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DIASPORA



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A FRESH START TO THE GOOD LIFE IN A GREEN ECONOMY

Photo published with the permission of Gordon Moseley, editor-in-chief of News Source Guyana.

Budget '15: Tall, Truthful, and Thorough

By Frank A. Campbell

On September 26, 1960, Cuban leader Fidel Castro addressed the United Nations General Assembly for four hours 29 minutes. He immediately earned a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for the longest delivery before the Assembly. His longest speech, made on Cuban soil in 1986, lasted seven hours 10 minutes.

Without exaggeration, the four hours 29 minutes of the UN speech is about the length of the recent 2015 budget presentation by Guyana's new finance minister, The Honorable Winston Jordan. Measured by text size, as recorded on the Ministry of Finance website, Minister Jordan's speech was twice as long as his predecessor's 2014 speech and seven times as long as either the 2009 or the 2011 one. Former president and current opposition leader Bharrat Jagdeo was not impressed. The kindest thing he could say about Minister Jordan's effort was that it was "lengthy and underwhelming."

Not being an economist like Mr. Jagdeo, I was impressed. I thought the speech was tall, yes, but also truthful and thorough. Also impressed was the accounting firm Ram & McRae, previously Christopher L. Ram & Company. For 25 years, the firm has been producing an analysis, prepared soon after the budget speech and published as "Budget Focus ..." For example Ram & McRae called the 2014 budget a "huge disappointment." It was a shopping list of expenditures, with nothing on jobs creation or on ending corruption and with "no real evidence of a central theme or a direction in which the government proposes to take the country."

Budget 2015, with its clear and encouraging theme of "a fresh start to the good life in a green economy," received the firm's vote of confidence. "Having regard," says Focus on Guyana's National Budget 2015, "to all the challenges facing the economy, the resources at the minister's disposal and the fact that a budget is always a choice from several and often competing objectives, Ram & McRae is in the camp of those who have endorsed this budget."

The Ram & McRae document emphasizes the breadth of national endorsements that the budget enjoys. It compares the results of its pre-budget mini-survey with post-budget points of view. "Prior to the budget presentation," Ram and McRae notes, "the government received low marks for economic management. Following the presentation, with the exception of the PPP/C, the budget has received commendations." The private sector, a number of trade unions, and even known pro-PPP/C personalities were among those greeting the budget with high-fives.

One thing for which Budget 2015 is sure to continue receiving low marks is brevity. As a result, we only have enough space to say so much in this issue of *Diaspora Times*. We hope to publish more, especially with regard to what the budget means for the Diaspora, in subsequent editions. For now, let's just place on record that, like Ram & McRae, we place ourselves "in the camp of those who endorse this budget." Even ex-President Jagdeo, perhaps without intending to do so, has shown that he may not be so underwhelmed after all. Otherwise, why would he claim that the finance minister had stolen the budget ideas from the PPP/C?

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THE CHINESE ALSO CAME

CHINESE MEETING ROOM
AT PETERS HALL

A church of a small Christian group.

Compiled by Frank A. Campbell

In the conversation about race in Guyana, it is easy to get the impression that the population begins and ends with African Guyanese and Indian Guyanese. Before these groups—and before the Europeans—there were the Aboriginal people. And there were the Portuguese.

The Chinese also came. Without attempting a thorough historical analysis, we want to mention in this issue of *Diaspora Times* a few facts about the Chinese in Guyana.

How come?

The Chinese came for the same reason as the Indians and the Portuguese. They came as indentured laborers to replace African slave labor, following the abolition of slavery in 1834.

When and how?

The first two Chinese boats, the *Glentanner* and the *Lord Elgin*, arrived in Georgetown in January, 1853, on the 12th and 17th respectively. Between then and mid-March 1879, about 39 boats made the trip. The journey varied from 70 to just under 180 days. Many died along the way. These boats came from the ports of Canton, Hong Kong, Amoy, Swatow and Whampoa. The largest inflow took place between 1860 and 1866.

Who came?

Among indentured laborers, the Chinese comprised the smallest group. Initially at least, they came mainly from the Kwangtung and Kwangsi provinces.

Initially only men came. So in 1853, of the 811 Chinese in Guyana, none were women and all had been born in

China. Even eight years later, in 1861, only 844 of the 6,579 Chinese were women, and still none were locally born.

The Chinese population reached its peak of 10,022 in 1866. There were still only about 1,700 women, compared with about 8,300 men. Only 222 had been born in British Guiana.

By 1921, the number had plummeted to 2,722. Many had left British Guiana in search of Chinese spouses or improved economic prospects.

What do they do?

Initially, Chinese immigrants worked on the sugar estates in various parts of the country. The initial group, for example, went to estates on all three countries. However, the vast majority went to estates on the West Demerara. Later they transitioned into business, mainly small businesses, including restaurants, then into the professions. Guyana's first president, His Excellency Arthur Chung, current First Lady Sandra Granger and Acting Chief Justice Ian Chang are three of the most well known Guyanese of Chinese heritage.

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THE APPROACHING IMPLOSION OF VENEZUELA

A much longer version of this article was published on July 10, 2015 by—and this version is reprinted with permission of—the Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, U.S. Army War College.

by Dr. R. Evan Ellis

From a U.S. perspective, the danger presented by Venezuela arises from the confluence of four factors:

1. the political stalemate that makes it improbable that Venezuela will resolve the crisis on its own, or with assistance from its neighbors, before becoming much worse,
2. the near total destruction of food and consumer goods production capability during 16 years of Bolivarian socialism, which will magnify the human consequences and associated level of desperation and aggression as the crisis deepens,
3. the strategically important geographical position of the country as a conduit for U.S. and Europe-bound drugs, a refuge for Colombian terrorist groups, and the location of vast petroleum reserves that also extend into the territory and waters of neighboring states such as Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, and
4. the role of Venezuela as a point of entry into the region for multiple extra-hemispheric actors with varying strategic interests in conflict with those of the United States, including the People's Republic of China, Russia, and Iran.

The interaction of the first two factors suggest that the situation may degenerate into economic collapse and political chaos, possibly with widespread hunger, disease, and violence between people desperate to survive and a narco-dependent government desperate to retain control. Scarcity of basic food and medical items has reportedly reached 60 percent, with incidents such as the robbery of supply trucks.

Even beyond political protests, as the conditions deteriorate, the military will have to use increasing force to maintain order. Some in Venezuela are already talking about a repeat of the widespread



violence and chaos that occurred in the country in 1989, known as the “Caracazo,” in which thousands may have died, and which ultimately contributed to two attempted coup d'états and the eventual removal of Venezuelan president Carlos Andrés

Pérez on charges of illegally giving money to Nicaraguan President Violeta Chamorro.

In the event Venezuela descends into violence and chaos, neighbors such as Colombia, Guyana, and Brazil, and nearby Caribbean states such as Aruba, Curacao, Bonaire, and Trinidad and Tobago will be forced into the expensive and economically suboptimal task of increasing border control to manage the spillover challenges from refugees, terrorist violence, and criminality.

Similarly, the United States and Europe will have to dedicate increasing effort against drug shipments originating in Venezuela, as well as expanding efforts to bolster overwhelmed Caribbean and Central American security forces against the criminality that the expansion of these flows will foster in the region. Ironically, in this dynamic, as more Venezuelan officials such as Capitan Leamsy Salazar cooperate with U.S. authorities regarding the criminal activities of former colleagues, it will likely increase instability within the regime, sowing mistrust among the Venezuelan elite, as each wonders who will betray them to save themselves.

THE APPROACHING IMPLOSION OF VENEZUELA

by Dr. R. Evan Ellis

At the same time, as the number of international indictments expand and more Venezuelan officials are added to the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list, Venezuela's political and military elites will find themselves increasingly trapped within the country's borders, with the increasing realization that their real estate in Miami and their anonymous bank accounts, and thus their future and that of their families, are indeed at risk...

The Path Forward

Despite the grim scenario painted by the forgoing analysis, it is not in the U.S. strategic interest to intervene in Venezuela. Doing so would probably cause more serious damage to U.S. relationships in the region, and to its strategic position globally, than it would benefit stability and law and order in the region. Nor, in considering the lives that would be lost and the chaos potentially unleashed by such an invasion, is it clear that U.S. intervention would generate a net benefit from a humanitarian standpoint. Intervention would also likely drive other nations of the hemisphere into a deeper embrace of extra-regional powers such as China and Russia, and would move the region one step further from democratic self-governance.

Short of a military intervention, the United States can and should recognize the consequences of the likely continued degeneration of the situation in Venezuela, and work with regional partners and institutions to prepare for and mitigate its consequences...

The United States may also need to strengthen security cooperation with the newly elected democratic government of Guyana, as the situation in its neighbor to the West deteriorates. The Maduro regime has recently

asserted new territorial claims over waters defined by the border between the two states, where a team led by Exxon-Mobil, exploring with the authorization of the Guyanese government, has found evidence of potentially significant offshore oil deposits. While the issue may ultimately need to be settled by international arbitration, there may be an opportunity for the United States to work with the OAS to provide security assurances that permit the unencumbered exploration and development of the fields until the matter can be definitively resolved by an appropriate international tribunal. The United States should not, however, deploy its own warships to the zone, since doing so would probably only inflame the situation and be exploited by Venezuela for propaganda purposes.

In preparing for the coming Venezuelan crisis, the United States should also attempt, wherever possible, to involve the OAS... The United States should be prepared to work with Brazil on issues such as the nation's own shared border with Venezuela, and potentially find ways to collaborate with Brazilian forces in other aspects of the Venezuelan crisis, while at the same time making it clear that Brazilian attempts, in conjunction with ALBA governments, to exclude the United States from a role in addressing the Venezuela crisis would be counterproductive.

The collapse of Venezuela is a tragedy for the Venezuelan people, Venezuela's neighbors, and for all of the countries in the region. Yet for the United States, it is also an opportunity to strengthen its role in maintaining the democracy, stability, and development of the hemisphere. If the United States acts with prudence and generosity in the present crisis, it can demonstrate its appreciation of the ties of commerce, geography, and family that bind it to the region.

FRESH START TO GOOD LIFE IN GREEN LAND

EXTRACTS FROM THE INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY FINANCE MINISTER WINSTON JORDAN IN HIS FIRST BUDGET SPEECH

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present the first budget of this government... I want to thank all those letter writers and the ordinary person who approached me with advice and requests, especially for pension and wage increases. I assure you that your contributions are valued highly and that your efforts have not been without a listening or sympathetic ear.

On May 11, 2015 the Guyanese people held their breath as they proceeded to the polls to exercise their democratic right to elect a government of their choice... After five anxious days, during which the Guyanese people agonized as they waited, the results of the General and Regional Elections were finally announced on May 16, 2015. The coalition of the APNU+AFC, which had earlier sealed a formal relationship to fight the PPP/C on a joint platform, was declared the winner. The Guyanese people finally exhaled after holding their breath against the stench of corruption, nepotism and discrimination that had assailed their olfactory sense...

Our government immediately buckled down to the task of governing this complex, multi-ethnic nation. We knew it was not going to be easy, especially since we had to deal with an opposition that refused to acknowledge its loss at the recent general elections, in spite of the declaration of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) and the pronouncements of all the international observers.

No honeymoon

Without the benefit of the traditional 'honeymoon period' usually enjoyed by incoming governments, we were confronted with a series of events, both local and international, that threatened the livelihood of thousands and the sovereignty of the country.

We learnt that the sugar company, Guyana Sugar Corporation (GUYSUCO), was broke and needed an immediate infusion of cash, an estimated \$16 billion, to keep it afloat for the rest of the year. The government responded with alacrity, providing an initial amount of almost \$4 billion, installing new management and board of directors and instituting a Commission of Inquiry that would examine, among other things, all options pertaining to the future of the sugar industry in Guyana. No sooner had we put out the proverbial fire at GUYSUCO



than we were faced with a crisis in the rice industry. The hardworking farmers, who have toiled mightily to return record rice production for the past three years, were confronted with uncertainty as to payment for rice shipped to Venezuela under the Petro Caribe barter arrangement. Unknowing to them, the PPP/C Government had mismanaged the Petro Caribe Fund, with only a small balance of US\$0.8 million in the fund at the end of May 2015, whereas outstanding payments to farmers was in excess of US\$17 million.

Worse yet, and this is only now being disclosed to the public, the Guyana Energy Agency (GEA), under pressure from the PPP/C administration, was forced to offset the cash amounts due to PDVSA (Venezuela's state-owned oil and natural-gas company) against future shipments, in order to ensure that current payments to rice farmers were made at the due dates. Once again, the government came to the rescue, transferring over \$5 billion to the Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) so that farmers could be paid.

All this, and Venezuela too

Mr. Speaker, early challenges to the young government did not end there. A massive flood, not unlike that experienced in 2005, inundated the land, sparing human lives, but destroying crops and livestock, and infrastructure. The government moved speedily to activate its disaster preparedness procedures, made available emergency

100 DAY ACTION PLAN
DELIVERABLE AUGUST 24, 2015
COALITION GOVERNMENT UPDATE REPORT

Significant salary increases for government workers, including nurses; teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary education; security personnel; and civil servants on the traditional payroll.



Major salary increases ranging of 26.4%, 17.1%, 15%, 10%, 7.5% & 6% across the various salary scales. Minimum wage increased from \$39,540 to \$50,000.

100 DAY ACTION PLAN
DELIVERABLE AUGUST 24, 2015
COALITION GOVERNMENT UPDATE REPORT

Reduction in the Berbice Bridge toll



Phased implementation with reduction for passenger cars and buses from \$2200 to \$1900 and 10% reduction for all other categories of vehicles.

100 DAY ACTION PLAN
DELIVERABLE AUGUST 24, 2015
COALITION GOVERNMENT UPDATE REPORT

Significant increase in Old Age pensions.



Significant increase by 30% from \$13,125 to \$17,000

BUDGET 2015

assistance to drain the water off the land as quickly as possible, provided help and shelter to those in need, and established a committee of experts to examine short and long term solutions to flooding in Guyana.a

Even as the government was dealing with those pressing domestic matters, it had to grapple with our western neighbor, Venezuela, who was ratcheting up her unjust claim to virtually two-thirds of our country - a claim that was settled in 1899. This time, through diplomatic and other initiatives, the government moved quickly to mobilize domestic and international support in defence of our sovereignty. We will continue to utilize peaceful and diplomatic means in our search for a lasting solution to the controversy that was precipitated by Venezuela's continuous questioning of the validity of the arbitral award of 1899.

Mr. Speaker, the government's handling of these four incidents of potential crisis demonstrates its resolve to do what is right by the Guyanese people. Although nearly half of those who voted in the recent General and Regional Elections, did not vote for us, we view this not as a rejection, but as an opportunity to forge accountable and inclusive governance - something that was lacking in the previous regime. We recognize that Guyana would not develop, nay survive intact, if the people are not allowed to participate meaningfully in the affairs of the country, whether individually or through their elected representatives at the national, regional and local levels.

Teething problems, but coalition strong

All Guyanese yearn for the good life - one in which the country's patrimony is exploited in a sustainable and responsible manner that caters for future generations; where they have good jobs providing permanent incomes; where they have access to decent affordable housing, health care, pure water, sanitation and education; where they can live and retire comfortably and in a secure environment.

Our government commits to providing that good life. It is for this reason, Mr. Speaker, that this first budget of the new APNU+AFC administration has been structured under the theme, "A Fresh Approach to the Good Life in a Green Economy." It speaks to accountable government as the basis for securing the good life in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner...

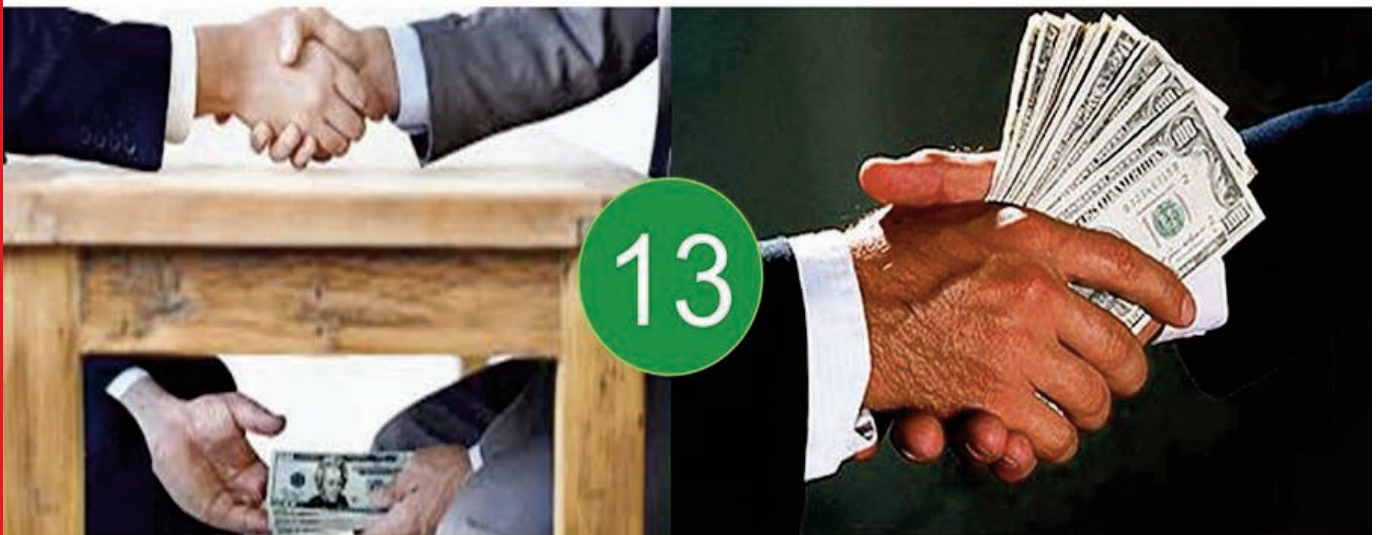
Mr. Speaker, many have been the carping about the Cummingsburg Accord that cemented this coalition government. I wish to state here that the Coalition remains strong, and its viability and longevity remain unthreatened.

It is true that there have been the usual teething problems that are associated with partnership Government... Working together, we are confident that we can take our country through difficult times to better days ahead. Mr. Speaker, our passion, in this regard, remains unshaken and undiminished.

100 DAY ACTION PLAN

DELIVERED BEFORE AUGUST 24, 2015

THE PEOPLE OF GUYANA ASKED FOR 21 PRIORITY ITEMS AND THE COALITION GOVERNMENT DELIVERED BEFORE THE 100 DAYS DEADLINE AS PROMISED



13. Establishment of an Investigative Commission on Corruption

BEING DONE



- **Government has commissioned several forensic audits to uncover revenue leakages & corrupt practices in state entities & has established a State Asset Recovery Unit to retrieve vehicles, land & other assets that were illegally transferred to officials & their friends.**
 - **Government is also considering drafts for a comprehensive Anti-Corruption Law.**

Budget 2015 a 2020 vision

By Frank A. Campbell

“Mr. Speaker, I now want to share with all Guyanese across the length and breadth of our 214,970 sq. km (83,000 square miles), our vision of the Cooperative Republic in the year 2020.” Thus began an important 20,000-word section of the recent 2015 budget speech. With those words, newly minted finance minister, Honorable Winston Jordan, made clear that his was more than a holding document to keep the government going for what remains of the year. The budget was a document to guide the government’s actions for the next five years. In every sense, it was a 2020 vision, and it charged all members of the National Assembly with the task of “realizing the common vision of a good life for all who live within our nation.”

The big picture

This look into the government’s intentions regarding the next five years began with a commitment to stability in the wider economy. This, according to the minister, is “the cornerstone for the achievement and sustainability of a good life.”

He declared that, “over the next five years, we commit to the maintenance of macroeconomic stability by creating conditions to foster a positive growth trajectory while improving expenditure management and revenue administration, low inflation, stable exchange rate and sustainable debt.” This approach includes efforts to reduce the deficit in the public sector in part through a reform in the tax system and a more “robust” system of tax compliance.

Strategic drivers behind the 2020 vision

As the title of the budget speech would imply, the building of a green economy is part of the strategy behind the government’s pathway to 2020. “A green economy,” Minister Jordan said, “is one in which we have improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.” This environmental approach is one that recognizes that “people need nature for now and in the future.”

The commitment to a green economy finds resonance in Article 36 of the constitution, which mandates sustainable extraction and utilization of the country’s natural resources. This kind of thinking, the minister seemed to be saying, goes hand in hand with the creation of the Sovereign Wealth Fund, promised by President Granger

100 DAY ACTION PLAN

DELIVERABLE AUGUST 24, 2015

COALITION GOVERNMENT UPDATE REPORT

Immediately implement a phased reduction of VAT and the removal of VAT from food and other essential items.

PARTIALLY COMPLETE >>

Massively expanded list essential items which are now zero rated.

during the election campaign and proclaimed in the APNU+AFC election manifesto.

This Fund, financed through earnings from the extractive sectors, will provide relief from economic ups and downs, and help finance the non-extractive sectors. “This Fund will also help to avoid the potential negative impacts of a sudden surge in national revenue expected from the establishment of an oil and gas industry in Guyana.”

Another strategic imperative will be the creation of a kind of government and of industries that is knowledge-driven. This means that Guyana must follow the rest of the world by striving to “harness information, communications and other technologies, to transform our economy and our society, delivering goods, services and a quality of life to our citizens in accordance with the contemporary expectations of the 21st century.” This imperative must be “tempered, of course, by our norms, traditions and values as a people.”

The new 21st-century Guyana will embrace good governance as a national principle and information and communication technologies (ICTs) as an engine of social and economic development. It will, in fact, use ICTs as a “key enabler of accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness, responsiveness, participation, and inclusiveness.” The knowledge-driven approach to development, both in government and in industry, will include the allocation of significant levels of resources to the education, health and security sectors.

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PRESIDENT'S
CLUB



5. Reduction of the Presidents' Pension benefits

DONE ✓

A new law was passed in the National Assembly which trimmed the benefits attached to pensions of former presidents to prevent abuse of state funds and assented to by President Granger.

Crime, cohesion, diplomacy among budget topics

By Frank A. Campbell

The areas covered in the comprehensive 2020 vision outlined in the budget speech are too wide-ranging for us to do them justice in the few pages available in *Diaspora Times*. But here, painted in very, very broad strokes, are a few of those areas:

• Productive and service sectors

Apart from managing the extractive sector to benefit all Guyanese, this aspect includes diversifying agriculture and transforming production in that sector. Items under this sector varied from herbs and spices to livestock and fisheries to, of course, the embattled rice and sugar industries. "Achieving food security in every region across our land is paramount," says Finance Minister Jordan. Also covered by the 2020 vision are plans to build Guyana's tourism industry, which is "still young in years and maturity," and must develop so that Guyana becomes a "must-see tourist destination."

• Physical and human capital

This includes addressing the infrastructure deficit through a range of initiatives from building culverts to constructing a new Demerara Harbor Bridge and establishing a deep-water harbor bridge and container port in the Berbice River and dredging the Demerara River Channel. Energy, educational development, arts and culture, universal health coverage, youth and families and children, and social protection for pensioners and other vulnerable and disadvantaged are all spelt out under physical and human capital. So are labor relations for which the 2020 vision and the budget as a whole provide multiple initiatives.

• Social cohesion

The 2020 vision recognizes a "clear nexus between social cohesion and nation building." It defines social cohesion as "an intricate interplay of culture, geographic space, language, religion, race, social phenomena and status." Said the minister: "In order to achieve the good life, Guyanese must be willing to cooperate with each other." In this regard, the 2020 vision takes a stand against inequality and marginalization and, in the words of President Granger, in favor of the bridging of "the divides that exist between the hinterland and coastland, between the educated few and the semi-literate mass, between the very rich and the poor."

• National sovereignty and economic diplomacy

This aspect of the march to 2020 charges Guyana's diplomatic service and the country's defence service

with the recognition that "attaining the good life would be impossible if Guyana, as we know it, does not remain intact." Minister Jordan declared: "For nearly 50 years, Guyana's development has been threatened by, or held in abeyance because of, Venezuela, whose spurious claim to two-thirds of our land mass and, more recently, all of our sea space, has been a drain on our nation's resources. As eloquently expressed by our President, the Guyanese people 'are undeserving of 50 years of unrelenting provocation and obstruction of our development'." The importance of the diplomatic service is also expressed in its role in helping to garner the resources that the ambitious program outlined in the budget speech would require.

• Reducing crime, rebuilding public trust, reforming public security systems

The minister waxed both poetic and political in his characterization of the crime situation as the "most pressing and most depressing" problem facing the nation. "The last PPP/C administration," he said, "failed to arrest banditry, piracy and criminal violence, among other crimes... We need a police force that is more accountable to the public and better able to deal with crime and anti-social behavior that are anathema to the good life." He mentioned the current fine-tuning of a comprehensive public security plan as one of the steps designed to address those problems as well as such concerns as human, drugs and arms trafficking.

• Institutional reforms

These reforms covered a wide range of actions, starting with the creation of a fair, efficient and stimulating environment for doing business in Guyana. "Currently, Guyana ranks 123 (of 189 countries) in the World Bank's Doing Business Index... For this reason, the government will smash the suffocating red tape that stifles businesses and stunts growth in this country."

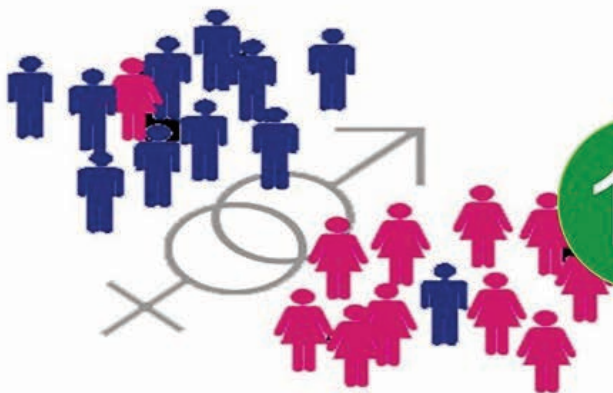
Another crucial step is the building of "sustainable communities for strong regions and a strong nation." This title itself subsumes such crucial areas as the long-deferred local government elections; the elevation of Bartica, Lethem, Mahdia, and Mabaruma to townships; and improvements in housing, sanitation, and pure water supply.

Governance has long been a concern of the parties forming the governing coalition and of the coalition itself. Action in this regard will include the establishment of the Constitutional Reform Commission and the strengthening of the electoral system and electoral laws. Tax reform, a restructured tender board, anti-laundering legislation, public service reform, better data for better decision-making, public administration reform, forensic audits and the recovery of stolen state assets, the establishment of a parliamentary budget office and other financial reforms are other proposed steps towards institutional reform.

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15. A National Conference of Women will be held and a bi-partisan Women's Working Group established as part of the Healing the Nation & National Unity trust.

BEING DONE



A National Conference on Gender Policy is scheduled to be held on August. 27-29.

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1. Reduction of the Berbice Bridge toll

DONE



Effective Sept 1st toll for passenger cars & buses will be reduced by 13.6% from \$2200 to \$1900 & there will 10% reduction for all other categories of vehicles.

CRICKET, HISTORY AND THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

by Desmond Roberts

I met the legends Clive Lloyd and Lance Gibbs for a few drinks at Water Chris (Peppers) when last I was in Guyana. We all marveled at the popularity of the CPL 20-overs version of the game among women. Neither of us was sure what the 'net run rate' meant, but the youths, male and female, seemed to know. Invariably, the discussion turned to cricket and the celebration of Guyana's 50th anniversary of independence in 2016. I was told that there might be a match between Guyanese cricketers and a composite team from the 'Rest of the World'. I said then, that I hoped "Clivey" and Lance and the boys could get in shape for a Guyanese squad of former greats to play against a list of reflective legends from other countries.

It struck me later, though, that the nation might also benefit from a reminder of the development of cricket in the period approaching independence and certainly the political contribution thereafter. There needs to be a retelling of the political struggle to get better living and social conditions for workers on the estates: the replacement of awful logies with affordable nuclear housing and the development of sports and sports facilities by Bookers. It was out of this political struggle by the then multi-racial PPP and Cheddi Jagan that there emerged some great athletes – Clem Fields, Moses Dwarka and Harry Prowell among others – as well as the famous cricketers - Rohan Kanhai, his nephews Romaine and Tyrone Etwaroo, Joe Solomon, Basil Butcher, Roy Fredericks, Ivan Madray, and so many others. Although there was a receptive host in management, it was the political reality and a demand for humane conditions that uncovered these hidden talents.

An even more intense international political contribution was made almost single handedly by President Burnham, using cricket as a weapon, to put pressure on the South African apartheid regime and its sympathizers. Beginning in 1970, Burnham launched a campaign to restrict the entry into Guyana of any cricketer who had played in or against South Africa or Rhodesia. It was a brave and bold stance for the new republic, risking the fragile unity of the West Indies team and the Caribbean Community. Many important Caribbean and Guyanese cricketers were affected by this ban. Guyana even suffered the loss of a Bourda test match when the English (MCC) team refused to come into the country without one of its banned stars, Robin Jackman. Reluctantly but eventually, all of the Caribbean and the rest of the cricketing fraternity supported the anti-apartheid campaign, at a time when the West Indies were not yet the marauding champions under Lloyd. Burnham showed his commitment with Guyana's painful withdrawal from the 1976 Montreal Olympics in solidarity with the African boycott.

It is not by accident, therefore, that we have also produced so many Guyanese captains of the West Indian teams in the modern era: Kanhai, Lloyd, Kalicharran, Hooper, Chanderpaul and several vice captains. Some say that we played so well in the 70s and 80s, more to demonstrate our pride and stature after independence than for the increased money, which was also important.

Maybe we will have a chance next year to see many of these legends, including Harper, Sarwan and other former Guyanese members of West Indies teams (several scattered across the Diaspora), play a representative, entertaining short game against the Rest.



LEARNING AND DIASPORA: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

by Lear Matthews, PhD

“Home is not where my grandparents are buried, but where my grandchildren will be raised” - Maher Hathout

Dr. Maher Hathout’s view conjures up interesting but provocative thoughts about assumptions regarding members of the Diaspora and their definition of “home.” Whether we live in Guyana or in the Diaspora, when our children and grandchildren begin their formal educational journey, we expect significant learning and positive socialization in an environment that best prepares them for careers and other desirable outcomes. Driven by recent developments in Guyana, many in the Diaspora anticipate transformative changes in various social institutions, including education.

This article shares some insight into the state of the education system in both Guyana, mainly a sending society, and the United States, mainly a recipient society. These insights apply regardless of one’s definition of “home,” and of one’s perception regarding challenges within the Diaspora.

The memories of educational values and practices inculcated during the “good ol’ days” back in the home country keep us grounded as we provide guidance to the next generation. The need to adapt to contemporary institutions and “modern” approaches with constantly changing technology and curricula, though inevitable, is challenging. In this regard, many adults in the Diaspora seek to further their own education and training in order to “survive” in their adopted home.

This new experience varies from anticipated success to frustration in negotiating the nuances of the system. One social commentator warns that in the midst of social transition, “education is not a desired goal for many segments of the population, easy money is.” Such an assertion is extremely worrisome. This article highlights the intersecting of learning environment and Diaspora challenges, and is based on research findings and observations on the topic.

The home country

There is no shortage of criticism of the educational systems in Caribbean countries, including Guyana. Such criticism paints a rather gloomy picture of the future. Following elections, there is usually the hope that things will get better. The dearth of qualified teachers

and the inadequacy of resources are well documented. So is the alleged mediocre response by previous administrations. During the “good ol’ days,” teachers appeared to be more dedicated, more invested in the total education of students. However, several factors exacerbate the current situation, which is mired in economic and political problems.

Not only are teachers underpaid, but many have “interim” status, which forges a non-committal attitude toward teaching locally, and encourages migration. The policy of retiring government-school principals at age 55 in Guyana has decimated the chance for consistent and dependable leadership, rupturing quality education. This situation has been worsened by the loss of skills and knowledge due to emigration. Furthermore, there seems to be a correlation between students’ success rate and the capacity of their families to afford “extra lessons.” The introduction of the Learning Channel, and the distribution of laptops by the previous government were steps in the right direction, and should be continued, and apparently are being improved, by the new administration. However, some students’ academic underachievement may be linked to poor nutrition, among other psycho-social deprivations. The possibility that teachers’ mental preparation is affected by life stresses, including the lack of basic human needs and the demands of caring for their own children, must also be considered.

Simultaneously, the anticipation by youngsters of opportunities to emigrate can have a negative effect on their commitment to education. A World Bank report found that the number of school-age children leaving Guyana has vastly increased. Both parents and students often view migration positively, as a means to an end. But a sobering reality is that immigration often ends up being perceived not as a contributor to education, but as a more attractive option than education. Consequently, students become disinterested in school, with some ceasing attendance altogether. Eventually, “the devil finds mischief for idle hands to do.”

Hopefully, the above considerations put into perspective some of the challenges to educational progress in Guyana and the Diaspora. For more on these challenges, please read “The search for a better life” on page 16.

Research has shown that most immigrants leave for other shores because they want a “better life” for themselves and their children. Newcomers to North America, especially children and adolescents who were born or raised in the Caribbean, rely on the family network and the school as primary sources of guidance, inspiration and support in their efforts to achieve academic success. Many families expect the school to play a major role in the socialization and achievement of their children. Yet these youngsters often face difficulties adjusting to the school system and to the ambivalent response from some educators.

Although the facilities and opportunities afforded in North American schools are generally superior to those in the Caribbean, there are some structural barriers. In the past, Guyanese immigrant students would out-perform their American counterparts. Now, because they leave Guyana less academically prepared, some are placed in remedial classes upon arrival. Other barriers include cultural differences, overcrowded classrooms,

self-esteem problems related to stereotyping, ridicule, and discipline-related conflict. The latter was poignantly exemplified when a student newly arrived from Guyana was warned by his teacher to “stay away from the boys in your class.”

Although some immigrant students still excel in academic skills, a growing number are challenged by the realities of a new and different academic and social environment. Consequently, some families seek out “good” neighborhoods to ensure quality education and a “safe” environment for their children. Shifts in immigrant household constellation, gender roles and domestic policy, though inevitable and protective, often undermine parental authority and indirectly affect educational progress. Distractions from a barrage of frivolous entertainment-focused media further complicate the situation.

THE SEARCH FOR A BETTER LIFE

by Lear Matthews, PhD



THE LAW: GOVERNMENT MUST TREAD CAREFULLY

by Oscar Ramjeet

Oscar Ramjeet, a former Guyanese journalist, is also a lawyer and a former solicitor-general of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and of Belize. He is the author of From Errand-Boy to Solicitor-General: The Memoirs of Oscar Ramjeet.



It is clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that there was massive corruption in most, if not all, Guyanese government ministries, departments, corporations, agencies and what have you. Yet the new administration must carry out careful investigations and do proper checks before drastic action, including prosecution, is taken against those considered liable.

Some critics feel that the government wants to tackle too many situations at the same time, and that they should be more thorough, cautious and rigorous in their investigations. But contrary to the critics, there are so many glaring irregularities and blatant cases of fraud that there is no need for forensic auditing. Nevertheless, when it comes to prosecution, you have to dot the I's, and cross the T's.

Minister of State Joseph Harmon is in the news, more than are other government leaders, talking about corruption and about actions being taken against wrongdoers. Very little is said by Minister of National Security Khemraj Ramjattan, himself an attorney, who is leader of the Alliance for Change (AFC). Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) Shalimar Ali-Hack is saying even less. Ms. Hack was appointed DPP in April 2008, in preference to Dr. Arif Bulkan, an excellent prosecutor and one of the few Guyanese with a doctorate in law.

A nation to rebuild

During the election campaign, politicians from the governing coalition and the opposition PPP/C were attacking each other, and a few unfortunate statements were made. I sincerely hope that they will bury the hatchet, avoid disparaging utterances in Parliament, and strive to make sound and valid contributions to the debates. They should bear in mind that they have a nation to rebuild. And they must work assiduously in the interest of the entire nation.

Meanwhile, crime is becoming even more rampant. The public does not have faith in the police force, and I believe that the new administration should take a close look at the senior officers and weed out the bad eggs in order to regain the people's confidence. Law enforcement officers should be more involved in combatting crimes. Unfortunately it is alleged that a few, instead of apprehending the criminals, are providing assistance to them. This needs to cease immediately.

It will be interesting to see how the police commissioner, the minister of public security and the Granger/Nagamootoo administration as a whole will deal with the startling revelations made by Sean Hinds, a self confessed former death squad member. His disclosures are staggering and hair-raising, and need to be ventilated. Maybe a high-powered commission comprising legal luminaries and senior law-enforcement officers should be set up to take evidence under oath and to make recommendations.

IS RACIAL HARMONY POSSIBLE?

*By Paul Sanders,
Caribbean Daylight, New York
Photo by Dwayne Hackett*



Is racial harmony possible?

By Paul Sanders,

Caribbean Daylight, New York

Photograph Dwane Hackett

Any serious enquirer interested in the concreteness of how racism is formulated, fertilized and marketed for mass consumption need look no further than the PPP's election campaign spearheaded by Bharrat Jagdeo. His gospel according to "Apaan Jaat" is a living souvenir of this man's psychosis. His unhinged behaviour and hate speeches are evidence of the state of enlightenment in the country.

Jagdeo couldn't have advocated racial ideas if there wasn't a market for such ideas. And given the voting pattern during these last elections, we have an overview of how many folks are prisoners or protagonists of the racist hypothesis. Additionally, if Facebook is anything to go by, then race hate has certainly gone wilder since Donald Ramotar went out into the streets with that placard.

That is why the recently convoked Unity Forum must challenge the old thinking. It must go beyond the limitations of its predecessors. One recalls the previous conferences as mere academic exercises. Strangely, some of the players on those platforms became crusaders in Bharrat Jagdeo's thrust towards "Apaan Jaat."

A symposium to address the unity issue now must provide an honest, say-it-like-it-is framework with the aim of putting head and heart together, of not just playing the blame game, but of searching for commonalities that can rev the human potential.

This kind of passion trumps mathematics; and it does not include race in its equation. It is simply the human touch. Race, after all, is only incidental in the dynamics of human development.

The quality of eager sincerity is what must be distinct this time around as Indo and Afro brothers and sisters search their souls for answers to Guyana's ailment. The "coolie/blackman" syndrome does not have to be an everlasting curse. The fact that the APNU+AFC partnership began its drive on the basis of its faith in multi-race cooperation is a good indication that the Indo/Afro relationship can exalt itself to the highest in human evolution.

Sounds too much, right? To hold to a belief in something less than this is to short-change one's own potential. It is to limit one's vision. It is to subscribe to the same "any-old-how" approach that never worked, and will never work. Not to mention that it exacerbates the economic interplay, and it plays right into the hands of haters, the likes of Bharrat Jagdeo and company.

So what is needed now is for you to be crazy enough to think that Indo and Afro Guyanese can live with each other, work with each other, disagree with each other and yet carry on like family for the simple reason that our quest for peace and harmony depends on our interdependence. Yes, what we need is that kind of crazy.

Yup, crazy enough to think today that you can be the starting point for a new tomorrow. And yes, after all that has transpired since Independence. Yes, even after all the toxic stuff that Bharrat Jagdeo spewed on his inglorious campaign trail.

Can this Unity Forum challenge the Guyanese diaspora—Indo and Afro communities—of Queens, Brooklyn, and beyond, including the religious leaders—to take a shot at looking at ourselves again with a renewed consciousness? Can it inspire a new fad called racial harmony?

We shall see.

THE CHANGE THAT IS UNITY

by Joshua Chowritmootoo



*The new dawn is come
From the olden Sun, the eternal
Energy that derives it all
The common source of the life
That breathes newness at every dawn
And in its voiceless resounding call
Now brings Unity, a new resolve to change
The old shackles that tether to past,
That Goliath of hatred and distrust,
That David, honest governance and Equity
Slings into the graveyards of disunity.*

*Renewed, its People Now in Comity
The fossilized hate and distrust,
The thawing evidence now eloquent
In the New Dawn.
Arise Now in Peace and Confidence
In the green pastures of hope and plenty,
The dreams of our martyrs and their blood;
Bloom now the evergreen promenades and forestry,
Born of the battles of our heroes' sacrifices,
Garden City find they anew and rebirthed
In the fulfillment of our Founders Cooperative,
That dawned the Arrowhead first flutters.
Oh! Glorious Unity your promise
Must steadfast conjoin
The equity to bear
And transparency the practice fair;
That Highway is there,
In the meritocracy oh! My Country.
That One Nation, One People, One Destiny,
The Mission, The Vision is gleamed in rivers streams
In the hearts of the Patriots true and Golden
The New Dawn now born, spirited anew.
The New Highway is there,
Unity is its name,
Guyanese all, now forward march,
Rally, Stake your claim,
Forge forward, onward, upward
On the New Highway,
Unity is its name.*

PASSION FRUIT, FIVE FINGER AND LEGACY THAT LIVES

by *Sharma Solomon*

The recent death anniversary of Mr. Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham was an appropriate time to reflect on his life and his legacy. In this context, the Burnham government had developed a national policy that envisaged Guyanese controlling the commanding heights of our economy by harnessing local resources for our benefit. It was this vision that led to the establishment of institutions such as the Institute of Applied Science and Technology (IAST).

IAST is located on the Turkeyen Campus of the University of Guyana (UG). In 2012 I had the pleasure of meeting Professor Suresh Narine, honorary director of IAST, who explained just how important IAST is to the development and advancement of our people.

Guyanese are encouraged and delighted regarding the ability of our fellow citizens and the potential of our natural resources, following the discovery that our homegrown passion fruit has antibacterial effects. This is good news for healthcare. Congratulations to Professor Raymond Jagessar, recently promoted professor at UG, and his team for their hard work.

Once again, Mr. Burnham's confidence that "Yes we can" is made reality. It was this belief in our ability and his desire for us to prove ourselves that put Guyana on the road to converting our rice into flour, causing our processed carambola (five-finger) to enter the European market, and initiating the mass production of plantain chips.

The latter, earlier condemned, are today in our supermarkets. Unfortunately, though, they are imported from Central America. In the metropolitan countries, rice flour, still demonized in Guyana, is sold as health food. Gerber and Kellogg, major food brands, have converted rice into cereal both for adults and as baby foods.

Mr. Burnham's advocacy for the use of our local herbs as staple tea was not met with much enthusiasm. Today these 'bush teas' are sold in the supermarkets, most, if not all,

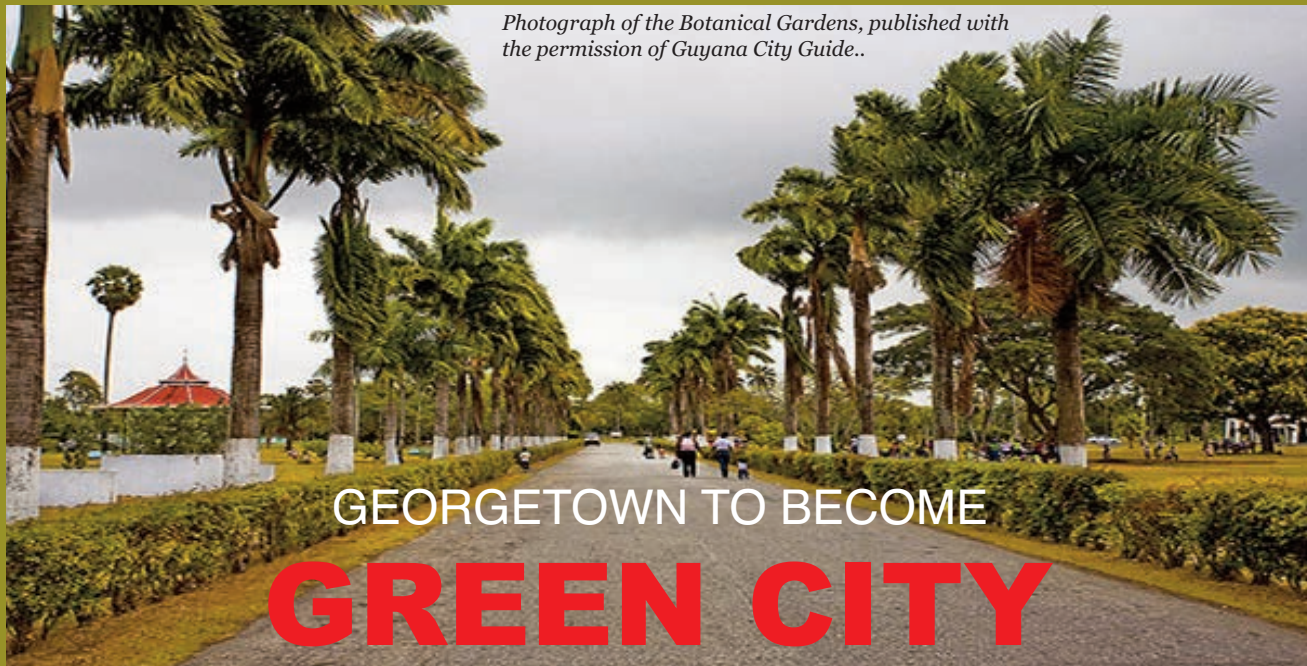
with imported labels. Jamaica

sells us cerassie tea. Cerassie is what we call corilla (or karaila). Britain and U.S.A. sell us lemongrass. This, like the other abovementioned items, grows in our backyards. And the potential for local job opportunities has not escaped me.

Thirty years after Mr. Burnham's departure, Guyanese continue, through the IAST, to do research and development to harness our nation's resources for the benefit of all. His dream lives on.



Photograph of the Botanical Gardens, published with the permission of Guyana City Guide..



GEORGETOWN TO BECOME **GREEN CITY**

SET FOR GRAND RETURN TO GLORY AS THE FAMED “GARDEN CITY”

FOLLOWING a meeting with President David Granger this past week over his “Green” vision for Guyana, the Mayor and City Council (M&CC) has not only embarked on the restoration of the renowned “Garden City”, but is doing this within an eco-friendly, green-environment framework.

This is according to Town Clerk Royston King who, on Friday last, laid out an elaborate plan for citizens and other stakeholders to participate in the various aspects of the city’s revitalisation drive. This drive involves, what was deemed most important, “a vigorous education initiative to instill in citizens the necessity, and long-term benefits of a clean, green city.”

The town clerk pointed out that this new approach to the city “demands a new attitude from all citizens occupying or traversing the capital.” This is especially so, since work is currently ongoing to address matters that have caused the decay of the capital of Guyana. These matters include the revision of legislation related to offences and penalties, and additional regulations to ensure the continuance of what city administrators envision.

As it stands, Georgetown has been plagued by flooding due to blocked drains, canals and other waterways. The city is congested given its layout, while

This article was first published in the Guyana Chronicle, and is used here with the permission of the Guyana National Newspapers Limited, publishers of the Chronicle.

citizens – particularly the business community – have confiscated city alleyways, reserves and other open spaces. Overgrown bushes and grass characterise almost every inch of Georgetown, while huge buildings have risen, some not adhering to the construction or zoning rules and regulations of the Council.

“This will be no more,” King promised. “Until the requisite legislation is passed to seriously arrest acts that contribute to the city’s deterioration, we will boost enforcement of all existing laws.”

King also warned that citizens should be mindful now of how they treat the city. He revealed a “no tolerance” policy for persons who, among other violations, arbitrarily destroy or occupy city property, and dump or cause waste to be dumped illegally.

As part of the education aspect of the green-city initiative, training and assistance programs will be made available by the Council.

It will include information on harmful chemicals, such as weedicides and poisons that negatively impact the environment. There will be programs on recycling and composting processes among others. Information on the benefits of low-carbon strategies and of alternative energy sources will also be accessible.

Given the enduring value of trees, particularly in the human respiratory process, their importance will be made known to all citizens, who will be encouraged to plant more trees and to care for them. “Plant and animal life must be respected in the city,” King charged.

In relation to vagrants and homeless persons who contribute to the ugliness and filth within the city, moves will be made to collaborate with the relevant ministries to address this.

In the meantime, City Hall has commenced the restoration of recreational areas for public convenience. The Council said it is adamant that it wants to see its citizens living as one, lending to the concept of cohesive communities. “We are therefore restoring recreational parks, playgrounds, sporting facilities and other social areas where the young and old can meet and talk, where uptown can meet downtown and dwell, and where all citizens are recognised only as citizens.”

The town clerk concluded that while the city is up for a grand return to glory, its citizens will also have to come up to par. He said City Hall will be making moves towards citizens’ health development, with related programs that encourage exercise and healthy eating.

The town clerk’s passionate appeal is that citizens start now, “to wrap their minds around a new, healthier and greener Georgetown.”

The winds of change

By Winston Jordan

The winds of change brought a breath of fresh air, and we see it in the beauty of laughing eyes of our children, women and men; their exuberance to make a positive difference; and their willingness to work hard to achieve a good life for themselves, their families and communities. We can only wonder where we could have been, had we been the beneficiaries of good and accountable governance during the past two decades.

In just about three months in office, we, in this Coalition Government, have been tested, by both domestic and international issues, and by an uncooperative opposition still piqued at losing the recent General and Regional Elections. We have made missteps, but generally we have proven that we have the mettle to confront the problems and challenges thrown at us. After all, that is part of what we were elected to do—provide strategic, astute and accountable leadership in pursuit of the common good. This is what we commit to do: continue to govern in the interest of all Guyanese.

We in the Coalition are a strong group of men and women, forged by our individual experiences and welded together by our common desire to work for the development of this country. We extend a hand of friendship and cooperation, of strength and unity, to all parties, groups, stakeholders and all Guyanese, as we pursue the arduous but exciting task of building this fledgling nation of ours.

As we stand on the cusp of our 50th year of independence, I call on all Guyanese to eschew petty intolerances, bitterness and hate. Let us dismiss all those purveyors of enmity who, in their selfish egotism, promote division and destruction. Let us invoke the indomitable will and spirit of our forebears, who battled slavery, indentureship, and colonialism so that we could be free to be One People and build One Nation. Let us ponder the distance we have travelled to date, where we are as a nation; where we want to be by the time of our centennial celebration of our independence; and how we get there.

Let us together, as one nation, leave a legacy of which the next generation can be proud, a destiny to which they can aspire. In this fast-paced world in which we live, we can do no worse than dissipate our energies with petulance and tangential distractions. We must immediately buckle down to the task at hand – moving our nation forward. We have an opportunity to make a fresh start in pursuit of a good life within a green economy.

Extracted from the concluding remarks of Budget 2015

HOME: WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

I hear an accent!

by Lear Matthews, PhD

The question, “Where are you from?” (followed by “You have an accent”) is quite familiar to immigrants. The stimulus for such a query is usually based on one’s speech pattern, accent or other linguistic attributes that appear to be different or “foreign.” Indeed it is reasonable to believe that the question emerges out of curiosity and is not motivated by any xenophobic thoughts.

However, a good friend told me that his initial inclination is usually to respond by saying “Earth! Where are you from?” But he quickly declared that because he was raised to be polite, he exercises self-restraint, empathy and diplomacy. He further stated that his response may be followed by pointing out to the questioner that she/he too has an “accent”. Everyone inherently has an accent peculiar to his or her indigenous socialization, unless (a) there is a deliberate attempt to alter or otherwise disguise it, which some immigrants may do to “fit in” or (b) social or environmental influences affect one’s speech pattern over time.

Further, my buddy usually assumes that what questioners mean is that he has a “non-American” accent. He thus feels the urge to verify an important dimension of his demographic attributes. He also ponders the possibility that his response may be used by the inquiring individual to gauge or determine the nature of the interpersonal interaction that follows.

A related theme is immigrants’ definition of “home”, which may be influenced by the immigration experience and level of assimilation into their adopted country. Owing to the transnational nature of Diaspora existence, defining “home” and its impact on identity and allegiance becomes an interesting sociological issue. As one social commentator stated, “home is not where my grandparents are buried, but where my grandchildren will be raised”. This addresses some of the assumptions made about the characterization of members of the Diaspora. Should members of the Guyanese Diaspora claim multiple “homes”? Is home the place where one was born or where one is raised?



What about the undocumented? Is home one’s adopted place of residence after migration or where one claims citizenship? If so, to whom (or which country) does one owe allegiance? Should members of the Diaspora be allowed to vote in hometown elections? Should they have representation in the parliaments of their countries of birth? Is home Guyana, the Caribbean, the West Indies, USA, Toronto, South America, Africa, India?

Furthermore, identifying oneself by using a bi-cultural label may reflect ethnic pride rather than the desire for enduring relations with an “ancestral land.” However, beyond such an argument, identification as Caribbean-American, West Indian-American or Guyanese-American may be less symbolic than significantly representing the essence of a transnational existence. Although in no way disruptive to life in their adopted home, the above represent subtle idiosyncrasies that some in the Diaspora grapple with daily, but that they may or may not discuss openly.

PROMISED LAND

by LouAnn Gross

Dr. Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith is a visionary leader, who dreamed big and delivered bigger, a man who changed Fort Valley State University (FVSU) forever. He spent a lot of time with his eyes closed creating blueprints and fantasies that led to greater transparency, increased integrity, quality customer service and excellence.

This visionary leader committed himself to excellence in everything he did. Dr. Griffith left a legacy. To live in the hearts of the people around you is to never die. Success is wonderful but significance is even better. He made many contributions and has a long list of accomplishments during a very short window of time.

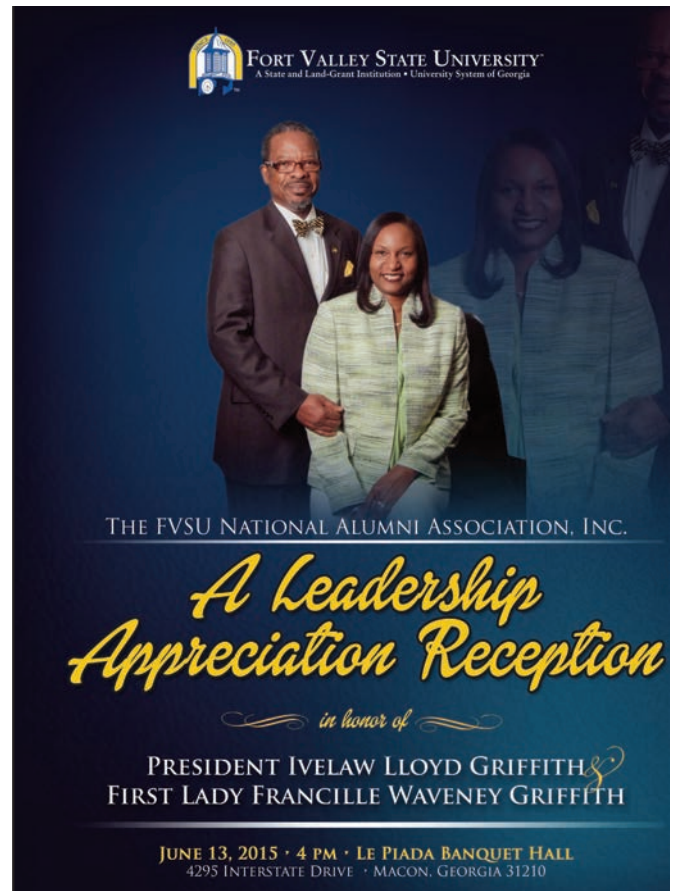
I'll just name a few: As a result of his outstanding leadership, FVSU will exceed its Fall 2015 student recruitment goals. The traditional marketing strategy for FVSU was expanded to include a robust social media presence (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, Instagram, and Flickr). The FVSU website was upgraded and we now have a mobile app. But most importantly, he left a mark on the people around him.

Years from now, historians will report that the 20+ months he spent in the "Valley" were successful. They will positively impact FVSU for years to come.

Dr. Griffith often said, "We cannot fix what we do not face". So we were forced to face the "good, the bad and the ugly". There were times when there were "tough, yet necessary conversations."

There were those who did not agree with his plans to expand FVSU globally. However, he knew that his dream of global outreach is critical to the future growth of the university. Dr. Griffith, like any great leader of any university today, knows that international initiatives are a competitive necessity for the standing and growth of our institution. He provoked many to think about the never-ending possibilities available to FVSU via international partnerships.

Dr. Griffith came to FV and into our lives only for an appointed time, only for a season. His work was part of a higher cause and his larger-than-life leadership style can be compared to other great leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the prophet Moses, who also had only a short time to get things done.



Dr. Griffith accomplished what he was destined to accomplish. Sir, Job WELL DONE... You made it to your mountaintop. You saw your Promised Land.

Reproduced here are extracts of an address by Ms. LouAnn Gross, a member of the Executive Board of the National Alumni Association of Fort Valley State University (FVSU) in Georgia at a leadership appreciation reception to honor outgoing FVSU president Guyanese-born Ivelaw Griffith and First Lady Francille Griffith.

WHY WORRY?

by Neil Wray

The late Robert Nesta (“Bob”) Marley, in one of his socio-political statements in song, said, “Don’t worry about a thing, ‘cause every little thing is gonna be alright.” So true! In a recent op-ed article, the writer seemed to worry about a number of things mainly pertaining to the new style of governance in Guyana. This new governance seemed to be associated with a unique phobia.

The topics discussed in the article ranged from race, gender, and age to percentage distributions among these groups and categories both on state boards and in the cabinet. A broad brush was used to paint a “picture of worry.” Why worry about all these things that can be seen as the colour of politics. Achieving political equilibrium takes time. The phenomenon of disequilibrium, or instability if you like, must run its course.

One particular point raised, one that stretched female gender issues, needs to be addressed since it is a worldwide talking point. Women have always been looked at as having a kind of “back seat” role rather than being more visible up front. In fact, biblical teaching shows that the role of women must be carefully placed without being marginalized.

The Master Evangelist loved His Mother, as He did Mary and Martha. Yet none of His disciples was female. Just look around. The great majority of church-goers, of religious folk, are indisputably female. But how many female pastors are out there? How many female bishops do we know in this world? Discrimination or whatever, it is reality!

Any system of governance, be it democratic or otherwise, does not necessarily require a determined percentage of persons of one gender, race or religious persuasion or another. Government by definition is a process that has to be conducted mainly by individuals who are “designed” to govern, or participate in the process.

Guyana had its fair share of female leaders. To name a few, upon reflection over our short history, there were Janet Jagan, Winifred Gaskin, Shirley Field-Ridley, Ann Jardim, Dorothy Bailey, and more recently, Priya Manickchand and Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett.

A well-known American president alluded to the concept of “leading from behind.” This is somewhat of an oxymoron, and does not remove the leadership role from being up front. A driving force can either be moving forward with a bunch of followers or being at the back pushing the bunch forward. Therefore, real leadership does not necessarily mean “prominence” up front.

Imbalance is not unreal in many areas of public service. Guyana always experienced a notable level of racial imbalance in the Police Force and the Defence Force. That does not make imbalance an evil thing. Therefore why worry about these abstract things and not address the most disgusting feature of corruption, as widespread as it was.

Nevertheless, the late American singing and dancing superstar named James Brown screamed at the top of his voice, “It is a man’s world, but it would be nothing without a woman or a girl.” During the last general and regional elections in Guyana, a leading publication carried the photo of a young man lifting a “grannie” to get her to the polls so that she can exercise her democratic right to vote. What a sight!

One cannot deny the fact that the right to vote, not how the leadership is formulated, is the single most important feature of governance. Political party membership, with its intrinsic cronyism, happens to be driven by a sense of trust and familiarity developed from the camaraderie that binds most party members, and must not be looked upon as a form of discrimination or favoritism.

Every time an opinion is expressed it serves to strengthen weaknesses, and helps to avoid the pitfall inherent in the statement that “where all men think alike, no man thinks at all.”

The author of this opinion piece is the former honorary trade representative of Guyana in Atlanta, Georgia. The opinions expressed here are his own, and not those of Diaspora Times, or of the government he represented.

LAST-MINUTE NEWS FLASH

By Eff A. See

The first 100 days have ended

The APNU+AFC Coalition, both during the election campaign and in the early days of the coalition government, highlighted the things the government intended to achieve during its first 100 days. Those 100 days end today, Monday August 24th.

How are we doing? It depends who you ask. Ram & McRae, the professional services firm of chartered accountants, in its Focus on Guyana's National Budget 2015, gives the coalition high marks for its budget. But that document is much less complimentary with regard to the first-100-days program. "There are 26 ministers in 15 ministries, the document points out. It adds, "If each minister had been assigned just one of the commitments all 21 commitments would have been achieved with time to spare."

The government's own reckoning of its performance comes in a number of charts made available by a senior Ministry of Information official and reproduced on pages seven to 13. Moreover, buoyed by chants of "Done," "To be done," or "Almost done" respectively, Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo gave Parliament an enthusiastic report on all the steps the APNU+AFC Coalition had taken to keep its 100-day promise.

Late but well-deserved



Terry Holder, one of Guyana's leading broadcasters and one of the Caribbean's leading broadcast leaders, was recently inducted posthumously into the Caribbean Broadcasting Union's Hall of Fame. His eldest child, Attorney at Law Dawn Adriane Holder, and his son Duane received the plaque on his behalf. Responding to the honor bestowed on her father, Dawn said: "Broadcasting and regional integration were his life, apart from the passion of cricket... Daddy believed in regional integration the way Christians believed in the Second Coming."



Photograph: Gordon Moseley, News Source Guyana

Now you see them, now you don't

Ex-president Bharrat Jagdeo returned to Parliament on Monday as head of the new PPP/C contingent. He soon formalized his position as leader of the opposition but his party turned down the deputy speakership normally reserved for the opposition. The government and opposition were soon sparring across the aisle, each side giving as good as it got.

Not long after they had arrived, Dr. Jagdeo and his team walked out. There was consternation among media professionals and politicians alike about what generated the walkout. Before the mystery could be resolved, Dr. Jagdeo and his side were back again.

Coalition honors PPP executive member



In the early days and weeks of the new coalition government, Facebook was ablaze with complaints about photographs of President David Granger sitting next to senior public servant Hydar Ally, seen in picture presenting a copy of his book to then President Ramotar. As permanent secretary in the Public Service Ministry, Ally was the most senior public servant. But he is also a long-standing member of the top echelons of the PPP. The coalition's supporters on Facebook seemed particularly incensed that Ally was being allowed to sit next to the new president while also being photographed picketing in support of the PPP's claim that the APNU+AFC Coalition government was a de facto government, not a legitimate one.

Recently, as his tenure in the public service drew to a close, he was honored for his service to the government and offered the opportunity to return as a trainer in the soon-to-be-established Public Service Staff College. This time, government supporters are not likely to object. Mr. Ally was instrumental in charges being laid against an ex PPP minister for the illegal transfer of government vehicles to private hands.

LAST-MINUTE NEWS FLASH

The sad, strange story of Mrs. Singh and Mr. Dindyal

Dismissals of, and enforced leave against, a number of public service and public-sector officials have led to allegations that the government is engaging in ethnic cleansing. Opposition supporters became more vociferous in their allegations after the government terminated the services of Guyana Power and Light Chief Executive Officer Bharrat Dindyal. The irony is that Dindyal, whose US\$30,000 monthly salary compares favorably with those of many public- and private-sector professionals in highly developed societies, did not have the support of even the corporation's PPP-appointed board.

A December 22, 2014 letter to then PPP/C Prime Minister Samuel Hinds, stated clearly, "The board does not support a renewal of the CEO's contract." Disrespect of the board, poor management style and dishonest actions are among the reasons given for the Board's opposition to Dindyal's re-appointment, either at his \$30,000 salary or with the US\$1,500-a-month increase he was proposing.

Meanwhile, one PPP leader supporting allegations of ethnic cleansing is said to have been shocked when, as minister, he visited a certain Guyanese diplomatic mission and found there was still one person of African descent on the staff. The person was a Mrs. Singh. Apparently, reading her name on a list, he had misled himself into thinking she was of Indian ancestry. Shortly after the visit to the mission and the discovery of his error, Mrs. Singh was out of a job. Did someone say ethnic cleansing?

For more information on ethnic cleansing in Guyana, please see Freddie Kissoon's article "Statistics and Names of Ethnic Cleansing During PPP Reign" in the August 24 issue of Kaieteur News.

Battling for last place

As the past week progressed, the government and the parliamentary opposition were battling to the death for last place, or more correctly, second-to-last place. The penultimate position usually allows the opposition leader to respond to points made in the debate before the finance minister wraps up. This time, however, the positioning took on a new significance—whether Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo would have an opportunity, from the high perch of a former PPP insider, to deal with the fireworks likely to be lit



by Opposition Leader Jagdeo. In the end, the P.M. got to speak after Dr. Jagdeo. About the opposition's accusations regarding racism, ethnic cleansing, and the crime situation, he revealed in stark detail how it was the previous PPP Government that had much for which to answer.

Surprise revelation: PPP company owns Red House

Ownership of Red House, at one stage the official residence of the premier of Guyana and later the office of the Public Service Ministry, was transferred to a PPP-related company, Cheddi Jagan Research Inc. Also, the name was changed from Red House to the Cheddi Jagan Centre.

This information was discovered by the new administration, and it was revealed to the Guyanese people by Minister of State in the Ministry of the Presidency Joseph Harmon during the current budget debate.

The transfer from state ownership to the Cheddi Jagan Research Inc. took place in 2012 when the company was granted a 99-year lease for which the company, whose directors were PPP leaders, including Mrs. Janet Jagan and Mr. Donald Ramotar, pays a meager \$1,000 Guyana (US\$5) monthly.

The minister said that the government spent millions of dollar to renovate the building before handing it over to the company. Government also continued paying the staff after the handover.

Minister Harmon further alluded to initiatives by the Asset Recovery Unit to recover properties improperly transferred from state ownership to private hands. He noted that the money trail was leading to New York, Abu Dhabi and elsewhere.