoo.com](mailto:silviamk21@yahoo.com)

## FROM PROSE TO POETRY

by Ines V. Sealy 2/12/2014

At 4:00 in the morning  
inspiration comes.  
Set to it right away  
before the ideas sway,  
jot them down  
as they come  
catch them in the air  
as they float and flair.  
Check the rhyme  
to the musical time.  
Get it now,  
or, gone is the flow.

Apparently we speak musically  
because turning prose into poetry  
is beginning to become quite easily

Think up a subject you would write in prose  
shuffle the words around for them to rhyme  
surely then, there will be a poem in time.

At first it maybe hard  
but with a little practice and thought  
soon you will become a bard.

Stick to it, keep it up,  
it will be easier each time  
a subject you want to address comes up.

You may feel noone is listening out there  
but somewhere in the whole wide world  
there's one or two who will be lending an ear.



## UNDER THE TABLE AND THROUGH THE BACK DOOR

by Ines V. Sealy 1/23/2014

Everyone thinks that this is a BACK DOOR country  
Everyone thinks that things can be done simply  
by dealing with our citizens  
under the table and through the back door.

Never mind if it is official or private  
if it's a small or large amount  
How did it all begin and how will it culminate?  
Under the table and through the back door?

Businesses, large and small, local and foreign  
want to do business with Panama,  
the banana State that's making money, they assume,  
under the table and through the back door, it's plain.

This construction company from Spain  
together with others, foreign and local names  
to wheel and deal building locks in the Canal  
under the table and through the back door for gain.

An extremely low bid the group made  
in the hope that at a later date  
an extra amount they would procure  
under the table and through the back door.

A contract is a contract and you've received  
the Administrator of the Canal proclaimed,  
more than half the total contracted for;  
nothing under the table and through the back door.

Only this small amount we can forward  
to help you with your liquid problem.  
With our own workers and equipment  
this expansion we can successfully end.

Nothing under the table and through the back door.



*(Taken from Canale-di-panama-impregilo)*

Feb-Mar 2014

*Bank of America visualized the worldwide expectations placed on the expansion of the Panama Canal. The impasse, at the moment and virtual shutdown of labor on expansion of the Canal will surely have repercussions.*

**Canal Expansion (excerpt from *Get Ready for the Big Ships – Bank of America*)  
(contributed by Lewis R. Eccleston Sr.)**

In anticipation of the Panama Canal's new look and the expected boom in trade, many East Coast ports and businesses have undertaken expansion projects of their own.

Post-Panamax vessels — which account for 30% of working ships today and a majority of all ships on order — require 50 feet of draft in freshwater harbors. As a result, a number of ports along the East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico are deepening their harbors and ramping up their logistics.

The Florida Department of Transportation has also been at work on construction of a tunnel for trucks to transport cargo directly from the Miami port to Interstate 95 without clogging — or being slowed by — small surface roads.

Shipping and trucking will be natural beneficiaries of the expansion. Other sectors should gain in 2015 and beyond, too. "Manufacturing and warehouse distribution are the next obvious industries that will see new growth,"

"Obviously, the impetus is that ports are trying to get a piece of the action because they see this incredible expansion in trade and exports,"

"These trends will affect middle-market companies whether they're ready or not," (*Extending the date of the opening of the new locks maybe beneficial to these companies*)

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**DEVELOPING DIGITAL AGENDAS & STRATEGIES FOR THE DECADE OF  
AFRODESCENDANTS AND BEYOND**

*(Excerpts from article sent by Amilcar Priestley, Director of The Afrolatin@ Project ) Complete Article: <http://afrolatinproject.org/2014/02/09/developing-digital-agendas-strategies-for-the-decade-of-afrodescendants-and-beyond/>*

In December 2013, the United Nations declared 2015-2024 as the International Decade of Afrodescendants.

Despite the growing recognition of our importance as citizens in our respective countries, Afrolatin@s continue to battle for inclusion, autonomy, rights and justice. The Afrolatin@ Project (ALP) will continue to champion the Afrodescendant struggle for human rights by using digital tools to preserve the culture and history of Afrodescendants, increase our visibility, and improve our access as citizens no matter where we reside.

Afrodescendant communities will benefit greatly if we integrate information and communications technology (ICT) more successfully into our agendas and strategies...

...Many of today's Afrodescendant youth have grown up with technology of some kind. They stand to benefit most from a movement that recognizes the positive potential of technology...

...The way different groups/communities are counted in the census is linked to public policies and funding for strategic resources such as education, employment, and social services. Mobile phones can be used to develop effective demographic questions or to send out notifications on the importance of Census participation.

Follow **The Afrolatin@ Project** at <http://afrolatinproject.org/> for much more information.

**International women's day (March 8)**

*(Excerpted from Portobelo, Panama... Congos. Interamerican Foundation.)*



**Inola Mapp** grew up in Panama City, and hers is a prototype Afro-Antillean success story that puts the condition of Afro-colonials in sharp relief. Afro-Antilleans of the generation of Mapp’s father, an upholsterer in the Canal Zone, insisted their children grow up bilingual and even sent them to a nursery school where English became firmly engrained before the students started first grade.

Fluency won Mapp a paid internship in the Canal Zone that helped support her toward a degree in economics from the University of Panama.

As a well-paid government employee she was less inconvenienced by the country’s 1988 financial crisis than most people, but the suffering around her changed her life. “I decided I had to help, thinking one day it could happen to me too,” she recalled. So in 1991 she quit her job to found PRODES, a nongovernmental organization staffed by herself and a secretary.

For its first decade, PRODES’ clients were drawn from Panama’s indigenous and mestizo communities. “I hadn’t focused on the difference between Panama’s two groups of African descendants and how the Afro-colonials had been left behind,” Mapp admits today. In 1999 she applied to the Inter-American Foundation for a grant for her project “*Desarrollo turístico del municipio de Portobelo*” aimed at greater participation by Portobelo’s residents in an expanded tourist economy. The next six years were both tough and rewarding. A resounding success was the formation of a corps of enthusiastic teen-aged guides who earn pocket money conducting tours after school and on weekends. Beyond its practical aspects, the training broadened the students’ horizon, exposing them to other cultural sites and to the University of Panama. PRODES also extended children between seven and 12 a program to encourage reading and creative writing.

The result was a book distributed in the community and an invitation to the young authors to share their experience in a workshop at the National Book Fair in Panama City.

**Beauty is also a part of being a woman.**



Maria de Lourdes Gallimore  
Carnival Queen 2014



Miss Panama 1997  
Tanisha Tamara  
Drummond Johnson



[Gloria Karamañites Davis](#) was Miss Panamá in 1980. In the Miss Universe Pageant she was a Semifinalist

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**The bound versions of the 2013 Newsletter  
are now available, also 2010, 2011 and 2012  
from Ines at (507)224-4177.**

## CLARA OPHELIA WATTLEY PAIGE

Feb-Mar 2014



The youngest of six girls born to Mr. William A. and Mrs. Blanche Wattley, Clara was brought up in the “local rate” town of La Boca, Canal Zone in the Salvation Army faith.

**The Salvation Army School in Rio Abajo was named after her.**

The other girls were: Evadne, Gladys, Clarissa, Ilene & Catherine. Two boys came after her: Ernest & William.

She was active in all phases of scholastic sports, excelling in track, softball and volleyball, while attending Canal Zone schools from First grade to teacher training at the La Boca Normal School. Clara continued her education, earning a BS from Illinois State University, an MA from San Francisco State College and an Associate at the Institute of Education from the University of London, England. She was chosen as a British Council Scholar, 1962-1963.

*(you too maybe chosen, apply:*

<http://www.educationuk.org/global/articles/scholarships-financial-support/>)

From 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 1945 Clara was employed as a junior trainee at the Curundu Commissary (*turned into a farmer's market and soon to dissappear from beside the Tribunal Electoral*), transferred then to teach the Sixth grade at the Gatun Elementary School beginning her teaching career from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to Jr. and Hi School.

After Twenty years, Clara transferred to the Social Services staff of the Canal Zone Government, serving as Community Organizer for seven years before leaving the istmus to reside in the US with her Senior Petty Officer husband Joshua Paige, himself a Drug Abuse and Education Specialist.

In her new hometown of Norfolk, Virginia, Clara became the Assistant Director/Social Worker of the Virginia Beach Drug Outreach Clinic, then transferred to the Community Mental Health Center and Psychiatric Institute as Director of their Special School.

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*(Excerpted from: <http://classic.nwciowa.edu/summer2008/alumniprofiles#sthash.4dWffwwt.dpuf> and Spirit Lake Beacon)*

### **Christina McGrinson: A woman with courage.**

As a little girl, Christina “studied” with her father as he prepared to receive his pharmacy degree. She was so excited when he received his diploma. “I felt as if I, too, was graduating.” Her father told her that she would indeed be the next person in the family to graduate from college. Christina explained, “Once I was able to imagine it, I felt I could do it.”

Christina went on to explain that being able to imagine things even before you can read or write makes them more real when you begin connecting written words to their meaning. This type of early language development, she explains, is something parents can do with their children from the day they are born.

When Christina was growing up in a bilingual home in the Republic of Panama, her grandmother, who was blind, would direct her to find places on a map and then tell her wonderful facts about the countries she found. This led Christina to want to find books, photographs, and other information. She would imagine herself there. As an adult, Christina has traveled to many countries, and it is as if she had already been there in her mind.

For Christina, teaching is a lot about helping students imagine everything from where they want to go to graduating. “You can never get to a place, or do anything, until you get there first in your imagination,” she said.

In 2006, the 25th anniversary of the tragedy of her son's death, McGrinson began writing **FOREVER FRIENDS**, a children's book published in English and Spanish, the Panama-born author's native tongue... “I feel the Lord has preserved me to be an encourager to children,” says McGrinson, a retired schoolteacher.

Once a woman wracked with sorrow, she is now an author inscribing her books with Nehemiah 8:10. Truly, the joy of the Lord is her strength, carrying her past a tragic ending to a fresh new start.