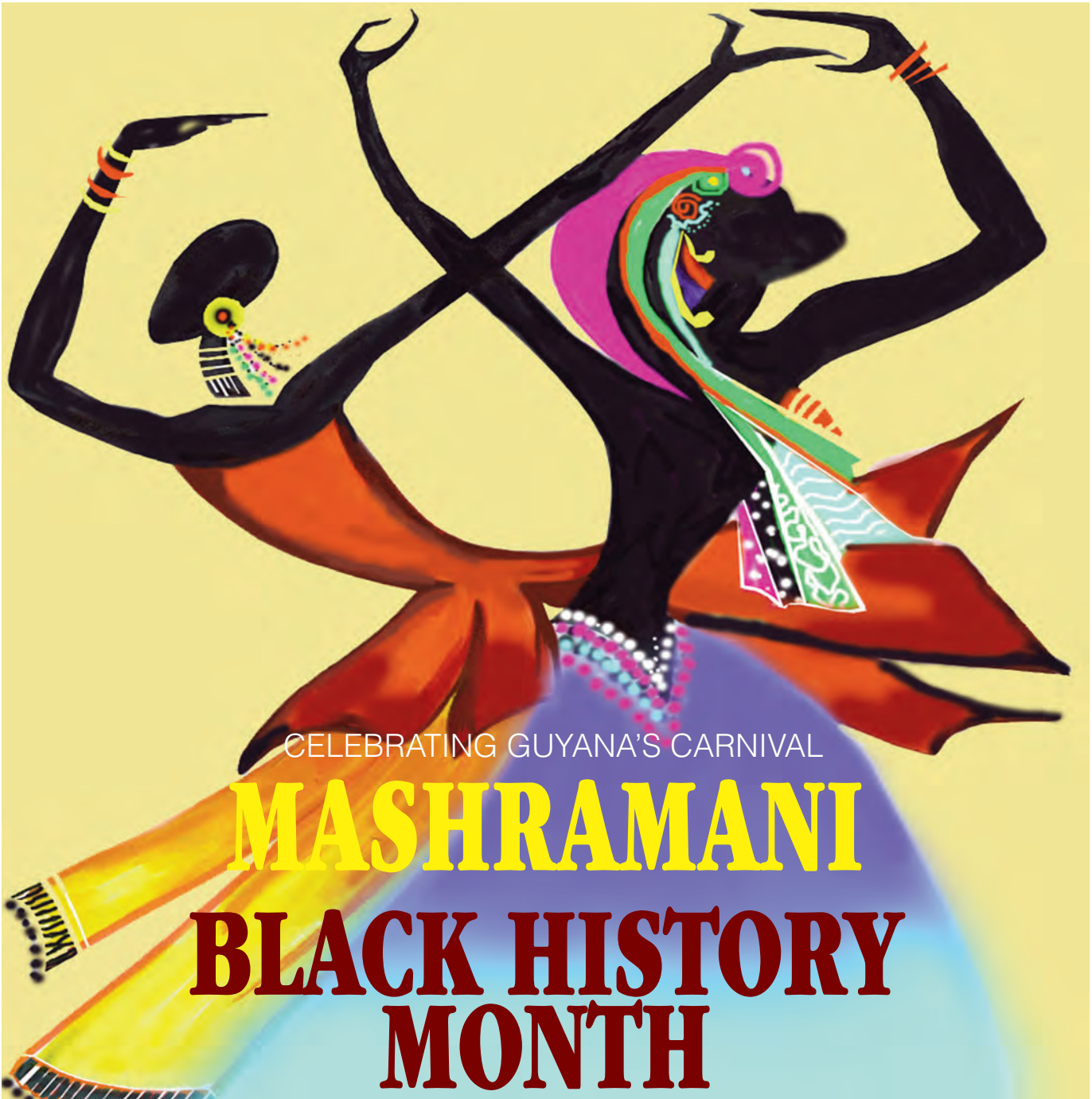
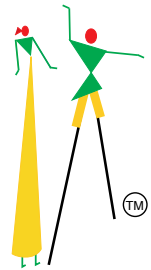
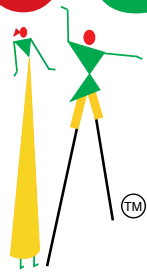


GUYANA FOLK AND CULTURE



CELEBRATING GUYANA'S CARNIVAL

MASHRAMANI BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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Folk Arts Messenger

During our recent GCA 2012 media meeting, we unanimously decided to rotate the editorial role of our monthly newsletter. Thanks to Tangerine Clarke who exercised that responsibility very well during our pilot initiative. I was assigned the editorial responsibility for the month of February.

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to show appreciation to everyone who took time, despite the inclement weather to attend the wake held for one of our founding members and hero of the Guyana Cultural Association of NY - Godfrey Chin. That evening was packed with excitement and commemorated in true form his genius and exemplified his dedication and life he unselfishly portrayed during his tenure on this earth plane. While remembering Godfrey let us also pay tribute to Don Cornelius. A legend, a pioneer of Black music and black culture, who truly provided a means for black artists to showcase their talents via his TV show "Soul Train." What an awesome legacy he has left behind.

This month marks the celebration of our diverse cultural heritage in Guyana. Trinidad and most neighboring countries refer to this artistic extravaganza as Carnival. However since February 1970, Mashramani has been the major cultural celebration for Guyanese, having earlier overcome that infamous day of disturbances on February 16, 1962.

GCA's proposed 2012 theme: Masquerade Lives! - will capture the history, vibrancy, artistry and colorful spectacle of this art form that will feature prominently in Guyana this year as promised by the Ministry of Culture.

Secondly we are indeed grateful for all the healthy comments you our readers made regarding our January newsletter. Your critical thoughts and encouragement are appreciated and your valuable source of information will all be considered. Your suggestions will certainly make our newsletter paramount here in the Diaspora. As the year unfolds we promise to stimulate you with not only cultural programs, but also inspiring features, events and activities. We will also feature people who made us proud of their achievements. I draw your attention to the special section describing Claire Goring's memories of fashion and costume design. In PART I she brings to life the behind-the-scenes stories critical to the birth and sustenance of Carnival Art and Culture in Guyana

Thirdly, please enjoy our articles on Black History month as we pause to recognize some of our African American Guyanese overseas; the origins of Mashramani; a call to sustain and preserve Godfrey Chin's legacy and collections; remembering one of the nine tribes of the Amerindians; a portrayal of the political and cultural immigration divide; music education workshops, and many other interesting features.

Special acknowledgement to our writers and all who contributed in our previous issues. It's easy to take for granted the ability and hard work of the talented personnel, advertisers, and volunteers. Nothing brings us more excitement than the success of actually being able to make a difference through our publications.

Finally, we salute and thank you for your ardent support in 2011 and invite your continued patronage in 2012 as we venture to produce another exciting Folk Festival season.

Please join our Facebook group, and log on to www.guyfolkfest.org for our upcoming events. May 2012 bring another year of cultural and artistic education and inspiration for all of us to enjoy.

Edgar Henry

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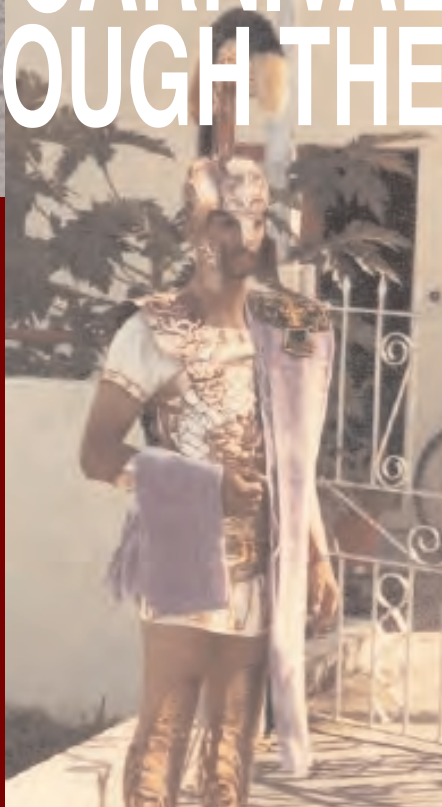


GUYANA CARNIVAL COSTUMES THROUGH THE YEARS

1961 GUYANA FESTIVAL “Helen of Troy”

Godfrey Chin,
assisted by Arthur Veerasammy

One of the first attempts in Guyana to bring costume mas to a carnival-like celebration.



Helen of Troy was significant in costuming in that it embraced, for the first time in Guyana, techniques of metal work required to scroll and carve intricate breast plates and armor. The presentation included all the characters of Homer’s Iliad including Hercules, Jason and the Golden Fleece, Polyphemus, the Amazons, Hector, Ulysses and Paris.

By 1962, papier-mache sculptures together with feather craft and wire bending frames were introduced. These were essential skills to be mastered if costume carnivaling was to grow in Guyana.

ALSO KNOWN AS AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH, STARTED WITH DR. CARTER G. WOODSON'S THOUGHT THAT HISTORY BOOKS OMITTED MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OR CONTRIBUTIONS OF BLACK PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THEIR HISTORY

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Edgar Henry

There is so much to be learnt from the controversy and celebration of the struggle and character that define people of African decent. Embedded in this process is the cultural diversity that garners the Diaspora and the United States into a great mosaic.

History has not always been kind to African Americans and it took quite some time to embrace diverse ethnic cultures. Most historical recordings have omitted significant contributions made by important heroes of the past. The vast majority of Americans know of Rosa Parks and her vital role leading up to the Civil Rights Movement but very few know of Paul Leroy Robeson who was an American concert singer, recording artist, actor, athlete, scholar and also an advocate for Civil Rights.

Culture is a set of norms that establish societal standards for what is considered general acceptable behavior, beliefs and customs. In every culture there are basic standards for social interaction. From a Guyanese perspective we portray and recognize various conduits for the transmission and sustainability of traditional culture, which include storytelling, Kwe Kwe, performing arts, masquerade, maticore,

Eid-ul-Fitr, literary hang, sports, food, dance, art exhibition, poetry, comedy and many other ethnic cultural activities.

Other cultures take on an entirely different composition in America. We bring with us our cultural heritage to the US and at times tend to have a rather myopic worldview. Some of us adapt and can readily accept and respect other cross-cultures while others do not. Cultural diversity makes our country richer by making it a more interesting place in which to live. Just think how boring our diet would be without Chinese, Mexican, Japanese, Italian, Indian, German, French or South African foods. I know there are some Guyanese who claim they can eat cook up rice or curry every single day.

Black history month, also known as African American history month, began largely due to one man, Dr. Carter G. Woodson who found that history books omitted major accomplishments or contributions of black people made throughout their long history as Americans. It was perceived that the only person recognized and contributed to the culture of the United States was George Washington Carver. Initially, Black History Month was celebrated during the second week of February



GODFREY CAMBRIDGE
Actor, comedian and civil rights activist was born in New York to parents Sarah and Alexander Cambridge of British Guiana.

to correlate with the birthdays of two men, President Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. The bicentennial of the United States in 1976 motivated the legislature to designate the entire month of February as a time for celebrating black history.

Black History has come a long way. Gone are those days when cultural artists and singers in the fifties such as The Platters and Nat King Cole had to actually "slick" their hair to be recognized and validated by the establishment of that era to sing and appear on radio, bearing in mind that no television existed in those days.

Cultural diversity brings language skills, new ways of thinking, and creative solutions to difficult problems and encourages negotiating proficiencies. Black History Month encompasses an entire population of people that possess a unique heritage and remarkable perception of the world. The United States could still be recognized as the melting pot or more precisely, a salad bowl where new immigrants are integrated into the American society but at the same time maintaining and embracing their own culture.

CONTRIBUTIONS BY AFRICAN AMERICAN GUYANESE



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Historian, Writer



E.R. BRAITHWAITE
Writer



CCH POUNDER
Actress



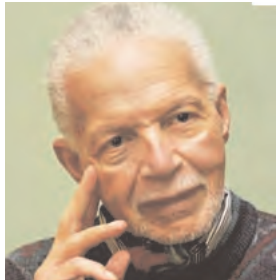
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Bklyn, Dep. Borough President



SHIRLEY CHISHOLM
Politician



EUSI KWAYANA
Activist, Writer



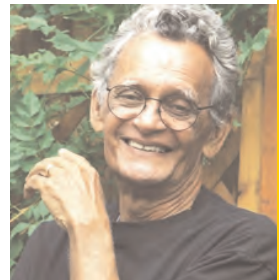
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DONALD LOCKE
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TV Journalist



JULIET EMANUEL
Associate Professor



ALYSON CAMBRIDGE
Opera Singer



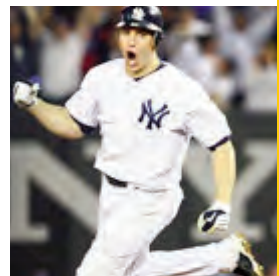
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CLAIRE PATTERSON-MONAH
Healthcare Administrator



DEREK LUKE
Actor



MARK TEXEIRA
Baseball Player, Yankees



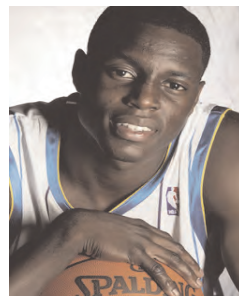
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Writer, Professor



SEAN PATRICK THOMAS
Actor



MARITZA CORREIA
Olympic Silver Medalist



DARREN COLLISON
NBA, Indiana Pacers



ALIAN POMPEY
Athlete

HOW MASHRAMANI CELEBRATIONS STARTED IN LINDEN BY THE JAYCEES

The Jaycees of Linden, since Guyana became independent in 1966, had been arranging and organizing an Independence Carnival in McKenzie. When Guyana became a Republic in February, 1970, the Jaycees of Linden, under its President Nobreiga, formed a Jaycees Republic Celebrations Committee. Basil Butcher was selected as Chairman but because he was selected to tour Australia with the West Indies Cricket Team, Mr. Jim Blackman was appointed as the Deputy to carry on.

A broad based committee including resource personnel such as Wordsworth McAndrew, Arthur Seymour and Adrian Thompson, began the organization of the Carnival activities.

The search for a name to replace Carnival began and it was suggested by Basil Butcher that an Amerindian name be chosen. This was agreed to and several individuals including Mr. Allan Feidtkou, an Amerindian, were contacted.

Mr. Feidtkou held discussion with his grandfather who explained a type of Festival that was held by Amerindians whenever they gathered to celebrate a special event. This event he said was like "Muster Many"

which sounded in Arawak like Mashramani.

Steps were taken to confirm this. The help of Mr. Adrian Thompson, who was the District Commissioner of the interior and was considered an authority on Amerindian Affairs, was sought.

After checks could not confirm or deny that the Arawak word for the Festival was Mashramani, and in keeping with Mr. Feidtkou's interpretation, it was decided that the Festival would be called Mashramani.

On February 23rd, 1970 the festival called "Mashramani" was a huge success with people drawn from all Regions of Guyana to Linden welcoming Guyana's Republic status with over three days of frolic and fun.

After witnessing the massive crowds, glitter and level of competition, Mr. David Singh a Government official held discussion with the Jaycees Committee about bringing the event to Georgetown. Approval was also given by the then President Forbes Burnham for Mash to be the National Event for the Republic Celebration.

Mash activities were rotated in Linden, Berbice and Georgetown but due to sponsorship, the Costume Bands contest remained in Georgetown.



**MASHRAMANI
1968**

Evadne Gravesande, first Mashramani Queen at McKenzie

I was aware from an early age, that in my home, if my mother can make it, we don't buy it. I can't remember wearing a pair of socks bought from the store because my mother would knit my socks with hat and purse to match. My first foray into costume designing was at age nine when my Mom and I designed an entire costume made from banana leaves for the talent show at the annual Ghana Day celebration at Victoria Village.

As a teenager, I did not realize I was following in her footsteps until I would take my aunt's dresses and, using pieces from each dress, I would come up with my own design which would be more along the latest fashion and was tight enough to show off my blossoming curves. To complete that image, and to the amusement of my family, I would weave wire into my hair to form whatever design I thought would fit with my outfit. Sometimes I even used pieces of materials to add to my "Soca Boat" slippers to compliment my outfit.

A member of the Young Methodists Arts Youth Group at Kingston Methodist Church, I also had the opportunity during our Cultural Festival each year to compete in the art and craft competitions. I also worked on the play "Barabus" staged at the Theatre Guild, during Holy Week and on other stage productions at my church.

At some point, I saw a Carnival magazine with the latest costumes. I was enthralled by the artistic creativity of the Trinidad Mas designers and their use of many different forms of materials (natural and man-made) to transform the costume into a dream of the mind's eye. Even though at the time I had no way of showing my designs I would think of a theme based on folklore, culture or tradition and come up with designs for characters who I thought would portray those themes.

Years later, working as a Graphic Artist in the advertising department of Guyana National Newspapers, I met businessman Neil Chan and during discussions with Chan and his assistant Fay Gaskin, I mentioned my passion for production and costume designing and showed them some of my designs. This was to be the start of the most exciting and memorable time of my career as a designer.

As my love for costume designing grew, it became my

IN THE SOLO MASH CAMP

Claire Ann Goring



MASHRAMANI
1974

Solo Producer Neil Chan in this Clare Goring designed winning King of the Band costume for the band "From Whence We Came"

focus to elevate that aspect of local culture which, after the days of Godfrey Chin and David Lanny, had somewhat lost the glitz, glamour, originality and attention to detail they were known for. I wanted my designs to be expressions of the Mashramani spirit while capturing the pageantry and splendor of the portrayal.

Those who know Neil Chan would know that he does everything with flair and as Godfrey Chin would say, with "Pizazz." So when Chan decided to enter Solo into the Small Band Competition in the 1973 Mashramani Competition, I was tasked with coming up with designs and along with Grant Gaskin who was familiar

with costume making in Trinidad, the production started. For many months prior to Mash Day, I would work at my job at the Chronicle, then rush over to the Solo camp on Eping Avenue and work until two and three o'clock in the morning. Many times, in those early years, looking on as Patrick Melville bent wire for the frames of the costume and soldered pieces together, the next day I would have to go to work with dark shades to hide my "hawk eyes" which came about from staring into the flame and sparks from the soldering equipment.

The Solo Mash Camp was a family of volunteers sitting on homemade benches and "shooting the breeze" as they cut and paste until the wee hours of the morning. The camp was surprised one year when Martin Carter and Marc Mathews walked in and started cutting cardboard and foil like any other volunteer.

It was not only work at the Solo Mash Camp. Food, music and practical jokes got us through the night. The resident cooks, Ivor and Brian would have their "favorites" and would take orders for that night's dinner. For those who could not keep up with the late nights, it was best you stayed at home, since, if you fell asleep, your eye lids would be pasted shut and your legs tied to the chair you were sitting on. One volunteer decided one night to make his bed on the cross beam of the roof of the tent.

MEMORIES OF A COSTUME DESIGNER

In Godfrey Chin's Nostalgia, he stated
*"...without any mamaguying,
 I award the title of Best Costume
 Band ever in Georgetown to
 Solo's presentation
 "From Whence We Came" in 1974.*

*Producer Neil Chan with designer Claire
 Goring produced a mas equal to Cleopatra's
 entry into Rome Claire's elaborate
 authenticity was mind boggling. Thousands of
 feathers adorned massive headpieces, intricately
 braided to glamorize tribal splendor."*

We all looked on in amazement as he slept comfortably on a 4X4 beam, high above us. Another "sleeper" thought he was smart and made his bed in a large box at the bottom of the table, covering himself with scraps of paper and pieces of colorful foil. Unfortunately his shoes stuck out and Alan Cooper and Chris Cameron decided to get him back for the many times he floured or pasted a sleeping volunteer. They used one of the cardboard tubes from a bolt of cloth and ran it down into the box. They poured water down the tube which woke our "sleeper" from his slumber, landing him on the ground, soaking wet, with glitter and pieces of foil stuck to his body.

Another Mash Camp activity we looked forward to was the yearly spying visit from "Trini", Winfield James. The Mash Camp was surrounded by high zinc sheets so that the competition could not see in. Our king and queen costumes had to be hidden from the eyes of the public until the night of the Mash Competition. "Trini" would come by with some of his crew around one o'clock in the morning, tooting his horn and banging on the shed. They would try to scale the fence even as the Solo crew sprayed them with paint and threw items at them. "Solo, wha' alyuh hiding deh. I doan ca'e wha ulyuh coming wid, I gun beat ulyuh into next week," James would shout as he drove around the camp.

Another memorable event was the Mash Nite Competition at the Linden Sports Grounds when we were forced to lift our huge Queen costume over the fence in the pouring rain, because the personnel at the gates refused to open the gates for us to enter. "Alyuh comin' to win everything again, well get in de best way you can" shouted the gatekeeper. Lifting the huge, wet costume on our shoulders over the fence, we borrowed fans from friends in the neighborhood to dry out the many feathers which adorned the costume. Also locked out from the dressing area, we formed a human curtain so that our Queen, Sandra Stewart could dress. Of course after winning again, we had to hightail it out of there. Linden was a far way from Georgetown and some of those Lindenens were out for blood. The next year, the blind Calypsonian "Mighty Smoker" wrote a calypso about it.

Claire A. Goring - Part 2 continued in March issue



*Carol Cholmondeley, Female
 Individual in the Band
 "From Whence We Came"*

**MASHRAMANI
 1974**



*Karla Gaskin, Female
 Individual in the Band
 "Beauty in Fertility"*

**MASHRAMANI
 1973**



MASHRAMANI 2012

Allan Fenty

Guyana's Mashramani, now virtually a three - week long festival of both art - forms and educational activities, is really the celebratory aspect of the Republic Anniversary Observance. It climaxes, in a way, with an extravaganza of a Costume and Float Parade through the streets of the Capital, Georgetown.

There is now something for all Guyanese, their friends and other visitors and tourists at February's Mashramani in Guyana.

COME VISIT TROPICAL RAIN-FORESTS OR THE MIGHTY MOUNT RORAIMA STRADDLING THREE COUNTRIES,

STAY AT OUR ECOLOGICAL LODGES IN THE FORESTS OR ON THE RIVERS.

PARTICIPATE IN STREET DRAMA -

LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRADITIONAL AND POP CONCERTS
PLAY MAS'

SEE FOLK RITUALS RE -ENACTED
ATTEND UNIVERSITY - LED LITERARY/ CULTURAL WORSHOPS.

What? You still love PAN, MASQUERADE, CALYPSO, SOCA AND CHUTNEY! We'll come on down to Georgetown. Mashramani is more varied, more diversified than many other festivals or carnivals. And by air, road or bridge, you may slip across to Venezuela, Suriname or Brazil.

Then it's back to Georgetown or some hinterland or rural community to "festivate" with the folk. Book a fantastic February in Guyana this year. What? Weather? Rain or Storm Mashramani 2012 goes on!

Ting-A-Ling Ting-A-Ling

Ronald Lammy

Steelpan creativity developed in Guyana shortly after it emerged in the instrument's birthplace. Guyanese musicians have played an impressive, defining role, albeit under-recognized. But by 2012 the characteristics of Oii - origins, identity and influence - portray how far we have come with steelpan artistry and Guyanese contributions.

Two major milestones in the presentation of the instrument in popular music hail back to recordings in 1954 and ten years later. Al Seales, a pioneering music producer, conceived and recorded "Ting-A-Ling" in his Georgetown studios. It is an extraordinary recording in light of its era: Guyanese are being restrained for self-government aspirations; and the art forms combination is a first. The featured vocalist was Doreen Gravesande, a soprano in popular music, singing lyrics in tribute

to steelband music. The melody was reinforced by the contemporary ping-pong, the precursor to today's soprano or lead steelpan. A full brass line provides the accompaniment.

Bing Serrao and The Ramblers were a popular Guyanese string band in the mid-1960s and their most liked performance was "Three in One Saga". Exhibiting their self-confidence and the influence the emerging steelpan music was having at that time, the band re-recorded their signature tune. The ping pong was featured in a solo performance.

Forty-five years later, Kenton Wyatt applies 21st century technology in a leapfrog approach to training steelpan musicians. Observe a typical Kendrum Youth Steel Orchestra panyard rehearsal scene. A new item is introduced to the repertoire one afternoon.

The music director plays a sym-

phony recording of a European classical piece from the panyard computer and through high quality speakers. He discusses nuances for specific pan instruments. The score is presented to each band member. The three melody pan members then move their instruments to another section of the panyard for a brief practice session by themselves. The music director, meanwhile, has individual discussions with each of the other members at their respective instruments. The lead pannists rejoin the group, the ensemble plays together three times, and rehearsal ends as scheduled.

The latest addition to the repertoire was done using music scores. In addition, all of the instruments were individually recorded and modulated through a mixing board. The recording would be reviewed by the director for instruction and guidance at the next practice session.

Teaching and presenting pan in new ways while preserving the ingenuity of the artform has brought more science to the art of pan. Glorious sounds have been our privilege to enjoy.

Bing Serrao and the Ramblers and Kendrum Youth Steel Orchestra



Have you not known? Have you not heard? Well, why should you know about the men who are part and parcel of Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc. Some are more visible than others and so are greeted loudly when they appear in public but others labor quietly in the background, encouraging, supporting, applauding the rest of us who tend to the business of GCA. To list all that they do for this organization will take up much more room than allowed in this newsletter. So there will be very short acknowledgments of what they cheerfully do for the organization

and in so doing make us all look good. To anchor the following words I am using the events that took place in the tenth season. Let us then praise the men of GCA and then some.

Selwyn Collins walked in one day during the Summer Camp to take a look. In short order he was conducting the Writing Workshop of the day. **Lear Matthews** and **David Bryant** came by to see what was going on and pledged support. Lear is now heavily involved in the newsletter, Folk, the magazine and the Annual Symposium. It is he that delivers his brother's poem to rousing applause whenever I call upon him. It is he who stayed behind at the last symposium hauling out garbage and so on. **Clem Richardson**, his shirt was soaked by the time he was finished teaching at the camp and the children adored him and he them. When we look up any year there is **Ken Corsbie** arriving on time at the Literary Hang, the Symposium and other events. One does not dare ask at what hour he left Long Island. **Ron Bobb-Semple**, in character, everyword in place for the plays and other events. **E. Wayne McDonald**, who brought to life Mittelholzer's play at the Symposium at York College (praise here to Ivelaw Griffith for generosity plus!) and who willingly ran a workshop for the summer camp and has not missed a Lit. Hang, **Keith Proctor**, quiet, effective in his amazing way (you should have heard those children sing, "Lord, We Lift our Hands on High") Keith reminds us of an earlier gracious supporter, **Danny Coakley**. Then there is **Rudy Bishop**, with and without his Chronicle Steel Orchestra, weathering a flooded auditorium basement, helping to godfather the location of the Summer Camp, **Courtney Parris**, always there, concerned, promoting, running interference and the other godfather, **Alexander Betton-Haynes**, early morning run around at the camp all those lunches, cleaning up, helping with lessons, physical labor during the play, **Oswald Bobb**, his own children in tow, in the early afternoon Film Show Time! We acknowledge **Chuck Mohan** and **Leslie Stewart** whose firm support and con-



SELWYN COLLINS



LEAR MATTHEWS



CLEM RICHARDSON



E. WAYNE McDONALD



ROMESH SINGH



KEITH PROCTOR

tributions to events such as the summer camp were more than gifts. **Akoyah Rudder**: ah ha, more than the drums for the dance classes, cheerfully giving drumming classes and making kites, and all that fetching back and fro **Jeggae** again the music whenever needed and then some. **Wayne Daniels**, and the dance and the children, stick dancing! **Monsignor Paul Jervis**, space for the Kwe Kwe, Symposium and Literary Hang over the years at St. Peter Claver and Our Lady of Victory. **Fr. Clark Powers** for the gardens and other spaces of St. John's for meetings and the Lit. Hang. **Marcel Braithwaite** with whom there would have been no space for rehearsals for the plays. Over the years the actors invaded Leinad Early Childhood Center and After-school for rehearsals and **Lear Gordon** did not flinch. Neither did **Peter Halder** or **Eusi Kwayana** when they allowed their thoughts to be filmed! **Hilton Hemerding**: calmly every day at the camp, teaching, advising, remember the music, the singing and the Ice Cream Banquet! One does not see these men (and a "hats off" to the supportive spouses and partners of all the GCA women) and they are not members of the board; just men who believe in the mission of GCA and the children of the Diaspora.

And now for the Board: That Summer Camp (and this has to be in short hand) **Maurice Blenman**: the man who gets there early, sets up, deals with the vendors, breaks down the field, runs the children's games - one sees the effects of his work; the voice of GCA, the inimitable **Franklin**, **Bobby Vieira**, all those gifts at the end of the camp; **Edgar Henry** - music theory at the camp, steady, steady and with no complaints, space for events, has already godfathered space for the Lit Hang, **Cyril Browne**: the story teller; **Roy Brummell**, activist, educator, writer, dedicates his time so quietly one does not notice,

Ashton Franklin, giving the children at the camps over the years lessons on writing and did those kids love the free books! **Ron Lammy** always in support of recognizing the youth particularly those resident in Guyana, **Carl**

Hazlewood, the curator of the first Art Exhibition for Guyanese artists in New York, the gracious host of the Open Mike session at the Lit Hang, **Ray Seales**, prompt supporter of the Silent auction and promoter of music initiatives in GCA, **Romesh Singh**, support, encouragement in all GCA efforts, **Errol Doris**, the GCA business man, lives out of state but always in touch with his finger on the pulse, **Francis Farrier**, filming and reporting, quietly generously, **Godfrey Williams**, even out of town, a firm contributor; the late **Godfrey Chin** (this essay was proposed early in January) his work cannot be over praised but his determination to support the first Lit Hang will always be treasured. **Maurice Braithwaite**, AKA MoBraff, the other person at the desk of the summer Camp, the voice and diction master, the producer and director of the Performing Arts Program, supporter of the Lit Hang and the Symposium, godfather of space over at St. Peter Claver and physical labor on the festival ground. **Malcolm Hall** was succeeded by **Vibert Cambridge** as President but each man was his own force: Malcolm who insisted on Open Mic, our own GCA throw down, at the Lit Hang, fetching and carrying and subscribing to all events in ways too numerous to mention, drumming, acting as backstage crew and in lighting, helping to teach in the summer camps and meetings, meetings, meetings; Vibert picking up the challenge, guiding, enjoying those flowers and the home made ice-cream, the joy in the children's masquerade at the camp. As Godfrey has said, "Ya tink it easy." The work of these men collectively make GCA. They are there all the time with patience and good grace. But you would not really notice them, so it is time to say,

"Come let us praise good men."



CHUCK MOHAN



AKOYAW RUDDER

LET US BUILD UPON THE WORK GODFREY CHIN WAS ENGAGED IN

CALL TO ESTABLISH A SYSTEMATIC AND SUSTAINABLE COLLECTION AND STORAGE STRATEGY FOR GUYANESE MEMORY

Vibert Cambridge

The passing of giants is always sad, and the recent passing of Godfrey Chin is no exception. I vividly remember sitting with him at his David Street flat for most of the afternoon of Saturday, December 18, 2011. He reflected on the joys of being back home and the sadness he sometimes felt about the apparent disregard for his efforts to popularize Guyanese heritage and social history. He bemoaned the passing of the old days, not in a nostalgia based on the class and color privileges of most of the 20th century but of the “old days” when actualizing our possibilities was the driving force, when entire communities celebrated the achievements of “poor people children” and “inventiveness” was celebrated—even making a toy—a war tank from a disused cotton reel, two pieces of candle, a rubber band, and two pieces of “pointa.”

I had looked forward to sharing more information from Ohio University’s Guyanese newspaper archives with Godfrey. He was finding it difficult to use the newspaper archives because the documents in the Guyana National Archives were too brittle. He considered it a crime against Guyana’s heritage to damage those documents further by using them. It was exciting to send Godfrey a PDF file of The Daily Argosy article describing the first flight of an aircraft in British Guiana on Easter Monday, March 24, 1913.

That Saturday afternoon Godfrey also talked about the photographic exhibition he was planning for Mashramani 2012. Given his penchant for pizzazz, he was planning to push the boundaries of photographic displays in Guyana. Godfrey wanted to incorporate the technologies associated with Guyana’s photographic heritage—magic lanterns, slide projectors, and contemporary digital technologies. He envisaged large photographs (some draped from buildings), cameos, stills from moving pictures, and panels with audio (music and the spoken word). In the final analysis, Godfrey

Chin’s ambition was to help contemporary Guyanese visualize their history and heritage.

When giants pass, they take so much with them. Sometimes, it is an act of selflessness that saves a giant from obscurity. Had it not been for the generosity of the Grant brothers, Billy Moore and Richard Noble would have been buried in an unmarked place and forgotten, their contributions to Guyana’s cultural life minimized. How do we remember Douglu Betty and Bal Gangadhar Tillack? How do their stories and those of the many who have gone before enrich us, invigorate us, and inspire us in this pivotal moment in Guyana when it seems possible to break the cycle of forever spinning the wheels of political rhetoric and going no place?

The question is: “Do we know our giants?” Our ancestors are giants—every one of them: those who left still-to-be-decoded messages in the petroglyphs of Guyana’s hinterland; those who with “shovel in hand moved millions of tons of water logged clay to humanize the coast”; those who travelled top-side to wrest Eldorado’s jewels; and those who farmed the land and fed a nation, always leaving some bambaye. We need to honor them.

Let us build upon Godfrey Chin’s work. He was standing on the shoulders of giants like Norman Cameron, Wordsworth McAndrew, Joel Benjamin, Lakshmi Kalicharran, and Raj Kumari Singh who always found pride in being Guyanese. We must establish a sustainable strategy for systematically collecting and archiving Guyanese memory. Memory is crucial for hearing the voices and aspirations of our heritage—for visualizing preferred futures. The Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc., stands ready to play its part in such an effort.



**GODFREY CHIN'S
AMBITION WAS
TO HELP
CONTEMPORARY
GUYANESE
VISUALIZE THEIR
HISTORY AND
HERITAGE.**

WHEN GUYANESE GIANTS PASS ON

THEY TAKE SO MUCH WITH THEM!

GUYANA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK READY TO BE PARTNERSHIP OF DIASPORA AND DOMESTIC ORGANIZATIONS TO ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY FOR SYSTEMATICALLY COLLECTING AND ARCHIVING GUYANESE MEMORY.

**SOMETIMES, WE
DO NOT
RECOGNIZE OUR
GIANTS!**

**HOW DO WE
REMEMBER
DOUGLA ELSIE
AND
BAL GANGADHAR
TILLACK,
NORMA CAMERON,
LAKSHMI
KALICHARRAN
AND RAJKUMARI
SINGH?**

14

MEMORIAL SERVICE

JOIN THE FAMILY & GCA AS WE
CELEBRATE THE LIFE AND WORK OF

Godfrey W. Chin

SUNDAY, FEB. 26, 2012

3.00 P.M.

**OUR LADY OF
VICTORY MEMORIAL HALL**

283 THROOP AVENUE &
McDONOUGH STS,
(next cross street Macon)
BROOKLYN, NY 11216

DIRECTIONS:

**By MTA: C train to Kingston and Throop.
Walk 3 minutes to Throop.**

**Because of current construction at weekends,
call MTA @ 718 330 1234
for any additional information.**



DOUBLE NEGATIVE

By John Morris

I don't want to talk to nobody,
Cause I don't have nothing to say.
I don't have no money
Cause I don't get no pay.

I don't like no daytime,
Cause I don't make no hay.
I don't like no bedtime,
Cause I don't want to not stay.

I don't dance with no antiman,
Cause I don't want no play.
I don't drink with any drunk man,
Cause I don't forget the way.

I don't buy no nice clothes,
Cause I don't go to no church.
I don't end no fight with no blows,
Cause I don't want to stay in no lurch.

I don't read with no dull light,
Cause I can't do without my sight.
I don't fly no heavy kite,
Cause I don't like to like the height.

I don't have nothing, not a thing,
Cause I don't have nothing to bring.
I don't know nothing, not a thing,
Cause I don't ask nobody nothing.



THE POET JOHN MORRIS

John G. Morris, former teacher at Berbice Educational Institute and District Youth Officer, is Professor of Sociology, Edison College in Punta Gorda, Florida.

SUBMIT YOUR POEMS

"The GCA Online Newsletter Editorial Team invites poets to submit their poems for consideration of publication in our POETS' CORNER.

Please make your submission to: LMatthews10@yahoo.com."

MOORE CELEBRATES 90TH BIRTHDAY
RECEIVES CCH NATIONAL AWARD

PHILLIP MOORE HONORED BY NATIONAL GALLERY

Elfrieda Bissember

A special card printed by the gallery last December honors Mr. Moore with a reproduction (detail) of his colorfully patterned 1966 painting *Journey - Rosignol to Georgetown*. This card, along with another by Winston Strick, MS, *Birds in the Forest* (1987), printed this month, can be purchased from the National Gallery's foyer shop along with others reproducing works from the National Collection; these are blank for personal messages.

Additionally, the main first floor gallery at Castellani House is exhibiting works by artists who have won awards at the National Visual Arts Exhibition, the premier visual arts competition in Guyana which ceased in 1994 after nearly four decades of such competitions being organized and presented, first by the National History & Culture Council, later renamed the National History and Arts Council, and its former successor the Department of Culture, all of which agencies administered the National Collection prior to the founding of the National Gallery in 1993.

Castellani House in wishing to revive an earlier proposal for a relaunch of the NVAE event, is thus promoting the idea of such a competition through the presentation and examination of the quality of prizewinning works and artists, many of whom have had their careers and reputations enhanced, if not established, by the winning of NVAE awards.

The current exhibition therefore includes paintings and sculpture by prizewinning artists from the National Collection, such as Stanley Greaves, George Simon, Oswald Hussein, Bernadette Persaud, Kenneth Ward, Dudley Charles and Gary Thomas. The exhibition ran until Saturday 4th February.

Gallery hours are 10am to 5pm Monday to Friday, and 2 to 6pm on Saturday; the gallery is closed on Sundays and holidays, and admission is free.

Photograph shows Philip Moore signing his work 'Janet Guyana', donated to the National Collection while Curator of Castellani House Elfrieda Bissember, Mr. Moore's daughter Corine Munroe, granddaughter and another relative, look on in the background.



Paintings and sculpture from the National Collection by the doyen of Guyanese art, Philip Moore, are on display on the two upper floors of the National Gallery building last December and for the month of January 2012. Mr. Moore celebrated his 90th birthday last October 12th, shortly before the National Awards Ceremony bestowed on him the award of the Cacique Crown of Honour (CCH) for his exceptional contribution to Guyanese art. The gallery's display honours this most influential of Guyana's artists for his lifelong creativity which has produced hundreds of works of art since his first sculptures begun in the late 1940's, after he experienced a vision of a hand reaching down

to him from the skies with a sculptor's tool - recorded in his painting in the National Collection, 'Receiving the Gift' (1971-80).

The National Gallery Curator and staff visited Mr. Moore at his home on the Corentyne on his birthday with gifts and also with the painting, titled *Janet Guyana*, which the artist had donated to the gallery last year in memory of the late Chairman of the National Gallery's Management Committee and former President of Guyana, Mrs. Janet Jagan. Contrary to his usual practice the artist had not signed the work and had promised to do so later; the gallery therefore returned with the work for the artist's signature.

PHILLIP MOORE

THE SPIRIT-TRAINED VISIONARY ARTIST

Anton (Tony) Rajer



Obeah Ceremonial Drum, by Phillip Moore, carved and painted wood with nails, 1982 Gallery Collection

About 1940, Moore converted to Jordanite Christianity, which teaches self-help, personal pride, communal life, hard work, and study of the Bible. But his intense love for God by no means conflicted with his belief in the influence of spirits. About 1955, Moore dreamed that a large hand reached down to him from the heavens, and a voice commanded him to begin his career as an artist. This is the reason Moore considers himself "spirit-taught."

The dream was a decisive moment in his life. He began modestly, refining his skills by carving wooden canes and quickly developed proficiency in manipulating tropical hardwoods such as purple heart and cocobolo. His early subjects included portraits, animal figures, sports heroes and stylized magic drums. Eventually, he turned to other forms of art, such as painting and poetry. By 1964, his intuitive carving abilities came to the attention of local authorities at the Department of Culture, who hired him to teach craft and arts.

Motivated by love for his native Guyana he got the chance to create what would be the largest bronze sculpture in the region. Moore's 1763 Monument, nearly 25 feet tall, dominates the Square of the Revolution in Guyana. A defiant African warrior, with pre-Columbian-like helmet and African breastplate, stands at the ready to march against any enemy who dares to desecrate his homeland. It reminds one of the pervasive African belief that the spirits of one's ancestors continue to exercise influence upon the living. Though controversial at first, and neglected more recently, the sculpture is a powerful though enigmatic work ÷ combining traditional African motifs such as the stylized masks used for leggings and breastplates as well as its non-Western sculptural proportions.

Moore laments the fact that younger Guyanese have been forced to eke out a living by mass-producing art for the tourist trade. He always felt that his art was meant to be enjoyed by the masses, and he, therefore, was pleased to hold exhibitions in local cultural institutions. In spite of his reputation, he only occasionally has sold his works to the general public.

KEITH WAITHE

ESSEQUIBO MUSIC ARTS EDUCATION ORGANIZATION RUNS WORKSHOPS IN STORYTELLING AND POETRY, AFRICAN AND CARIBBEAN DANCE, CARNIVAL COSTUME DESIGN, LIVE MUSIC AND DIGITAL IMAGING FOR UK YOUTHS

KEITH WAITHE HEADLINES TO STANDING OVATION IN UK TOUR OF "STRANGE FRUIT" AN INTERPRETATION OF THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF BILLIE HOLIDAY, .

Essequibo Music is an Arts Education Organisation based in the London Borough of Ealing. The members of our education team include contemporary Black British artists, storytellers, poets, musicians, all inspirational and experienced workshop practitioners working in the educational, cultural and performance arenas. All practitioners has enhanced CRB disclosure.

Essequibo Music has had week-long or fortnight-long residencies in educational settings in Bristol, Cardiff, Liverpool, London Borough of Ealing (The EAZ Project) and Oxford. They work with Primary and Secondary schools and After School Projects, Teachers' professional Development courses and Higher Education Performing Arts courses across the country. Among their special Essequibo Music projects have been a week-long residency at the Eden Project in Cornwall and an education workshop in the Pitt Rivers Museum,

Oxford. Most of their projects culminate in a performance that can include music, dance, storytelling, song and costume design. The programmes use multi media and draw on cultural traditions from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

Essequibo Music runs workshops in Storytelling, and Poetry, African and Caribbean Dance, Carnival Costume Design, Live Music and Digital Imaging. The Essequibo Music collaborative works as a team with teachers and project workers to develop skills and talent in all these areas, and to promote confidence and social skills. Themed week-long projects give an opportunity to bring these many arts experiences together. Themes they work with include Myths and Legends, The Rainforest and Caribbean Christmas.

They work closely with staff as well as students to prepare for week-long experiences. The week begins with a short performance for a large group and continues with

workshop sessions run in an informal, yet structured manner. The week leads to a dramatic 'presentation' of the skills that students have developed around the project theme.

Essequibo Music also works with a number of adult community associations and youth groups, supported by the Learning and Skills Council and the Children's Fund. They work with children, young people and people with disability, parents, teachers, youth and community workers. One of the core values of Essequibo Music is to reduce isolation, promote social inclusion and to reduce community tensions.

They are happy to work in environments where young people are at risk of exclusion or of becoming involved in criminal activity. They aim to encourage social cohesion and individual creativity in disaffected young people.

STRANGE FRUIT

Keith Waite and
Helen McDonald
Wednesday,
February 22, 2012
Spice of Life
6 Moor Street,
London
7.30-11. p.m.

Award-winning flautist, composer, teacher and expert proponent of vocal gymnastics Keith Waithe produces and promotes an international musical style, exploring an original fusion of jazz, classical, African, Caribbean, Asian and Western influences.

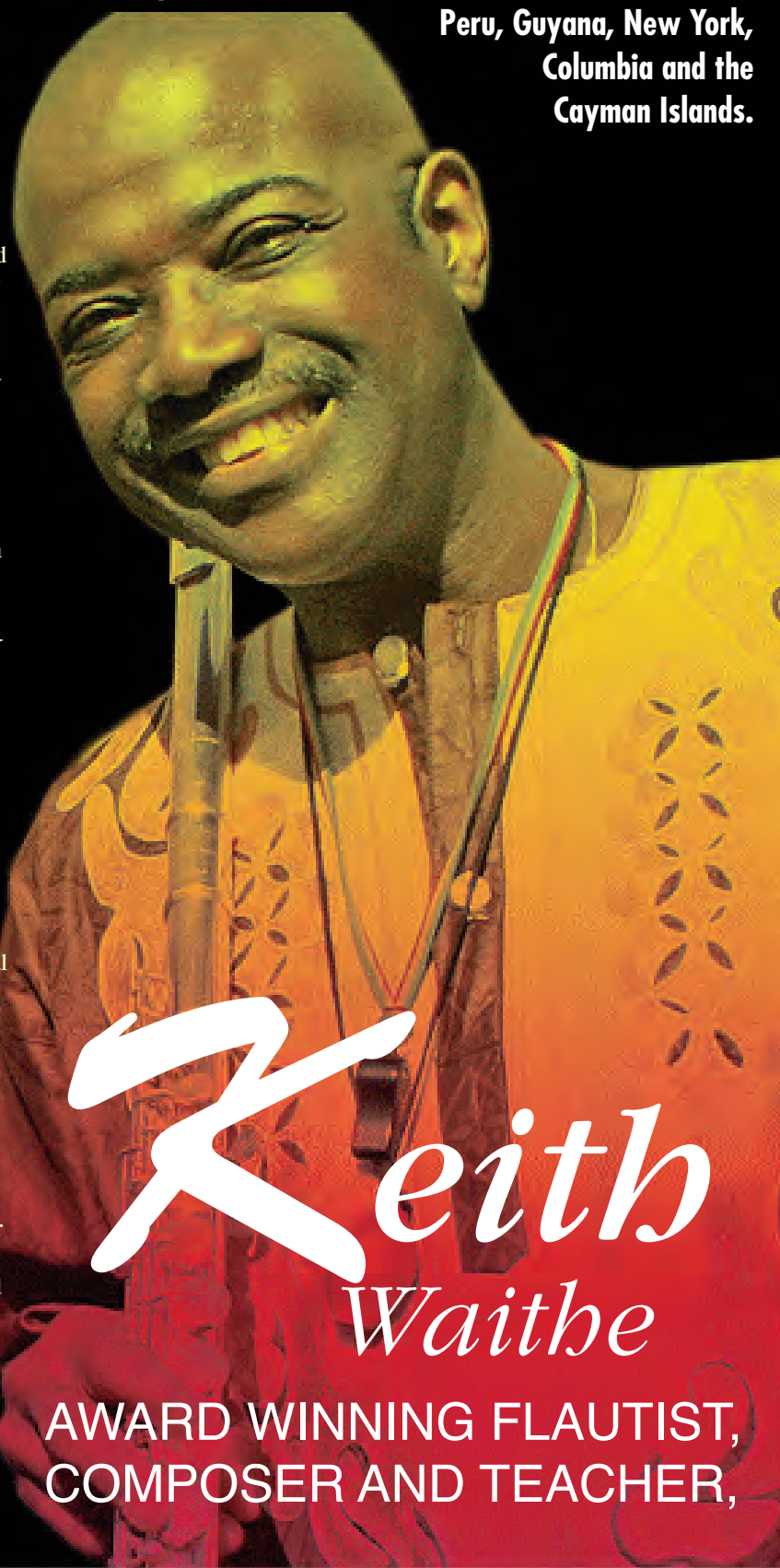
Keith mixes many sounds, fusing enigmatic musical forms in performance in addition to working on radio, theatre and television pieces, utilising his unique drive for a sound that moves audiences chilled out spiritually and sensually. Keith's enormous stage presence and his sense of showmanship helps to make the audience at each live concert a unique experience as was highlighted at the Ealing Jazz Festival (7,000 people) and The Brecon International Jazz Festival (3,000 people).

Keith first learned to play the trumpet from his late father in Guyana and during his formal music training there, transferred to the flute. He developed a passion for the instrument, mastering it at the University of Surrey and the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall, where he gained an LRSM Diploma and the PGCE Teaching Certificate. Keith lives and works in the United Kingdom.

Keith formed the Macusi Players, (taking the name from the powerful Macusis Amerindian tribe from Guyana). Their recent appearance at the Ealing Jazz Festival 2006 was noted by British Newspaper The Guardian "Virtuoso Flautist Waithe and his ensemble" was pick of the week as a concert not to be missed. Summer 2005, The Arts Council Of England - Three Cities create and connect project Commissioned Keith to develop and lead a new World Music Supergroup "Musicque et Espectacio" which was great success in Derby, Leicester and Nottingham. Keith was appointed Musician / Artists in Residence with Oxford Contemporary Music and the Harrow Arts Centre.

Keith is the Director of Essequibo Music an umbrella organisation that has on its books a range of quality contemporary British Artists & Musicians working in educational, cultural and performances arenas.

Waithe continues to thrill audiences all over the world, and has performed at festivals in India, France, Geneva, Peru, Guyana, New York, Columbia and the Cayman Islands.



Keith
Waithe

**AWARD WINNING FLAUTIST,
COMPOSER AND TEACHER,**

ALL ABOUT POLITICS, ECONOMICS AND A CULTURAL DIVIDE

Lear Matthews



Despite prevailing divisive rhetoric on transnational matters, let us symbolically bridge cultures by celebrating Mashramani, an important tradition of the home country, and Black History Month, commemorating the struggles of our adopted home. With the upcoming U.S. presidential elections, the timing, dissention and furor over immigration are by no means accidental.

The debate has become a simmering social issue churned by politics, economics and sentiments relating to ethnocentric ideals. The perennial question is often posed: Are immigrants displacing Americans in the job market and destroying the fabric of American society? Or are they energizing the economy and keeping the American dream alive? Such is the nature of escalating concerns regarding this controversial issue. The search for solutions has both domestic and international implications that could either enhance relations or increase dissonance between the indigenous working class and immigrants.

However passionate and shrill, there are valid arguments on both sides of the debate: liberalizing or restricting immigrant flows to the U.S. In promoting either view, advocates must assess the

effects on the host society and sending nations. The impact of lost human capital and other consequences of emigration from countries such as Guyana are seldom highlighted. While many immigrants bring needed skills to the U.S, the infamous “brain drain” occurs simultaneously.

Political ideology, government policies and rhetoric of public officials play a significant role in either abating or intensifying the rejection or accommodation of new immigrants. In an attempt to represent or appease their constituents, politicians strategically and deceptively use ‘the immigration problem’ as a brokering issue. In this regard, under the current administration’s Secure Communities Program, there has been an unprecedented number of deportations (396,906 in 2011), including hundreds from the English-speaking Caribbean. The *raison d’être* given for this huge number is a bold, but futile attempt to demonstrate “toughness on immigration”, a starkly political justification. Consequently, controversy over deportation policy, including jurisdictional responsibility, public safety, and the impact on families, has soured relations across nations.

The cultural divide is exacerbated by expressed concern, mainly by conservatives, that immigration is transforming American culture (a moot argument), while others engage in unbridled anti-immigrant diatribe and actions. Vilification and public pronouncements fuel community tensions, and derail tolerance, which worsen in dire economic times.

Possible Solution

Any solution to this apparent quagmire must be informed by humane, rational analysis of short and long term consequences of immigration reform. These include considering the demands of the labor market, equalizing economic and working conditions across nations, and the impact on social services. Every nation should protect its borders, but change agents need to be cognizant of the contextual polemics in which they operate, i.e. a land that promotes freedom and the American dream, while selectively restricting their attainment. Immigration reform, an incendiary issue, is driven by economic, political, and nativistic forces at a time when there is preoccupation with curbing wealth discrepancies, globalization and national security. A possible solution also requires compromising strategies on both sides of this critical debate. Regardless, be it known that the future of America is not threatened by immigrants, but her success may depend on the future of immigration.

FEBRUARY

THE SHORTEST MONTH, DISTINGUISHED CULTURAL COMMEMORATIONS

Edgar Henry

Did you ever consider why February is the shortest month of the year?

The varying number of days in February was a device to keep the calendar in line with the actual year as measured by the Earth's rotation about the sun. Pope Gregory XIII adjusted the Julian calendar's "leap year" formula so that the leap year would occur every four years.

February is the second month of the year in the Julian and Gregorian Calendars. It is the shortest month and the only month with fewer than 30 days. The month has 28 days in common years and 29 days in leap years. Having only 28 days in common years, it is the only month of the year that can pass without a single full moon. It is also the only month of the calendar that once every six years and twice every 11 years, will have only four full 7-day weeks.

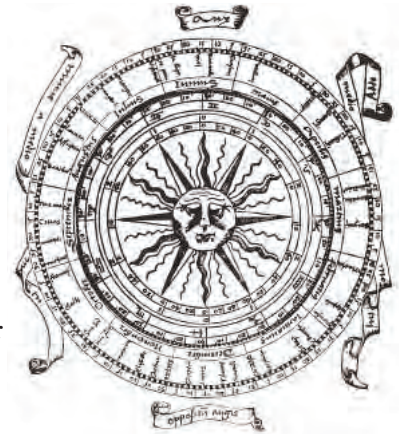
February starts on the same day of the week as March and November in common years, and on the same day of the week as August in leap years. February ends on the same day of the week as October every year and January in common years only. In leap years, it is the only month that ends on the same weekday it begins.

Despite having the least number of days, February celebrates many important cultural commemorative activities.

In the United States and Canada we commemorate Black History Month reiterating Black conscientiousness, while remembering stalwarts, sacrifices, and of course the civil rights movement. Strangely it is celebrated every February in the US, but October in the United Kingdom. In Guyana we celebrate February 23rd. the birth of our Republic and Mashramani. On February 2, the United States and Canada remember Groundhog Day. On February 12th the United States celebrate a national holiday on Abraham Lincoln's birthday. On



February 14th Valentine's Day is observed worldwide. On the third Monday in every month of February Presidents Day or George Washington's birthday is remembered. On February 22nd Lent begins and it is also Ash Wednesday. Not to forget Chinese New Year – most years, the ever popular Mardi Gras revelry in New Orleans and the Super Bowl championship series.



This year, Leap Day February 29 only occurs once every four years. Just think about this phenomenon. Let us suppose you were born on the 29th day of February in a leap year. Technically your birth date comes around once every four years. Today most people would celebrate that day on March 1st. in the common years, but that is not really your birth date. Some folk are very superstitious and conscious regarding matters relating to their personal birth dates. It could be argued that March 1st and February 29th definitely do not possess identical attributes, with regards to personality and destiny, but that is a topic for a debate in another forum.

However no one could deny that although February is indeed the shortest month of the year, yet it defines peculiar personal characteristics, and is packed with memorable historical events, celebrating significant cultural activities.

RECENT AND UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS BY GUYANESE

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW PUBLICATIONS (BOOKS, MUSIC, FILMS, ETC.)
AND IN-DEPTH REVIEWS

MAHADEO SHIVRAJ PRODUCTIONS Present
CHURAMANIE BISSUNDIAL'S
A JASMINE FOR A GARDENER
PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY MAHADEO SHIVRAJ

Showtime
Saturday - February 11th, 2012 at 5pm and 8pm
Sunday - February 12th, 2012 at 5pm and 8pm
Saturday - February 18th, 2012 at 5pm and 8pm
Sunday - February 19th, 2012 at 5pm and 8pm

TKS. & INFO. 917-972-0787
AT PS 268 AUDITORIUM 92-07 175th Street, Jamaica, NY. 11432.

MOVIE: A JASMINE FOR A GARDENER.

by Mahadeo Shivraj

A Jasmine for a Gardener is Mahadeo Shivraj's newest attempt at movie making. It will be screening soon in several communities in New York. Then it will be presented in other cities like Schenectady, Florida, and some promising engagements in Canada, as well. Later in Spring, A Jasmine for a Gardener will move to Guyana for engagements in strategic towns throughout the country.

A Jasmine for a Gardener was shot entirely in Guyana this last summer. It brings together theater performers in an intriguing family drama, rich in Bollywood overtones and sparkling with Guyanese undertones. The plotlines are definitely Guyanese which has a lot of resonance with the Indo Guyanese culture. However, the movie provides a wider angle to a more picturesque view of the country and the mores of the "now" generation. It is indeed a small production, strapped by shoe lace budget and a paucity of hi-tech production tools. Yet, A Jasmine for a Gardener surmounts the obstacles and limitations of the movie making business in Guyana.

This movie signals that there is hope for Guyanese artists. Mahadeo Shivraj's relentless pursuit in the theater field, his aspirations for Guyanese stardom and an imagination for artistic exuberance come through in this production. A Jasmine for a Gardener is a

great leap forward and inspiration for struggling artists.

Showtimes schedule:

Queens PS 268 Auditorium
92-07 175th Street, Jamaica NY. 11432
Sat Feb 11th - 5pm & 8pm
Sun Feb 12th - 5pm & 8pm
Sat Feb 18th - 5pm & 8pm
Sun Feb 19th - 5pm & 8pm
Berbice - March 3rd & 4th
Guyana - National Cultural Centre
March 10th, 11th 12th.

GUYANESE STRATEGIC CULTURE: LEADERS LEVERAGING LANDSCAPES

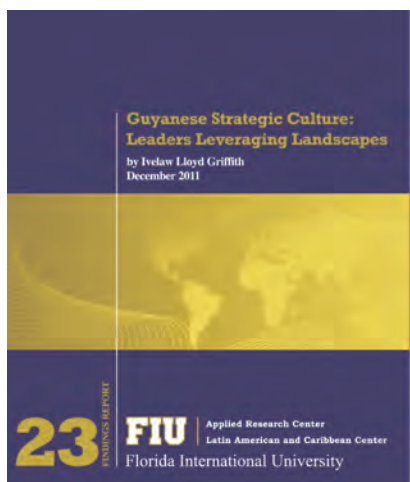
By Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith.

"This Strategic Culture Findings Report, authored by Ivelaw L. Griffith, is influenced by a work group that held a workshop in Miami on October 7, 2011. It included six prominent scholars on Guyanese history, geography, economics, politics, foreign policy and foreign affairs. In addition to Dr. Griffith, experts were Drs. George. K. Danns, Mark Kirton, Perry Mars, Desmond Thomas, and Nigel Westmaas."

The project examines the foundations of Guyana's strategic culture; personalities identified as the guardians or "keepers" of that culture; emerging and sustained social and economic challenges; and requirements for the continuation of change.

The monograph was published by The Latin American and Caribbean Center, Florida International University, Applied Research Center.

This is a free publication



by *Gokarran D. Sukhdeo*
(Abridged Version)

IF ONLY THE GODS WERE AWAKE
by **Gary Girdhari**

Guyana Journal Publication
Printing by Xweet Co. LLC, LIC, NY
ISBN: 978-0-615-19511-7
718 835 1530

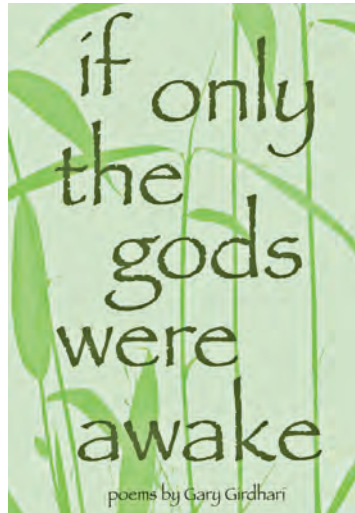
WE ARE LIVING at a critical moment in history when the forces of globalism and unabated capitalism with its ruthless accomplices – religion, wars, greed and environmental destruction are constantly eroding our humanity, threatening to reduce us into economic, social and religious automatons. We are willingly succumbing to a process of cultural hegemony that is silently homogenizing us into destructively, mindlessly capitalistic and hypocritically selfish creatures.

For those of us migrants who have been thrust into this system, especially those of us who are endowed with a consciousness as well as a sensitivity about our diasporic displacements – not once, but twice severed from our umbilical homes – accepting and adjusting to this process has been particularly traumatic. Against this backdrop I wish to examine the book of poetry by Dr. Gary Girdhari.

Pablo Neruda once said, “The books that help you most are those which make you think that most;” in other words, the books that awaken our consciousness.

In his anthology, Gary Girdhari has set out on a mission – to morally, politically and intellectually awaken us and the gods, both above and below, to the awareness of this cultural hegemony – an artificial social construct or mindset imposed by western beliefs and practices – or a “civilized bondage” as he terms it, in which we are all caught up. It is an “Ill-Legacy” (p.23) deeded us by “crooks and thieves / Politicians posturing / masquerading / cheating our people / raped our land.” And they, the “1% at the top / ...smiling”, while “The bottom 90% swelling” and “The in-between

BOOK OF POETRY
DR. GARY GIRDHARI
IF ONLY THE GODS WERE AWAKE



surely disappearing”. (p.88) Gary sees this wretchedness in “Civilized Bondage” (p.97) “asynchronously evolving in geometric progression / helped by $E = mc^2$ and it is “warping inexorably” as we are driven by “unrestricted greed and uncontrollable lust”. Thus, with an understanding of both physical and social sciences, he poetically makes a didactic pronouncement: “We [will continue to] exploit Nature / Determined as we are / Under no duress / Killing ourselves in the process.”

Gary’s profoundest qualification as a poet derives from the trauma and empathy of his diasporic experience during which he also produced a multitude of socio/political commentaries, editorials and articles, published mostly in the Guyana Journal. His poetry is actually an emotive complementary to his prosaic publications.

Like the children of Israel wailing by the rivers of Babylon, and most diasporic writers, Gary yearns for his homeland and begins his anthology with a set of nostalgic poems. In the very first poem “Rootlessness” (p.16) and also later in “Matri Bhumi” (p.22) he softly exhorts us to reconsider the assumptions and meanings of identity,

nation, home, and place in a broad cross-cultural context, for he says, “We are Guyanese / From China, Madera, India and Africa / Amerindians and Europeans, if you please / But migrants twice departed / We are the second diaspora.” Gary not only sees the phenomenon of colonial and post-colonial diaspora as a relationship between different cultural origins, but also as a complex and ambiguous relationship of migrants who yearn for their “Matri Bhumi”, but continue to “come in hundreds of thousands / To this acclaimed land of plenty and cold / Backs to the wall with bloodshot tears / Motivated and bold / to catch up for lost years.” Here he lavishly employs the use of fragmented or fissured run-on words and phrases which produce an emphatic emotion when the run-on words are pre or post attached to other concepts.

I think if only the gods were awake is a responsible attempt to understand the world in human terms through literary composition. It is very inspiring, and challenges the thinking person not to be content to live in isolated, metaphysical existentialism, but to be Socratic, to question the political and religious dogmas that yoke us. I believe it is this type of questioning that started out the Wall Street protesters and those in all the major capitals of the world. Thus, we are beginning to see a worldwide altruistic manifestation of people’s consciousness, and a rebellion against the death sentence imposed by the 1% (a terminology Gary employed many years ago in “We are Not Involved” (p.88). Some results are already showing as a few Bernie Madoffs in our community are being exposed. So, maybe, some gods are waking up!

(You may read the full review at: http://guyanajournal.com/if_only_the_gods_were_aware.html)

ONE OF THE NINE TRIBES OF AMERINDIANS IN GUYANA

EXPECTANT FATHERS

MACUSI CULTURE

The Macusi is one of 9 tribes of Amerindians in Guyana. The others are Patamona, Arecuna, Wapisiana, Carib, Warrau, Arawak, Wai Wai and Akawaio.

There was a particular culture, tradition and custom in the Macusi tribe that came to light during the 1800s. It was known as “expectant fathers” syndrome.

It was mentioned by Sir Everard Im Thurn, explorer and botanist in his book “Among The Indians of Guiana.” Sir Everard was Curator of the British Guiana Museum (1877-1882), then a Stipendiary Magistrate in the Pomeroon District and in December 1884, along with Harry Perkins, first scaled Mount Roraima. He travelled extensively among the Amerindians.

Under the culture, before a child is born, the father undergoes a lifestyle change and adopts many of

the practices of the mother. He abstains for a time from certain types of activities and food which contain meat.

On the other hand, the mother works as usual up to a few hours before she gives birth.

Peter Halder At the last moment, she

retires, sometimes alone, sometimes only with a few women of the village, to the forest where she ties her hammock. Then the baby is born. In a few hours or less than a day, depending on how she feels, she gets up and resumes her ordinary daily work.

The father changes his routine. After the baby is born, he ties his hammock alongside that of the mother and baby.

As soon as he is ensconced in his hammock, he imitates the birth process of the mother. He stops doing any kind of work and continues to refrain from eating meat and all other types of food except for regular helpings of cassava porridge. He stops smoking, bathing, using weapons and is nursed and cared for by the women of the village.

The man may not scratch any part

of his body with his fingernails so he uses a splinter from the cokerite palm.

He continues this culture, custom and tradition for many days, sometimes weeks.

The culture developed from the belief that both parents of a newborn baby need to avoid certain types of foods and activities, particularly the father, which may be harmful to the child’s well-being.

The Macusi also believed that the father, by simulating the wife, shields her from evil spirits by attracting them to him.

They believe too that by doing the things he does at the birth, the man asserts and demonstrates fatherhood.

Another belief is that a supernatural bond is developed between the father and the child, and is greatly re-enforced and strengthened, since the baby learns from birth, by smell and touch, that there is a mother and a father.

It is not known if the culture of the expectant fathers syndrome among the Macusi Amerindian tribe in Guyana, persists until this day.

The Amerindians are the indigenous people of Guyana. They number about 55,000 and live in some 120 settlements in Region 1- Barima/Waini; Region 7 - Cuyuni/Mazaruni; Region 8 - Potaro/Siparuni; Region 9 - Upper Takutu/Upper Essequibo.

The Macusi are found mainly in Regions 8 and 9.



GUYANA COMMUNITY SCHOLARS INITIATIVE

CALL FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE MASTERS

Tangerine Clarke



Seven dedicated Guyanese social change agents are seeking financial assistance to attain their Master's Degree and build a more sustainable future for their communities.

These young Guyanese men and women reflect the nation's geographic and ethnic diversity. They work for both government and NGOs and are engaged in a diverse array of activities to promote environmental conservation, conflict resolution, youth and women's empowerment, cultural preservation, and community development.

During their time in the Future Generations program they have attended study tours in India, Nepal, the U.S., and Peru. The program's blended learning pedagogy allows them to remain resident in Guyana working for their organizations and communities, while they pursue their studies. They really are an amazing group doing great work for the country. Here are brief profiles of the group:

Bertie Xavier - *Tosbao of Wowetta Village.*

Bertie is a leader of his village and a trainer at the Bina Hill Institute in the North Rupununi. This year he was elected to the U.N. Forum on Indigenous Issues as one of two representatives for the Latin America region.

Rohan Sagar - National Music Coordinator, Ministry of Education.

Rohan is conducting research on the use of culture and music to promote peace and inter-ethnic solidarity.

Luanna Goldie Scott - Chief Executive Officer, Volunteer Youth Corps.

Goldie's leads work with youth in Georgetown's Lodge community and around the country.

Suzanne Mcrae-Munro - Grants Coordinator, Conservation International.

Based in Georgetown, Suzanne works with communities throughout the interior on protected areas management. Her research involves the Wai-Wai in

the deep south of Region 9.

Shellon Eversley - Coordinator for Home Based Care for Ophans and Vulnerable Children, Agape Network, Inc.

Based in Sophia, Georgetown, Shellon works on urban poverty and breaking the cycle of dependency for people with HIV/AIDS.

Travis Eversley - Trustee and Volunteer, Partners for Peace and Development.

Travis works with youth in Buxton through sports and literacy initiatives to promote empowerment.

Jackie Robertson-Wilson - Probation and Social Services Officer, Ministry of Labor.

Jackie works in Region 8 to support services to women and youth in the complex environment of the mining community of Mahdia.

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