MASHRAMANI CELEBRATIONS IN BROOKLYN, JUNE 12

JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS IN NEW YORK
Greetings! Plenty Howdy!

Ah Deh Hay!

We trust that you are taking all necessary weather precautions and simultaneously enjoying the temperate climate. Undoubtedly our readers from the tropics have engaged fantasies about hometown sunshine to brighten these days in their adopted home. In the month of February, as we look forward to springtime, we are reminded of the importance of sharing love and spiritual sustenance in the Lenten season. Keeping up the tradition, annual Phagwah, Mashramani and other spirited Carnival events are successfully celebrated during this season around the Caribbean.

In this issue we continue the focus on “honoring our past, inspiring the future”. We share information about various dimensions of our culture, highlighting historical events, celebrations, artistic, educational and entrepreneurial accomplishments, particularly among our youth. We spotlight the historical journey to Guyana’s independence and the inimitable role of personalities such as Trade Union stalwart, Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow and Sir David J. Gardiner Rose, the first governor general of Guyana.

In celebrating Black History Month, the works of scholar Dr. George Monah James and the legacy of creative Art forms in constructing African villages are presented. The Fonoko Singers release of a Guyanese musical CD entitled “Awi Lumbay” this weekend in New York. Continuing on the path of youth achievement, the flag of Guyana flew as high as the mighty Roraima when a women’s 4 +200 meters relay team outclassed an elite USA team at the 2016 Armory Track Event in New York...... Brazil, here we come!

We bring you up-to-date with the on-going plans for celebrating Guyana’s Golden Jubilee 2016 proceedings by providing a detailed schedule of events. A commentary on the Jubilee Symposium theme which addresses the question: “Who are we? - reflecting on our collective identity as we prepare for an unprecedented milestone, hopefully leading to significant change and development in our dear land.

The selection of the poem, “AHWETOWN” (for Georgetown) emerged from an on-line Golden Jubilee conversation about transforming the names of prominent places to reflect the indigenous and Creole culture of Guyana. Visit the “new” Kitty Market soon.

Registrations for the GACC’s Music, Dance and Dancercize classes are still open. Hurry....Hurry!

The Guyana Cultural Association urges you to continue to share credible and helpful information and ideas that would not only preserved our heritage, but fortify our collective efforts as we prepare to celebrate 50 years of Guyana’s independence.

Enjoy the read and walk good!

Lear Matthews
February Editor
Oh I care not that others rave
over fair lands afar
Where silver lakes and placid streams
mirror the evening star
I care not though their wealth be great,
their scenery be grand
For none so fair as can compare
with my own native land.

Their sylvan vales and rippling brooks
may charm me when I roam
But what of that? No brooks and vales
can steal my love of home;
Where I in childhood used to play,
and where the old folks rest
Must be to me. where'er I be,
the dearest and the best.

And though I rove o'er hill and dale
and brave old Neptune's foam,
O'er crags and rocks and mossy dells,
I still will turn me home;
For when at length I come to die,
I want no gilded tomb,
Just let me rest within thy breast,
where thy sweet flowers bloom,
Where thy sweet flowers bloom.

GUYANA

My Native Land

Georgetown by the seawall going up to the East Coast
Black History Month is a remembrance of important people and events in the history of the African Diaspora. Since 1976, it is celebrated annually in the United States of America and Canada in February and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the month of October. In the U.S., Black History Month is also referred to as African-American History Month.

Guyanese Dr. George Granville Monah James

AUTHOR OF STOLEN LEGACY:

Dr. George Granville Monah James was born in Hadfield Street, Georgetown, Guyana, South America. He was the son of Reverend Linch B. and Margaret E. James. George G. M. James earned Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Theology and Master of Arts degrees from Durham University in England and was a candidate there for the D. Litt degree. He conducted research at London University and did postgraduate work at Columbia University where he read for his Ph.D. Dr. James earned a teaching certificate in the State of New York to teach mathematics, Latin and Greek. James later served as Professor of Logic and Greek at Livingston College in Salisbury, North Carolina for two years, and eventually taught at the University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff.
Dr. George Granville Monah James was an African Guyanese scholar who held degrees and teaching certificates in theology, logic, Latin, Greek, philosophy, mathematics and history. A professor at Arkansas A&M, and the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. With the publication of his groundbreaking book “STOLEN LEGACY” when published in 1954 concluded that the Greeks were not the originators of Greek philosophy. His was the first book to argue that the Greeks stole their philosophy from the people of KEMET in North Africa commonly called the Egyptians.

James presents seven primary arguments: (1) Greek philosophy was stolen Egyptian philosophy, (2) Greek philosophy was alien to the Greeks, (3) Greek philosophy was the off-spring of the Egyptian Mystery System, (4) the Egyptians educated the Greeks, (5) the doctrines of Greek philosophers are the doctrines of the Egyptian Mystery System, (6) the education of the Egyptian Priests and the Curriculum of the Mystery System, show Egypt was the source of Higher Education in the ancient world, not Greece; and (7) the Memphite Theology contains the theology, philosophy, and cosmology of the Egyptians and is therefore an authoritative source of doctrinal origin.

The release of Doctor James’ long-awaited book stirred tremendous controversy in 1954 in apartheid America. His very attack on the Greco-Roman, Judaeo-Christian foundation of Western civilization upset western academia and still does today. His unveiling that Aristotle stole and plagiarized materials from the royal libraries and temples throughout Egypt was the source of Higher Education in the ancient world, not Greece; and the Memphite Theology contains the theology, philosophy, and cosmology of the Egyptians and is therefore an authoritative source of doctrinal origin.

“Dr. George Granville Monah James' life ended in 1954 under suspicious circumstances, many alleging that he was murdered for revealing too much and thus daring to challenge the established racist European American power structure whose “vampiristic nature” enables them to live off black oppression. Dr. James’ work was seen as a shot across the bow of white supremacy, one whose echo reverberates throughout the African world. Dr. George Granville Monah James had attained Kundalini consciousness and intellect. His Stolen Legacy is an awakening and a must-read.

George Granville Monah James was born on Hadfield Street in Georgetown, British Guiana towards the end of the Nineteenth century, around 1899 according to documents and biographical booklets which were devoted to him. His father, the Reverend Linch B. James and his mother Margaret E. James were associated with the so-called Black minority educated class of the city and sent George to the best schools where he managed to acquire a rich and solid education.
How I Moved From Social Outcast To Successful Entrepreneur & CEO Of Fresh as Daisy Kids Spa & Salon

In August 2013, Althea Chase with the help of her sister Crystal, hosted a sleepover for her daughter and 6 of her friends. They did manicures, pedicures, and chocolate facials which they all loved. They ate pizza, drank apple cider in champagne glasses, and had girl talk. The girls talked about their future plans and how they were going to make the world a better place. It was a life changing, fun experience and everyone had a wonderful time. After the sleepover Althea would constantly get calls from the other moms asking when the next sleepover was going to be. The girls had so much fun that they couldn’t stop talking about it. Sometime in June of 2014 a light bulb went off and Althea realized that girls need to be empowered. So Althea put her idea into action and in November 2014 Fresh as Daisy Kids Spa and Salon opened its doors in a truly unique location in Brooklyn, New York. Here’s Althea’s story of how she went from being a social outcast to a successful entrepreneur.
My name is Alteaha Chase and I was born on March 17th 1979. My mother Joan LaRose is a teacher and my father Ashton Austin was a mechanic. My childhood was spent surrounded by family and friends. We lived in a large house that was shared by my mother and her three sisters and a friend. My mother and I occupied half of the top flat, we had one bedroom and another room that doubled as our kitchen and family room. Growing up I knew I was loved by both of my parents and my extended family; however, the words I love you were never said. You are beautiful and I am proud of you were rarely used. I attended Stella Maris Primary school then moved on to North Georgetown Secondary school (NGSS). At NGSS I would gravitate to people like myself; the shy easygoing, introverts.

My mother migrated to the United States from Guyana, South America in 1994 in search of a better life & in 1996 I followed. I left behind so many people who were instrumental in my youth and with whom I had strong ties. Everyone that I identified with were now miles away. To say the transition was hard is an understatement. It felt more like a transformation. I went from living among family and friends to residing in a two bedroom apartment with my mother and then two-year old sister in Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

I attended John Jay High School and the experience was overwhelming. Instead of being placed in the 12th grade, they placed me in 10th grade. I excelled academically and had the advantage of being ahead of my fellow students in all subject areas, but socially I felt myself shrinking. I was overwhelmed at the size of the school, the class structure and the mere pressure of trying to fit in. My accent caused some to laugh, my hair was not in style and I was not part of the “in” crowd with my store bought clothing. High school can be the turning point for many students and I was a social outcast. Kids made fun of my accent and made me feel like an outcast. I cringed inside at the thought of going to school and what lay ahead of me on any given day.
The toll of being ostracized was becoming too much and I finally convinced my mother to allow me to take the GED exam. Since academically I never had any problems, I was able to pass the test on my first attempt. I began working and was able to establish a slight sense of belonging with some friends I was beginning to make.

Over the next few years, more of my family and friends began migrating to New York from Guyana. This was comforting because I knew I belonged. We would sit and reminisce about Guyana and tell our stories about the transition to the United States. As we talked, we all shared a common thread, the ease and uncertainty we felt when we first moved here.

It was at this time that I decided I wanted the experience of young people, girls in particular, moving to the United States from a foreign country to be better than what it was for me. ENABLE, EMPOWER & EDUCATE!!! This became my mantra from that point on & I began envisioning my dream of working with young women. At my mother’s church, Greater AME Zion located on Lenox Avenue in Brooklyn, New York I would start a small youth group where school age girls would meet to discuss issues they were facing in schools. Our little group only lasted a few sessions but I was determined to reach more girls.

I enrolled at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) where I graduated with an Associates Degree in Human Service. I gained employment at Queens Children Guidance Center as a caseworker. My job responsibilities included home visits & providing support and counseling to the families.

I attended Lehman College where I majored in Social Work. In 2004 I graduated Magna Cum Laude and was on the Dean’s List. I was employed at the nonprofit agency YAI, as a Developmental Aide. YAI provides housing, counseling and a vast array of other services to individuals with developmental disabilities. In 2006, I accepted a position as a Social Worker Assistant with NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). My duties include interacting with clinical staff to provide support services to developmentally disabled individuals that live at home and in residential settings. I advocate for individuals who are disadvantaged and unable to speak up for themselves.

While continuing to work for OPWDD on a modified schedule, I applied and was accepted into the Advanced Standing Program at the Hunter College School of Social Work. I had the opportunity to be a part of a wonderful year long internship at Ackerman Institute for Family. I was a part of the Diversity and Social Work Training Program where I provided therapy to families dealing with school difficulties, child and adolescent problems, marital issues, divorce, bereavement, learning disabilities, family violence, child abuse and incest, and chronic medical illnesses, including AIDS. I would help family members work collaboratively towards solutions to their problems, and help them to harness and strengthen family resources.

I graduated in 2007 with a Master’s Degree and a deep love and understanding of working and advocating for people that could not do so for themselves. My work is rewarding but there was always a burning desire within to work with young women migrating to a new place.
In 2008 I gave birth to my most prized possession, a baby girl I named Daisy. I envisioned a life for her filled with the things I never had the chance to experience. She would have the opportunity to experience the arts, ballet, & museums.

We do a lot of mother–daughter activities and on special occasions I would bring her along to the nail salon where she would be treated to a manicure and pedicure. She loved the experience, but I began to notice that the service and environment were not kid-friendly. As I continued to treat Daisy to the occasional salon visit, I found myself complaining about the lack of attention she was given and how fast the services were completed. It was as though her nails & feet were not taken seriously.

In August of 2013 I hosted a sleepover for Daisy and 6 of her friends. I recruited my younger sister, Crystal, to help. We did manicures, pedicures, and chocolate facials which they all loved. We ate pizza, drank apple cider in champagne glasses, and had girl talk. The girls talked about future plans and how they were going to make the world a better place. It was a life changing, fun experience and we had a wonderful time. After the sleepover I would constantly get calls from the other moms asking when the next sleepover was going to be. The girls had so much fun that they couldn’t stop talking about it.

Sometime in June 2014 a light bulb went off in my head and I realized that all girls from all walks of life needed to be empowered. Fresh as Daisy Kids Spa & Salon was named after my daughter and with the vision of the life I have for her. Life lessons begin at a young age and are carried throughout life so why not start now. In November 2014 the doors of Fresh as Daisy Kids Spa and Salon opened.

Fresh as Daisy Kids Spa is a hidden paradise for girls ages 2-14. Our Mission is Pamper, Empower and Educate young girls, build self-esteem, confidence and create employment. This wonderful establishment has hosted over 150 events since November 21st, 2014, we continue to learn, grow and improve. Our Kids Spa offers Orbeez manicures and fun flavored pedicure such as bubble gum, watermelon, cotton candy, blueberry, strawberry. We offer edible, colorful chocolate facials with cool cucumber eye patches. No two parties are ever the same, Spa parties are unique, interactive, and fun. We have an incredible Cupcake Decorating Station that brings out the creativity in kids and adults. Your Spa party can also include a fancy fashion show where little Divas can dress up in pink tutu, boas, diamonds, pearls and walk down the red carpet to be crowned fashion Diva. Fresh as Daisy Kids Spa has a full service children’s hair salon specializing in braiding, flat twist, cornrows, extensions and dreadlocks. Our all inclusive kids spa party center specializes in all themes, Monster High, Frozen, Princess, Pink In Paris etc.. Little Divas, and princesses can enjoy gorgeous glitter make up, fancy nail polish, and our signature pink champagne while being pampered in our comfy pink spa robes and slippers.

Because we are extremely big on community involvement and family, for Mother’s Day 2015, Fresh as Daisy kids Spa pampers all the mothers, and grandmothers of The Greater Saint James AME Zion Church on Lenox Avenue in Brooklyn New York. We also donated our time and service to pamper all the little girls of Thaddeus Stevens Public School (P.S 81) who made the Honor Roll. We are currently in talks with the Principle and Parent Coordinator at Granville T. Wood Public School 335, putting together a date and time to pamper all the little girls who attended that school and are currently living in temporary housing such as shelters, and foster care. Fresh as Daisy Kids Spa participated in the 12th Annual Children’s Sport and Fitness Expo which was held at Boys and Girls School in June. We also attended the 6th Annual Juneteenth Family Fun Day in June which was held at Gershwin Park in Brooklyn New York.

I am extremely happy that I have provided such an awesome place for her and many other little girls who come from near and far to experience our services. It is very important for little girls to see that adults that look like them can build, create and manage businesses. I encourage any girl to follow her dream, don’t matter what people may say. Work hard, dream big and be determined. Anything is possible if you just believe.

Visit www.freshasdaisy.com for more information or to schedule an appointment.
In the south of Burkina Faso, a landlocked country in west Africa, near the border with Ghana lies a small, circular village of about 1.2 hectares, called Tiébélé. This is home of the Kassena people, one of the oldest ethnic groups that had settled in the territory of Burkina Faso in the 15th century. Tiébélé is known for their amazing traditional Gourounsi architecture and elaborately decorated walls of their homes.

Burkina Faso is a poor country, even by West African standards, and possibly the poorest in the world. But they are culturally rich, and decorating the walls of their buildings is an important part of their cultural legacy in this area of the country. Wall decorating is always a community project done by the women.

The Kassena people build their houses entirely of local materials: earth, wood and straw. Soil mixed with straw and cow dung is moistened to a state of perfect plasticity, to shape almost vertical surfaces. Today this technique is replaced by the use of mud brick molding walls with foundations resting on large stone. Tiébélé’s houses are built with defense in mind, whether that be against the climate or potential enemies. Walls are over a foot thick and the homes are designed without windows except for a small opening or two to let just enough light in to see. Front doors are only about two feet tall, which keeps the sun out and makes enemies difficult to strike. Roofs are protected with wood ladders that are easily retracted and the local beer (dolo) is brewed at home.

The most amazing feature, however, is the intricate ornamentation that covers almost every square inch of the dwellings, painted with colored mud and chalk that tell an expressive story of the ancient tribe’s culture. The motifs can illustrate just about anything from objects used in normal daily life, to religion and beliefs, to decorative patterns that
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Preparation for the 50th Anniversary of Guyana’s independence is in full swing. The launch of the Diaspora program occurred on January 16th in New York, and there is much anticipation, excitement and numerous activities for the yearlong celebration. Overseas-based planning committees complement those at home, ensuring inclusive participation. This is particularly important because the Guyanese Diaspora represents a significant portion of those who identify with the homeland. The Symposium Committee will focus on the history and development of Guyana with one of its stated goals to explore: Who are we? This is the focus on my commentary.

Land of Six Races: A misnomer

Guyana is internationally known as “Land of Six Races” or “Land of Six Peoples”. The groups referenced include East Indian, African, Amerindian, Chinese, European and Portuguese (a sub-group of European). However, the use of the term ‘race’ to distinguish these composite groups is a misnomer.

Sociologists are skeptical about the biological classification of race. According to Martin Marger in his book Race and Ethnic Relations, race is a social construct and in its popular usage describes a variety of human categories, including people of a particular skin color (the Caucasian “race”), religion (the Jewish “race”), nationality (the British “race”), and even the entire human species (the human “race”). How does this apply to the Guyanese context?

“Land of Six Races/Peoples” was likely adopted as a ‘catch all’ phrase. Nevertheless, East Indian, Chinese and Portuguese are not ‘races’, although one may argue that each “represents” a particular race, namely Asiatic and Caucasian respectively, however ambiguously defined. Similarly Amerindians, the indigenous people of Guyana, do not comprise a race in the conventional sense of the term. ‘Mixed race’ (e.g. dougla, bouviander, santanton) adds to the confusion. Many of us have ‘mixed’ ancestry and some people are not sure what they are.

Socio-linguistics and group identity: Institutional racism

These so-called racial groups and their social meaning have historical roots in colonialism and centers on political and economic realities, defining status and shaping inter-group relations. Not unlike other Caribbean countries, an ideology of racism, imposed under colonialism, with the intersecting of color, class, gender and culture, explains the categorizing of these groups.
In this regard, referring to Portuguese (primarily of peasant stock brought from Madeira) as “Putagee” has both linguistic and socio-cultural significance. That label distinguished them from the upper class European colonizers, and rationalized their labor status commensurate with the other lower/working class groups. This is a classic example of the strategic social construction of group divisions used to frame the hierarchy within the society.

**What has been our journey?**

‘Who are we’ is intricately connected to ‘what has been our journey’ - a journey which began far beyond the shores of South America, traversed by a trail of dehumanization and exploitation. This presumed, if not affirmed, a stratification system of superiority/inferiority, which percolated conflict and antagonism among the groups struggling to share/control the society’s natural resources. This was exacerbated by political tensions between the two major groups, Guyanese of Indian ancestry and Guyanese of African ancestry. It also perpetuated rigidly imposed ‘racial’ stereotypes. Political independence brought a redefinition of national identity and a sense of hope.

**Land of Six Ethnic Groups: An appropriate icon**

‘Land of Six Peoples’, rather non-descript, is also commonly used, but ‘Land of Six Ethnic Groups’ seems a more suitable icon. Such thinking is informed by the historical and cultural landscape of Guyana. Ethnic groups are groups within a larger society that exhibit a unique set of cultural traits. Members exhibit a sense of community, an ‘ahwhee’ feeling, and ethnic cleavage. They share a cultural tradition, common ancestry, perceived heritage, and tend to occupy (or have been assigned) distinct land space.

However, not only do these attributes result in a bonding of people of like origins, but unintentionally paves the way for divisions and disdain for people of dissimilar origins. As though struggling for an identity, conflict between the country’s two dominant ethnic groups has been pervasive and at times seemingly intractable. Further divisions based on the ‘belief’ of racial differences, were heightened by religious affiliation, numerical imbalance, regional disenfranchisement, distrust and name-calling. Over the years, this situation was exploited by political machinations through “racialization” of these groups, which contributed to a fractured society. “Racialization” is the process by which a group comes to be defined as a race.

Some perspective on this was articulated by Kimani Nehusi (2015) who suggested that we need to be honest with ourselves. He stated that Guyanese must come to know themselves as different ethnic/cultural groups, know each other and ourselves as Guyanese. Self-knowledge in all its individual and group ramifications is central to this honesty.

Ethnic communities share some common cultural traits by virtue of a shared environment. We should view ourselves from an ethnic rather than a racial/racist paradigm. This would harness mutual respect, set an example for young people, leading to policies and actions that are mutually beneficial rather than divisive. Hopefully, matured at 50, the nation is up to the challenge, in defining who we are, and what we can become.

*Part II will explore Diaspora Identity: Who are we away from ‘home’?*
Historian Hazel Woolford reminds us that “the BGLU and more specifically Hubert Critchlow, recognized that unless all ethnic groups respected themselves, their contribution to the development of the colonial Guianese society would be very limited and could have discouraged positive race relations. The effectiveness of the Union’s approach to handling the race issue was ultimately established by Critchlow’s ability to bring Guianese workers under the umbrella of the Labour Union and it was not surprising that East Indian workers conferred on him the title of ‘Black Crosby’. This was the most appropriate accolade that descendants of Indian immigrants could have bestowed on this trade unionist because ‘White Crosby’, or James Crosby, the Immigration Agent General, had been considered the only friend of the East Indian labourers.”

‘Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow stands tall as the most important figure in the birth and growth of the labor movement in British Guiana. He was dedicated and determined, as were his lieutenants, to bring an end to the horrific and depressed conditions that the working-class people in the colony of British Guiana were forced to endure…’

Mellissa Ifill
He is well known as the father of the Trade Union movement in Guyana. He established the British Guiana Labour Union, the first successful trade union in the colony in January 1919. He lived through two world wars. A statue in his honour stands on the grounds of Parliament Buildings, in Georgetown.

Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow was born in Georgetown on the 18 December 1884. His father James Nathaniel Critchlow had emigrated from Barbados and was employed by the Bookers company as a wharf foreman. His mother was Julia Elizabeth, nee Daniels, from Essequibo.

Hubert attended the Bedford Wesleyan Primary School. He was in Standard 4 (equivalent to Grade 6 in American schools), when his father died. He was only 13 years old then and he decided to leave school and start to work to help maintain his home. He started to work as an apprentice at the Demerara Foundry. Later he became a dock worker on the waterfront.

At school, he was good at sports and he continued to be so, well into his twenties. He became a popular sports figure in the country during the period 1905–1914 when he was the country’s middle-distance athletic champion. He was also a good footballer and cricketer.

Hubert grew up in a world where rights for workers as we know today were not even a pipe dream. Workers pay and living conditions were not matters for negotiation. Trade Unionism had not been established for too long in Britain and America.

When Hubert was a young man, the European powers with their policies to expand their empires and control territory, drove themselves headlong into a war of all wars, the Great War, known as the First World War. In that world, British Guiana was a tiny pawn, the government of which together with big businesses operated to suit the needs of Great Britain the imperial power. In that world, inequality reigned supreme, employers in their castle, and workers in their hovel.

In British Guiana in the early 1900s working and living conditions for workers were horrendous. Those fortunate to find work at a time of high unemployment faced a long working day for low wages and rising cost of living. In Georgetown many people lived in shantytowns with poor water supply, little or no drainage or garbage disposal. Disease was rampant, infant mortality rates were high and life expectancy low. No organization existed to make representation to employers on behalf of their workers to secure better wages and improved working conditions.

The sheer injustices and inhumanity meted out to workers drove them from time to time to strike out in total desperation, to risk their livelihood and their safety, in a basic human instinct for survival, in order to better their lot, but to no avail. When workers protested in Georgetown and in the countryside for better pay and working conditions, the government sided with the employers and quelled workers’ demonstrations with military force. Some protesters were even killed. Government did not see it as their role to have laws about income and hours of work, or grant recognition to organised labour unions.

Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow was 21 years old in 1905 when as a dock worker on the waterfront, he actively spoke up for his fellow workers during a strike in Georgetown, He became popular and the seed was planted then for the birth of the trade Union movement in Guyana.‘Cometh the Hour Cometh the Man.’

The immediate origins of the trade union movement can, however, be traced to a strike by waterfront workers for increased wages in November and December 1905 in Georgetown, which was led by Critchlow. These workers faced opposition from the uncompromising shipping companies, and, the conflict between the shipping companies and the workers that had deteriorated into rioting and bloodshed was eventually settled after the British troops had been summoned. At an address to the World Trade Union Conference in 1945, Critchlow detailed the workers’ woes and demands in the 1905 strike that had ultimately failed.
“There was no trade union, and the employers refused. So I got the working men, boys together, and they agreed that when there were six boats in the harbour they must strike. A great thing and at that time I did not know that all the estates in the country followed us and struck on account of low wages.”

‘It was Critchlow’s participation and role in this strike that catapulted him into the public eye and gave him added authority and credibility as a workers leader. The failure of this 1905 strike, which was partially due to the organizational weakness of the workers, clearly demonstrated to Critchlow that there was a pressing need for a trade union in the colony...

The first world war made matters worse for working people. Although many strikes during the war years were unsuccessful, there were some gains. The waterfront strike in January 1917 yielded a 10% increase in wages, and a reduction of daily working hours from 10 and a half hours to 9 hours. A strike in December 1917 yielded another 10% increase in wages.

Critchlow became the undisputed leader of waterfront workers and workers generally but he soon paid the price when he led a petition in 1917–18, for an 8-hour working day. The Chamber of Commerce pressured him to withdraw his name from the petition. He refused to do so. He was immediately fired from his job on March 1918, and blacklisted from obtaining employment.

Being unemployed, he devoted his time and energies to the campaign for an 8-hour work day. In December 1918, he led a small delegation of workers to the Governor, Sir Wilfred Colet. After this meeting he decided that the way forward was through a trade union, and he immediately started to make arrangements for its formation. The British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU), the first successful trade union in the colony was eventually established on the 11 January 1919. Critchlow had received support from all over the country and abroad, particularly from trade unions in Britain.

Critchlow was employed on a full time basis by the union. He was Secretary / Treasurer with a salary of $20 per month. His salary was increased to $120 in 1920 in order to satisfy the income qualification for a seat in the Combined court, the ‘parliament’ at the time. There he could make political representations on behalf of workers. He never stopped being a spokesperson for the workers. He publicised their grievances and demanded improved working conditions and better wages for them.

The union experienced numerous problems in its early years. Employers saw it as a force aimed at fomenting industrial unrest, and issued threats to workers who were union members. Despite this, its membership grew rapidly. By the end of its first year, it had more than 7,000 financial members comprising waterfront workers, tradesmen, sea defence and road workers, railroad workers, balata bleeders and miners, some Government employees and hundreds of sugar estate labourers. Branches of the union were also set up in various parts of the country. By January 1920, there were 13000 members, and the unions savings were $9700.

The Union gained many improvements including: the elimination of night and Sunday labour in bakeries, a number of salary increases, and the appointment of a commission to look into the living conditions, salaries and any other circumstance affecting stevedores. One of the most significant achievements was legal recognition for trade unions in June 1921. This recognition was achieved with the support of the Colonial Office in London and the British Labour Party.

Dr Ishmael in ‘Critchlow in the Workers’ Struggle’ stated inter alia:

‘A serious unemployment crisis developed in the early 1920s, following the end of the World War, and there were strikes and riots in Georgetown in 1924. Since similar problems occurred in the British West Indies, a strong solidarity among the trade unions was forged in all the territories. A number of West Indian labour conferences also took place, and the BGLU played a leading role in all of them. During this period, Critchlow served as Secretary-Treasurer of the union; C. T. Andrews was elected President of the union in 1922.

‘Spearheaded by Critchlow, the union also campaigned vigorously for the reduction of rents in Georgetown. At that time, most workers, particularly those on the waterfront, lived in rented buildings in the city. When a rent reduction was won in 1922, a committee of tenants designated the 3 July 1922 as “Critchlow Day.”

Trade unionism was now firmly established in the colony and the BGLU expanded its international links. Critchlow represented the union at the British Commonwealth Labour Conference in 1924, 1925 and 1930 in England. The British Caribbean and West Indian Labour Conference was inaugurated in Georgetown in 1926, and Critchlow was a leading representative at this, and at subsequent conferences. In 1938, he was elected to the position of Assistant Secretary of the Conference.
His experience in the workers’ struggle, led Critchlow to the view that the established capitalist system was not bringing benefits to the working class. In December 1930, in an address to members of the union, he called for workers to fight against capitalism, as practised by the employers, and to struggle for the establishment of socialism.

In 1931, he travelled to Germany to represent the union at the International Committee of Trade Union Workers Conference. In 1932, on an invitation from the trade union movement of the Soviet Union, he visited Russia. On his return, he spoke of the benefits Russian workers were receiving. The local press attacked him and called him a “Red, a Communist and a Bolshevik.”

A number of Unions were formed to represent workers in various areas, and in 1941 the British Guiana Trades’ Union Council (TUC) was established, with Critchlow as its first General Secretary. By 1943, 14 unions were affiliated to this umbrella body which, shortly after, joined the World Federation of Trades Unions (WFTU).

Critchlow also championed demands for the extension of the right to vote so that all workers could participate in national elections. Some leaders of other unions also agitated for this cause.

In 1943, Critchlow and Ayube Edun, of the Man Power Citizens’ Association (MPCA), which was formed a few years before, were nominated by the Governor to represent workers in the Legislative Council. In 1944, Critchlow was appointed to the Executive Council (the Governor’s Cabinet), and he served in this position until 1947. He also served as the Government’s nominee on the Georgetown City Council from December 1945 to December 1950.

In the 1947 elections, Critchlow contested and won the South Georgetown constituency. However as a result of an election petition, his election was declared null and void, and he was barred from contesting for a seat in the Legislative Council for five years. It was during these elections that Dr. Cheddi Jagan was first elected to the Legislative Council.

In 1948, with the advent of the Cold War, the WFTU was split. The TUC withdrew from it and joined the pro-West break-away group, the International Confederation of Free Trades Unions (ICFTU). Critchlow represented the TUC at the ICFTU conference in London in 1949, and was elected as a “substitute” member of the Executive Council to represent the West Indian group. Later in the year he attended an International Confederation of Workers meeting in Havana, Cuba.

Despite his increased administrative and official Government duties, Critchlow continued to actively represent workers in various parts of the country. In 1950, the Government appointed an Advisory Committee to examine cost of living issues and to make recommendations. These included a minimum wage of $1.52 per day, but Critchlow, who was a member of the Committee, issued a minority report calling for a minimum wage of $2.00 per day.

Dr Ishmael continued. ‘For his outstanding public service, he was awarded the medal of Officer of the British Empire (OBE) by King George VI in 1951. On the following year, he resigned as General Secretary of both the BGLU and the TUC, but he served on the Arbitration Panel that examined the wage dispute for waterfront workers in Grenada. After this period, he was generally not invited to activities organised by the TUC. During the 1957 May Day parade, a contingent of workers led by Dr. Cheddi Jagan saw Critchlow standing by his gate to watch the parade. Dr. Jagan broke ranks and walked over to the gate and took him to march at the head of the parade. Later, at the demands of the workers, he was allowed to address the May Day rally.

‘While Critchlow served as General Secretary of the TUC, May Day (1 May) was observed annually by unionised workers with marches and rallies. He made regular demands during his annual address to workers for the day to be declared a public holiday, but this was not achieved until 1958.

‘This outstanding working class leader died on the 10th of May 1958 at the age of 74. In 1963, at the request of Dr. Jagan, who was the then the Premier, the famous Guyanese artist E.R. Burrows sculpted a statue of Critchlow. This (bronze) statue was later placed (on a two-metre high pedestal) on the grounds of Parliament Buildings.’
Sir David James Gardiner Rose GCMG CVO MBE CPM was Governor General of Guyana from 1966 to 1969.

The son of a Georgetown doctor, he was born April 10, 1923 and grew up in Mahaica, ECD; he was educated at the Jesuit school of Mount St. Mary, Derbyshire in England. After war service with the King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, he joined the Colonial Police in 1948. His first police post was as assistant police superintendent in British Guiana.

In 1960 he was appointed Federal Defence Officer of the former Federation of the West Indies and retired in 1962 after its dissolution. He became acting administrator of Antigua in 1962 and of St. Lucia in 1963. In 1964 he became administrator of Antigua until he became Governor-General of Guyana in 1966.

He used to sing with the Georgetown choirs while a policeman, and as Governor-General once sang at a Georgetown charity concert.

From time to time he sang in the Cathedral Choir. His honors included The Colonial Police Medal with bar for gallantry, Member of the British Empire (1954) and Companion of the Victorian Order (1966); he was conferred Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George in 1966. The Order of Excellence of Guyana was awarded posthumously in 1970. Sir David James Gardiner Rose died Nov. 10, 1969, after scaffolding fell in a street at Whitehall Place, Westminster, England, burying under rubble the car in which he was travelling. He was 46. He was in London at the time to relinquish his office prior to Guyana becoming a Republic in Feb. 1970, and was buried at Seven Ponds, known as the Place of Heroes, in the Botanical Gardens in Georgetown. The David Rose School for the Handicapped, which was established in the 1960s, and Sir David Rose Avenue in Mackenzie, Linden were named in honour of the man who it is said was tipped to be the first president of Guyana.
NEW YORK CITY
GOLDEN JUBILEE COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS
JUNE 4-12, 2016

► June 4th  Interfaith Prayer Service, Queens
  Saturday, June 4, 2016
  Proposed Theme: “Standing As One We Heal In Unity”
  Proposed Time: 1pm - 4pm, VIP Reception: 4pm-6pm
  Proposed Venue: Performing Arts Center, York College

► June 4th  Unity Concert, (evening) Brooklyn - TBD
  This event is designed to bring international and/or recording artists of Guyanese and/or Caribbean lineage together with local Guyanese artists to produce a night of unforgettable entertainment for our young people, and to promote unity and healing in the global Guyanese community and nation.

► June 5th  Symposium on the History & Development of Guyana,
  Sunday, June 5, 2016
  York College, Queens
  Theme: “Guyana at 50: Understanding our Independence Journey”

► June 6th  Exhibition of Guyanese Art,
  Venue: TBD
  The vision of this exhibition is to showcase and promote illustrations, paintings, drawings, or other artistic works by Guyanese artists.

► June 7th  “Invest Guyana” Business and Investment Conference, Manhattan
  “Stimulating Economic Development through Private Enterprise”
  Venue: President’s Room – New York Athletic Club, Manhattan
  The conference will create a synergy between stakeholders who impact business investments, commerce, trade and economic development in Guyana, and overseas-based Guyanese entrepreneurs as well as foreign businesses and corporations that find Guyana attractive for profitable business investments.

► June 8th  “Guyana Gives Back,” Day of Volunteerism,
  Venues: Designated Centers in New York City

► June 8th  United Nations Reception to Commemorate 50 Years of Membership,
  United Nations Headquarters, Manhattan

► June 9th  Flag Raising Ceremony, Irvington, New Jersey

► June 10th  Cultural Extravaganza, “Showcasing Our Rich Cultural Heritage”
  Prospect High School Performing Arts Theater, Brooklyn, New York.

► June 11th  President’s Cup Soccer Tournament & Youth Fun Day, Brooklyn
  “Developing Our Youth Through Sport”
  Venue: South Shore High School Park, Brooklyn
  The soccer tournament is intended to unite all regions of Guyana as well as showcase young, talented Guyanese soccer players in the USA, and provide a fun-filled day of interactive carnival activities for children and families, while feasting on traditional Guyanese delicacies.

► June 11th  State Dinner & Awards Ceremony (evening),
  Venue: 583 Park Ave New York, NY

► June 12th  “Mashramani in New York,” Brooklyn - “Celebrating 50 Years Of Nation Building”.
  Venue: Church Ave and Bedford Ave, to Ralph Ave to Flatlands Ave, Brooklyn
  Mashramani (Carnival) in New York” affords the Guyanese diaspora an opportunity to, in typical “Mash” carnival-like atmosphere, come together to celebrate our nation’s golden jubilee Independence anniversary with costume band parade, masqueraders and a sea of Guyanese nationals displaying renewed national pride, patriotism and national unity in artistic and cultural splendor.
Mashramani (Carnival) in New York” affords the Guyanese diaspora an opportunity to, in typical “Mash” carnival-like atmosphere, come together to celebrate our nation’s golden jubilee Independence anniversary with costume band parade, masqueraders and a sea of Guyanese nationals displaying renewed national pride, patriotism and national unity in artistic and cultural splendor. Mashramani – an Amerindian word which means “celebration after hard work,” will live out its true meaning in New York with “Mashramani in New York” depicting various aspects of our culture and stages of our national journey under the theme “Celebrating 50 Years Of Nation Building”.

The Parade:
The Parade will comprise marching bands, floats of various sizes, masqueraders in costumes choreographed to depict various themes that reflect our nation’s rich cultural heritage, vast natural resources – like El Dorado – as well as its natural beauty.

The Mashramani Parade will commence with a march led by committee members, government of Guyana officials, U.S federal, state and city officials. Costume bands with their marvelous floats and colorful, energetic masqueraders, interspaced with large, wrapped music trucks, will follow.

Nationals will be organized in T-Shirt and costume band formations representing the three geographical counties of Guyana: Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara to give the Parade a Labor Day feeling.

Parade Route
The parade will commence at the intersection of church and Bedford Avenue, proceed East along Church Avenue, South into Ralph Avenue and East into Flatlands Avenue into South Shore High School Park, for a grand rally to be addressed by H.E President David Granger.

The Rally:
The Rally will commence around 4:00 p.m. and is expected to attract approximately 25,000 nationals. The program will include musical entertainment by several Guyanese celebrities.
CONGRATULATIONS
Ken Corsbie

Earl Warner Trust
2016 Lifetime Achievement Award Ceremony

Monday Feb 29th, 7.30pm
Walcott, Warner Theatre, EBCCI, UWI Cave Hill Campus

This year’s award is presented to Ken Corsbie for his outstanding contribution to Caribbean Theatre

This Program is FREE and open to the public
Decades ago, the Georgetown markets would draw the admiration of anyone who saw them. The city’s oldest markets date back more than a century when Guyana was still British Guiana. Within the city limits there are five markets, all named after the wards in which they can be found – the Stabroek Market, Bourda Market, Kitty Market, the Albouystown Market (or the La Penitence Market), and the East Ruimveldt Market.

Indeed, Guyana’s markets are filled with rich history. However, while there is rich documented history on the ever-popular Stabroek Market and the less popular, but also well-known, Bourda Market, the histories of the smaller markets are sketchy at best. The Kitty Market, in particular, is one somewhat shrouded in mystery.

Thanks to modern technology, information is constantly at our fingertips. However, technology is useless in finding a comprehensive history of the Kitty Market. More traditional means also reap little fruit; checks at the National Library will have you rummaging through old newspapers for just a few mentions of the Kitty Market; checks at City Council, which took over the market in 1970, would also leave you empty-handed. The National Archive was similarly devoid of information.

Desilon Daniels, Extracts from an article published in 2015 in the Kaieteur News
However, that does not mean the Kitty Market is lost from memory. Indeed, the market’s past can better be found in the memories of old timers than in the pages of a history book. The Kitty Market was established in 1882, two years after the Bourda Market came into being. Kitty Market began at the railway line near the abattoir. There, vendors plied their goods from sunrise until sunset. Over time, the initial site extended until 1970 when it was taken over by the City Council. Like the Bourda Market, Kitty Market is timber-framed. It was meant to serve Georgetown’s Atlantic Coast neighbourhoods in the city’s east end. That end also contained Campbellville, Bel Air and Prashad Nagar. Physically, the Kitty Market was a beautiful structure. Like other markets at the time, Kitty Market had a clock. Its clock was one of the two electric public clocks to be found in Georgetown. This clock was centrally located above the market’s offices. To date, the manufacture date of the clock is not known but it is known that the clock was made by the English firm, Gillett and Johnston.

Meanwhile, though it was smaller and less popular than the Stabroek and Bourda Markets, Kitty Market nonetheless thrived. Those who witnessed Kitty Market in its glory days recall that, like its predecessors, Kitty Market was always in abundance of goods and services. It did not matter what your needs were; from shoe repairs, to clothing, to furniture – Kitty Market had it all. Each day, throngs would flock to the market, drawn to the seemingly endless options offered by the market. But the market went beyond simply providing goods and services. For many, it was the opportunity to converse with others and to make lifelong friends. At a time when televisions did not exist, the market provided all the entertainment one could need. Even later when televisions made an appearance, the market had the edge because it provided human interactions, something that was more appreciated decades ago. The market also presented a forum for the average citizen to discuss what was happening in the country, whether it was in the realm of politics or sports. Even when the conversations sometimes became too heated, you would nonetheless see the arguers back at the market again together soon afterwards, ready for another discussion.

These days, things are much different at the Kitty Market. What was once a bustling commercial area now resembles a ghost town – save for the homeless persons, of course; what was once a source of pride is a common eyesore.
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A MEN’S and women’s Guyana team last weekend represented the Golden Arrowhead at a 4x200m relay in the international section at the Armory Invitational, where the women’s team, consisting of overseas-based Guyanese Alita Moore, Kadecia Baird, Shenika King and Melissa Caddle-Hope, did well to win their event ahead of the USA and France. The Guyanese girls finished in a time of 1:37.93s for the win, second place went to the USA team who finished in 1:40.97s, and France were third.

The winning women’s 4x200m team from left, Melissa Caddle-Hope, Shenika King, Kadecia Baird, and Alita Moore. The winning women’s 4x200m team from left, Melissa Caddle-Hope, Shenika King, Kadecia Baird, and Alita Moore

“I can safely say we are all excited about winning and we are looking forward to continue running together so we can lower the time, which lets us know where we are and where we need to get to before the Olympics,” Moore, who has been in the U.S. since she was awarded a scholarship two years ago, said about the race.

Meanwhile, Mississippi State’s Stephan James managed to record a 6.78 seconds time to make it into the final of the college men’s 60m. However, he suffered a cramp and was unable to participate in the final of the event.

Last weekend’s performance marked the latest in a string of remarkable performances being produced by Guyanese stationed overseas. These performances come at a time when the clock is counting down to the 2016 Summer Olympics set for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in August.

According to reports of the North American arm of the Athletics Association of Guyana, stellar performances have also been seen from South American Youth Championships gold medallist Jason Yaw, as well Brenessa Thompson, Guyana’s lone CARIFTA Games representative last year, and Jermaine Griffith of Rutgers University.

The AAG North American arm is headed by four-time Olympian and Commonwealth Games silver medallist Aliann Pompey, who is also the coach for King. Thompson last month ran 7.51 seconds for the 60m at the Texas A and M Invitational, while King did 7.88 seconds at the St. John’s season opener, Bill Ward Meet.

“Things get a bit spicy in the 200m with several athletes participating – Brenessa Thompson again leading the way with a time of 24.04 achieved at the Razorback Invitational last weekend in Arkansas. Kadecia Baird, the 400m specialist has posted a time of 24.17 at the Great Dane Invitational in Staten Island, NY on January 16, Shenika King posted a lifetime indoor-best of 24.97 and Melissa Caddle-Hope, a senior at Coppin State, has so far run 25.02,” a report by the body said.

“Leading the group of 400m is Jermaine Griffith of Rutgers University with a time of 47.99. Jason Yaw, now competing for Western Texas CC, ran his opening meet as a freshman with a time of 51.86. Kevin Blayley ran a 51.00 for his first indoor race ever. Jenna McCammon ran a 56.42 at the Armory Track Invitational and was second in the 60m with a time of 8.50.

Winston George broke the national indoor record with a time of 33.51. The highest-ranked Guyanese athlete is Troy Doris. His triple jump feat of 16.65 puts him tied for 4th in the world,” the report continued.

President of the AAG, Aubrey Hutson, said the Association has been taking note and is keeping its eyes peeled for those who qualify for the upcoming Olympics. Thus far Winston George stands as Guyana’s only qualifier for the Games. Nonetheless, Hutson noted, there are several athletes whose marks are just off the Olympic qualifying standard and it is hopeful these athletes can improve in time to qualify.
OUR PEOPLE, OUR CULTURE, OUR HISTORY: CELEBRATING GUYANA’S GOLDEN JUBILEE

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Ah was flyin fuh jubilee to Guyana
Straight from Miami, Florida.
De prodigal son again returnin home
As he turn his footsteps from a protracted roam.
Ah had a few drinks a couple a finee,
An ah wish it was de buckman piwatee.
Meh eyes ah close
An fall into a doze.
Ah tink ah was dreamin, but instead
Ah had a vision of meh beloved land of the Golden Arrowhead.

A vision about positive change in Guyana,
Change in the land of the mighty Roraima.
Change doesn’t come quick like turning on the light.
Is a slow process to day from a long long night.

Transformational leadership
Presupposes the heavy burden of effective stewardship.

Change initiated without a rat-a-tat-tat,
But by two common foot soldiers who belled the cat.
Change not by ahwe boy but by all ahwe,
Change you can touch, change you can see.
Change from the imposed singularity of Georgetown,
To the inclusive, cohesive, collectivity of Ahwetown.
Change to be,
By ahwe.

Maybe the Victoria Regia is the Water Lilly called by another name,
Or is it the same?
One thing that’s constant is irrevocable change,
Incipient change can start with a name.

Bury Georgetown with King George,
And call that George.
Then arise triumphant, glorious from the ashes of the past,
A new name. Ahwetown at last.

Then I saw people in other planes from the diaspora,
Flying straight to AhwetownGyana.
From Europe and Africa,
Straight to Ahwetown, Guyana.
From America and Canada,
Straight to Ahwetown, Guyana.
From Trinidad and Jamaica,
Straight to Ahwetown, Guyana.
From Cuba and even Venezuala,
Straight to Ahwetown, Guyana.

A voice on the intercom awoke me from my trance,
Almost home again, I wanted to dance.
“Ladies and gentlemen fasten your seatbelts please,
Arrival time ten minutes, temperature 81 degrees.
Weather sunny, clear and bright,
Hope you enjoyed your flight
To the capital
AHWETOWN, GUYANA.
Yeah man.
AHWETOWN!

John G. Morris
Ah was flyin fuh jubilee to Guyana
Straight from Miami, Florida.
De prodigal son again returnin home
As he turn his footsteps from a protracted roam.
Ah had a few drinks a couple a finee,
An ah wish it was de buckman piwaree.
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Transformational leadership
Presupposes the heavy burden of effective stewardship.
Change plutonic, change platonic,
Sweeping in like a tidal wave from the Atlantic.
Change like tropical rain nourishes the land,
By the sweat of thy brow and callouses in the hand
Change that is deaf to the doubting thomases that bray,
But attunes itself to the yea not the nay.
Change that turns a defiant back
To the nationalistic suicidal philosophy of apan jhat.
Change by aggressive mimicry,
The more you look the more you see.
Change remaking Guyana the breadbasket of the Caribbean,
By Indians, Dooglas, Chinese, Portuguese,
Whites, Blacks and Amerindians.
Change like a grass knife that cuts the weed
Of nepotism, injustice corruption and greed.
Change upstairs, downstairs chicken and coop,
Now who's the dupe?
Change from a blasted idiosyncratic, ethnocentric, nincompoop.
Now who got caught in the loop?
Change from a mindset in foreclose,
With words like bullets, words like blows.
Change that takes Guyana from the dharam sala
By a page from the playbook of Nelson Mandela.
Change eventuated without a military coup,
But by the will of the people a man-in-the-street like you.
Change initiated without a rat-a-tat-tat,
But by two common foot soldiers who belled the cat.
Change not by ahwe boy but by all ahwe,
Change you can touch, change you can see.
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