

AfroPanamanian Newsletter



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Christ Church-by-the-Sea 2014

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
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

*“Honesty and integrity are absolutely
essential for success in life
- all areas of life.*

*The really good news is that anyone can
develop both honesty and integrity.”*

— Zig Ziglar

*“Your reputation
is in the hands of others.*

*That's what the reputation is.
You can't control that.*

*The only thing you can control is your
character.”*

— Wayne W. Dyer

So, work on that.

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

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September Feedback

Thanks to Cecilia Parker for supplying us with wonderful quotes.

<p>Good job on this edition, Inés, especially the feature article on Bryce-LaPorte. I will forward it to my niece and nephews. I'm sure they will be pleased to know of the publication.</p> <p>M.</p>	<p><i>To the family:</i> I am sure you will be pleased to read this tribute to Roy in the latest edition of the Afro Panamanian Newsletter.</p> <p>M. <i>Replies from the family - Herrington (brother)</i></p> <p>Melba, thanks! We are proud of this. My regards to John Evans. I enjoy his books and poems--like his dedication to Roy.</p> <p>Melva- Thank you so much for sending this. Really nice tribute. It is appreciated. René</p>
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<p>I see you and appreciate your work. Did not know that the Dr. had left us. Critique:</p> <p>I need some clarity. My feeling is that you cannot have an editor who is not here to edit. How does that work? Hakim</p> <p>---</p> <p>Hey Ines, I think I got that part but the work is being done and the folks who do it are here. You know them and they should get the credit and the former editor can hold another position. It would lend a different level of currency if you know what i mean. Reading her as editor gives me a feeling of satire to the valuable info.</p>	<p><i>Hi Hakim:</i> <i>How are you? Thank you for your feedback. When our editor died, we requested applicants for the position. No one has come forward up to now. We are still in the market, If you know of anyone, please point them in our direction.</i></p> <p><i>For the time being, we have been doing our best to follow the line traced.</i> <i>Ines</i> ----</p> <p><i>Hi Hakim:</i> <i>You must remember that the Newsletter is more about trying to record our history. Current occurencies are compared to how they used to be, how they affected our people. The authors of the articles are mentioned. Try not to worry about the editor.</i></p> <p><i>Without an official editor, we may have to close; then there would be no valuable information being sent to you and our history would be lost.</i></p>
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Heat

by Ines V. Sealy April 2014

<p>The heat is everywhere up, down and around, in the high-rise apartments, on the street and underground.</p> <p>The cars let off heat The busses too The people do but there just aren't enough trees.</p> <p>Sit in the car, it is hot open the window, a jot the heat comes in with a bite cool down the air? there's no respite.</p>	<p>The rain falls, the steam rises, that is when it calls for more heat to fry us.</p> <p>Try to keep cool using fans like a fool nothing will help us you see the heat is everywhere you be.</p>
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Olden days curiosities:

Piercing the ears has its peculiarities: when piercing the ears one should be aware of the season of the year. If it is done during plum season it could form keloids. When it is done with a sterilized needle (the tip is burned) then a piece of broom straw is inserted and at least for 3 days it must be wet with the first spit in the morning before speaking to anyone. Where would we get a broom straw these days? Brooms are made of plastic.

-----Recycling: Stockings & sox

Before pantyhose came into style, women wore stockings held up by garters or garterbelts.

The part of the stocking which reached top of the leg was cut off at about 10 to 12 inches or to fit the particular head to make a stocking cap.

The Black guys wore them to shape the hair.

Nowadays, stocking and pantyhose are used to do bad things, such as disguising the face in holdups and robberies.

Weave caps, to me, are the same stocking caps.

Now, we do not recycle the top of the stocking, we buy an expensive weave cap.

Nylon stockings were also recycled by weaving them together to make mats, tablecloths and other adornments for the home.

CHUPON:

The toe of the stocking or sox was filled with rice or corn to make a chupon which we kicked to show endurance, flexibility and prowess

Cancer fighters:

Eat healthy and avoid Cancer

Fresh, uncooked fruit and vegetables

Soursop: As children, our parents served us bush tea. All kinds of bush tea: mint, fever grass, pear leaf, vervine, trumpet and soursop. Nowadays, as we grew up hating bush tea, our use of tea comes from a teabag. Lately different teas are being promoted as cancer-fighting agents.

Fever grass is one of those, only, lots of the tea is necessary to prevent or cure the cancer.

Green tea, Black tea, Pineapple tea and even a White tea are promising.

But soursop seems to top the list. This would be the sweetest way to prevent or cure cancer. The leaves prepare a delicious brew when sugar or honey is added. Don't talk about the juice. With milk or without. Add a little vanilla, **ambrosia**. And what about the Ice cream?

Check out Snopes.com which tells us: its "leaves and stems were found effective in attacking and destroying malignant cells."

Read more at

<http://www.snopes.com/medical/disease/graviola.asp#Y7WvGxxCYbIQ13HH.99>



THE UNTOLD STORY:

Cleff Melodaires

As a youth, we were lucky to hear the male singing group: The Cleff Melodaires. The song they sang that I liked the most, was Dry Bones. Recently I heard G Harmony singing it, bringing back memories of those days.



Excerpts from Earl Newland's BLACKS FACED WITH LOSS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE, published in The Sunday Republic Aug 24, 1986

Sunday, August 17, 1986 the Cleff Melodaires celebrated their Golden Jubilee. 50 years that this men's singing group has been pleasing the public with semi-classical and pop music.

To the accompaniment of pianist Seth Rose, the Melodaires took the audience on a stroll down Memory Lane, interpreting many of the favorites which had brought delight to thousands at concerts over 50 years: The Waltz you saved for me; The old songs; Cuando calienta el sol; You light up my life; Granada; Eres tu; You'll never walk alone.

The main speaker for the occasion was Professor Eglá Gooden Lynch, who left these messages:

"It is lamentable how we have completely abandoned the rich culture and heritage of our forebears". She stated as she recalled, with nostalgia, the wonderful days when Blacks who came from various West Indian Islands to work on the Panama Canal, lived and worked united in their communities, passing on their cultures to their offspring.

She recounted how those West Indian mothers and fathers spared no effort to assure that discipline and respect were instilled in every boy and girl.

Mrs. Lynch emphasized that what makes the situation more deplorable is that at the time, while the children of Blacks are being denied the opportunity to learn and speak English, the people of other groups are making every sacrifice to have their children learn this language that is so essential to international trade and commerce.

She punctuated the importance of our children learning as many languages as possible.

Mrs. Lynch stressed that as a result of the dramatic loss of our heritage, Blacks are rapidly becoming a people without an identity, a people as a ship adrift with no firm destiny. She concluded "we should do everything possible now to regain and preserve our rich heritage so that the future generations of our people can know and be proud of their true identity".

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Games West Indian Boys Played

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Follow the leader is both a daring and a silly game, in which the group reproduces every move and sound "the leader" made, in the most intricate and detailed manner.

The game can be fun, when the leader is not a daredevil because he'll concentrate on doing funny things, between playing the monkey of one's self and imitating others; on the contrary, when the leader was a born fool, one would follow him out on the ledge to prove one's valor by not chickening out at the end.

Follow the leader is a variation of a game we also know as "Kingdom Come", to mean no fear, like it was the end of time.

IN SCHOOL:

While the teacher was copying the class on the board, with her back turned, we would be following the leader, playing with our hair, making faces, acting silly, wiggling our hands, fingers, tongues, eyes, etc. Worst if she left the room, then it could become knocking pencils on the desktops, stomping our feet, clicking our tongue, or any other invention.

ROLE MODEL

by Cecil V. Reynolds

Did you know that the “Harlem Globetrotters” included at one time a Panamanian of West Indian heritage? Chosen was, **Arturo Agard Jr.** the eldest of Three children born to Maxine and Arturo Agard, Panamanian descendants of subjects of Martinique and Barbados,

Worthy of note, Arturo Agard was selected to play in the Basketball team representing Panama abroad for 15 years, and also was selected to play with the “Harlem Globetrotters” for one season in 1963. They travelled to South America, playing 53 games in 56 days, losing only one. That same year he was voted the most valuable player of the Selection.



During his 15 years as a “National Selection” Agard visited 26 countries and participated in Central American, Bolivarian, and Pan American games, besides the Olympiads. His trainer “Grillo” Holness remembers that he was the player who stayed in the game the longest without being replaced. This ability and physique caused him to be referred to as “Ironman”.

Agard states that he learned a lot about different cultures from his visits to those countries.

Arturo Agard worked for the Panama Canal as a linehandler, then as a part-time timekeeper, but after the 1964 events which caused rupture of relations between Panama and the US, he was the first Non-White who got the opportunity to become a Canal Zone Police.

While working, Agard continued playing basketball, and added baseball, representing the division he worked for, besides, training young women's teams from underprivileged areas in Colon, in tennis, volley, base and basketball.

A philanthropist, Arturo Agard Jr. belonged to The Thrifters Social Club which held activities to raise funds to help families whose head was in jail. He was offered scholarships which he passed on to others, since he had a steady job. Now retired both from the Canal Zone and his job in the US, he remains close to basketball by attending the games.

The Society of Friends of the West Indian Museum (Sociedad de Amigos del Museo Afro-Antillano de Panamá) SAMAAP was organized in 1981 by a group of afrodescendants to support the West Indian Museum located in the old Christian Mission Church on the corner of 24th St. and Justo Arosemena Ave. in Marañon or Guachapali.

One of its members, Cedric Gittens, came up with a bright idea to celebrate the anniversaries of the Panama Canal (in which many West Indians had worked, died and were buried under those waters) each year with a pilgrimage on the Canal and a ceremony on its waters in remembrance of our forefathers, as is done by seamen when someone is put to sea.

This idea was put to the then administrator, Fernando Manfredo, who supported the idea and has caused it to become a tradition to this day. The week of the 15th of August each year the Panama Canal Authorities facilitate and participate in this one-week celebration.

As good West Indians, conscious of God, his mercies and thankful for having brought us to this place and time, the celebration is begun on Sunday with attendance at a church service. Schools have been invited to participate in mural displays, intercollegiate contests (question and answer, speech), forums, film presentations, and, outstanding afrodescendants who have been useful to both the Canal and the community are honored in a culmination dinner and dance at the end of the week.

This idea of a celebration of the Canal's anniversary came to Cedric after having seen burials at sea, was presented to SAMAAP and the Administrator in 1989 worked on by the membership and came to fruition from then on.

The pilgrimage has evolved depending on the ability to get musical groups to enhance the ceremony, in which Praise is given to God for, and flowers are left on Canal waters in remembrance of our ancestors, the ceremony includes words from a pastor and a representative of the Canal Authorities, an explanation of the history, operation, and now the expansion of the Canal.

This ceremony has attracted documentary seekers, researchers, film makers and reporters from all over the world. It has helped to disseminate knowledge of the Canal and its

operations, which is what "Conozca su Canal" signifies.

*As a continuation of the celebration of the 100 years' anniversary of the opening of the Panama Canal, **together with** the Administration of the Panama Canal, the Cathedral of St. Luke, Episcopal Church held a Memorial Service for those who lost their lives during the construction of the Panama Canal, on Friday October 17, one day before St. Luke's day (Oct. 18th).*

There is a chapel at St. Luke's brought from the original chapel located at the Ancon Hospital, which was located in the area of what is now the PTJ, turned into Gorgas Hospital and, after the turnover of the Canal to Panama converted into the official Oncology Hospital.

According to The Rt. Rev. Julio E. Murray T., there was a crypt in that chapel which was transferred with the chapel and has been expanded by the Episcopal Diocese and can now hold more urns of ashes.

100 names of those Canal construction workers whose ashes was laid in the crypt, were read in their honor.

Messages came from the Bishop and the Canal's Administrator.

The Episcopal church feels that this service should be repeated annually, like is done by SAMAAP with the pilgrimage on the Canal.

History is something that is made as the days go by, it remains with us and must be present at all times.

HISTORIAS DEL CANAL (the movie)

Also in the 100th year of the inauguration of the Canal and during its expansion, the latest movie to portray its history is being presented in the movie theatres of the country, to the satisfaction of all moviegoers.

Everyone is pleased with its adherence to the truth, which was insisted upon by SEAPAT EVENTOS (the corporate body of this AfroPanamanian Newsletter) with regards to the 1913 story for which we coordinated the confection of the clothes.

Many members of our Black community participated in its filming.

Congratulations on a job well done.

October 2014

Rededication and Consecration of Christ Church by the Sea in the City of Colon

by Dilsia Mariela Collins-Alleyne

On Sunday August 24th 2014, at 4 p.m. The Rt. Rev. Julio E. Murray T., Diocesan Bishop, presided over the Rededication and Consecration ceremony of the Episcopal Christ Church by the Sea.

Some History about Christ Church

Construction of Christ Church begun in 1863 and was completed in 1864. Constructed under the administration and supervision of the Railroad Company and under the jurisdiction of the Church of England. It was built with a Victorian Gothic design by William Aspinwall's son-in-law: architect James Renwick from New York.

The church was built with dark stones taken from a quarry at a village called Bohio Soldado created during the construction of the railroad and located along the East Bank of the Chagres river.

Christ Church was consecrated on the 15th of June 1865 by Bishop Alonso Potter from Pennsylvania, was the first organized work by the Anglican Church in the Isthmus of Panama.

Being on the Atlantic coast of Panama, it was called Christ Church by the Sea because of its proximity to the Caribbean waters.

In 1883 British subjects from Jamaica, working with the French Canal asked the Jamaican Bishop to assign a Rector for the temple. Hailing from Jamaica, the Rev. Samuel Kerr, a British university graduate, was assigned.

Christ Church by the Sea is the second oldest Anglican temple built in Latin America.

In 1962 a series of postal stamps were designed using Christ Church to commemorate freedom of religion as established in the Panamanian constitution. On the 20th of May 1965 the Municipal Council of the city of Colon declared it a Municipal Historic Monument. On January 30 1980, Christ Church by the Sea was declared a National Historic Monument, through project No. 92-80.

The restauration project of the church begun in May 2010, with the full support of the Free Zone. This work was done by artisans from the Central Provinces of the interior of the country, laborers from the city of Colon, architects and engineers from Panama City. Male and female artisans installed their shops within the church to work day and night to complete the project.

Last year the Episcopal churches celebrated 160 years of the Anglican community in the Republic of Panama.

This Year, the reconstruction of Christ Church by the Sea was completed, rededicated and consecrated. In the presence of God's people, government workers, visitors and tourist.

A bilingual community of Faith that serves and follows the Lord contributing to the restoration of the **City of Colon** to the “**Golden cup**” it used to be.