

GUYANA FOLK

And Culture

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

GUYANA'S FIRST LADIES SALUTED



Sandra Granger



Deolatchmee Ramotar



Varshnie Singh-Jadeo



Janet Jagan



Joyce Hoyte



Viola Burnham



Doreen Chung



Lady Patricia Rose

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As we welcome Spring in this part of the hemisphere, we join our compatriots in Guyana, home, and wherever they are living in greeting our traditional holy days of Holi and Easter. Joy and blessings abound.

In this month's newsmagazine, we feature Guyana's First Ladies. GCA has been examining our path to the present and necessarily looking back not so much with nostalgia but with the intent to make sense of journey that has taken us to this place in time. Consider the women on the front cover and the history they represent for a nation pushing for realization of its self.

Further in this issue you will read about another path, estuarine in a sense but one that reflects the hopes and aspiration of a people and a medium that strove and is still striving to concretize its existence. That radio should remain fluid and "re-inventive" leans to the premise that renewal is a good thing; change is an inherent in growth and self-assessment brave.

One excellent example of art personified and in constant striving is the featured performer, Ken Corsbie. Also in this issue is the gyro in music that is intrinsically Guyanese, Lumbay, surely an evolving, changing form that encourages an awareness of the Guyanese Spirit, a spirit that Corsbie is still kneading.

Lear Matthews places the diasporic experience into a context that actualizes the transference of the Guyanese ethos, pushing for the same sort of acknowledgment of change and centeredness the First ladies, radio, Corsbie and Lumbay express.

Long live Mashramani, IN NEW YORK.

Enjoy the issue!

Juliet Emanuel
March Editor



The trees smile with their sprout
of tender leaves and blooming flowers,
Eternal nature with its transient expression.
Hails spring with ecstasy and joy!
Bewildering shades with so many tinge.
The land of beauty and greatness,
India, witnessing color of
happiness and peace.
Nation come alive to enjoy the spirit
A celebration of color- Holi!
An experience of content,
harmony and delight.

Holika burns amidst merriment and mirth.
Evil overpowered by love and devotion.
A festival to commemorate 'Ras Lila'-
an enduring love saga
of Radha and Krishna.

Gulal - red, green, yellow and countless.
A day's canvas - a riot of colors.
Lively crowd running hither and thither,
Rainbow of colors,
dashing from every nook and corner.
Disregarding their woe and despair
fervent folks, rejoicing at the marvel of colors.
A day filled with luster and gaiety,
A day to smear our dreams-
With a splash of vibrant frenzy colors.

Holi Hai!

*A spring of unbounded
fun and frolic!!*



4 GUYANA FIRST LADIES

First Published in Guyanese Girls Rock



SANDRA GRANGER

(current First Lady of Guyana)
Sandra Granger is the wife of Guyana's current President, HE David Granger. Prior to becoming first lady, she served for 18 years as senior programme manager at the Caricom Secretariat. She

was also a lecturer at the University of Guyana. She studied English Literature and Portuguese at the University of Guyana and Brazilian Literature at the University of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. First Lady Sandra Granger is an advocate for women's and children's rights in Guyana.



DEOLATCHMEE RAMOTAR:
(2011-2015)

Deolatchmee Ramotar is the wife of former President Donald Ramotar. She has a background in Nursing and Education and is an advocate for women's and children's issues. She

also spent a few years working in the Accounting industry prior to becoming the first Lady of Guyana.



VARSHNIE SINGH-JAGDEO
(1999-2007)

Varshnie Singh-Jadeo was the wife of former President, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo. While in this role, she served as Chairperson of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child. The couple separated in 2007, and

President Jagdeo continued his term until 2011.



JANET JAGAN
(1992-1997)

Janet Jagan was the wife of the late President Cheddi Jagan. Born in the Chicago, IL in 1920, she became the first female President of Guyana when her husband died during his presidency. She served from December 19, 1997, to

August 11, 1999. Prior to this appointment she also served as the first female Prime Minister of Guyana from March 17, 1997, to December 19, 1997. She was awarded Guyana's highest national award, the Order of

Excellence, in 1993, and the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Gold Medal for Women's Rights in 1998.



JOYCE HOYTE
(1985-1992)

Joyce Hoyte was the wife of former President of Guyana, the late Hugh Desmond Hoyte, who died in 2002. She was First lady of Guyana from 1985 to 1992, and died in 2012. She was

described by many in both the political and social spheres as "a lady" who represented and petitioned for the needs of all Guyanese both as first lady and afterwards.

VIOLA BURNHAM

(1980-1985)



The late Viola Burnham was the wife of the late Linden Forbes Sampson Burnham, the first Executive President of Guyana who died in 1985. She was the first female to be appointed Vice-President and Deputy Prime Minister

in the late 1980's. She was a Latin teacher until 1967 and also served as the Ministers of Education, Social Development and Infrastructure in the Government of Guyana, under both her husband and, later, President Hugh Desmond Hoyte. Mrs. Burnham died in 2003.

DOREEN CHUNG

(1970-1980)



Doreen Chung was the wife of former President Arthur Chung, the first President of the Republic of Guyana. She was First Lady of Guyana from 1970 to 1980, and died in 2009.



PATRICIA ROSE
(1966-1969)

Lady Patricia Rose was the wife of the late Sir David Rose who was the First Governor General of Guyana. A medical doctor, Lady Rose was known for her pioneering work at the Mahaica

Hospital in the Hansen's Disease in-house and outreach programmes. She received the Golden Arrow of Achievement in 1980 and the Cacique Crown of Honour in 1987 for her outstanding work in the field of medicine in Guyana, and has also published many papers on leprosy, and was a referee of medical manuscripts for the medical journal Leprosy Review. Lady Rose returned to her country of birth, England in February, 1988 after working for some 18 years at the Mahaica Hospital.

Mary Elizabeth Olga Fraser: Matriarch Exemplar



Ronald Pickering

rainbow.

In those days jobs were numerous and the cost of living was excellent. Olga quickly adapted to the American lifestyle, working as a healthcare aid and culinary artist. She acquired many life-long friends and maintained close relationships until the vast majority of them transitioned. She has had a unique entry into this world worth sharing. There was an error in the recording of her birth date. Her British calligraphic birth certificate was inadvertently recorded as 3/13. Consequently, her Guyanese birthday read 3/13/1916 and her American birthday was recorded as 3/30/1916. She marvels at the error and enjoys celebrating both birthdays.

On March 13, 2016, Mary Elizabeth Olga Frasier nee Swan celebrated her 100th birthday. She was born to farmer parents in the village of Stewartville/Leonora, West Coast Demerara, in the then British Guiana. Olga, as she was known in her childhood days, was the youngest of four children, all girls. Her formal education began at the Stewartville Congregational Primary School under the British system where primary education was the hallmark of one's future. Olga spent her childhood days chaperoned by her elder sisters while the breadwinners toiled to provide for the family's well-being.

In her early years she was employed at the Leonora Sugar Estate and later ventured to the Northwestern Region with an older sister and worked as a culinary artist at Matthews Ridge Reynolds Manganese Company. She later relocated to the City of Georgetown and was married to the late Adolphus Fraser. She brought into the world 7 children: Rupert (deceased), David Gloria, Ronald, Veronica, Brenda, and Elsa. She is blessed with numerous nieces and nephews who span the globe from Guyana to Canada, United Kingdom and other parts of Europe.

Her family tree consists of 20 grand-children, 32 great-grand children, and 3 great, great grandchildren. Olga migrated to North America in 1968 to answer the call for vacancies in the homecare industry, where numerous Caribbean families at the time were lured for opportunities, better wages and living conditions, as well as the illusionary "pot of gold" at the end of the

When asked for the secret formula to her longevity, she reflects on her strong religious upbringing, healthy eating habits and strong family genes. Her exceptional culinary skills were passed on to her offspring. Her special dishes were a treat to remember at family gatherings. Today Olga resides in Brooklyn, New York and is cared for by her daughters who make great sacrifices juggling family life, scheduling between work and personal commitments to ensure and preserve her well-being.

Join us in extending blessings to this matriarch. Mary Elizabeth Olga deserves a standing ovation, an honor and a salute. She has been a blessing to all of us and today we celebrate her life. Congratulation! Have a continued healthy, longer life.

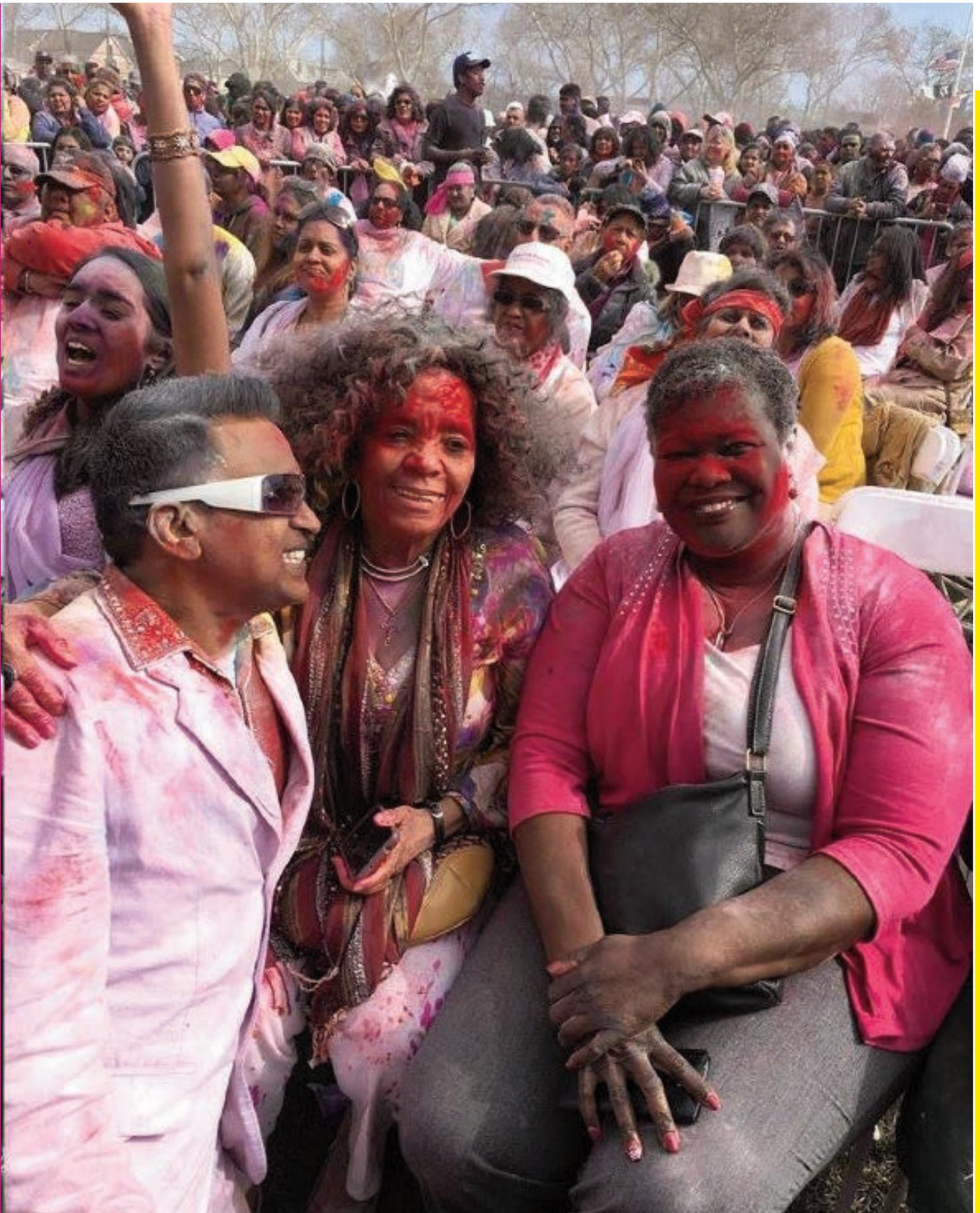
*Happy 100th
Birthday!*



Phagwah Greetings

*May God gift you all the colors of life, colors of joy,
colors of happiness, colors of friendship,
colors of love and all other colors
you want to paint in your life.*





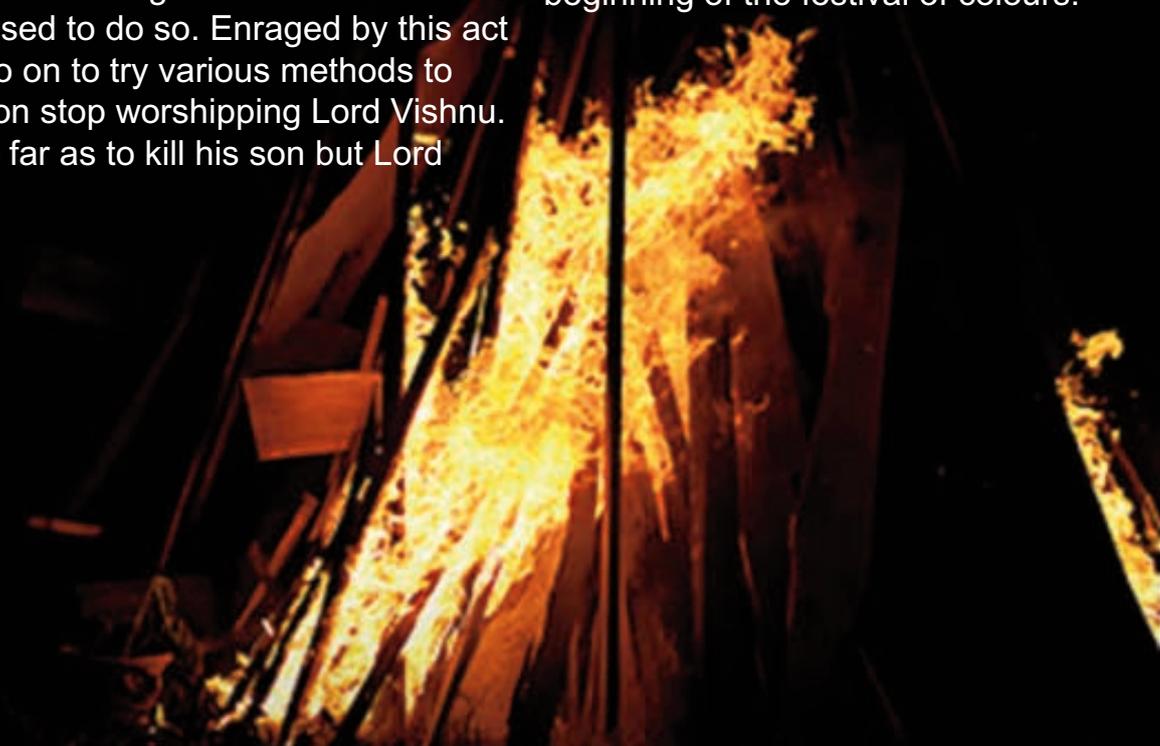
BURNING THE HOLIKA DURING HOLI

The word Holi originates from Holika who was the sister of the Demon King Hiranyakashyap. Hiranyakashyap had received a boon from the gods according to which he could not be killed during the day or night. No animal or human could kill him. So could any weapons. He felt that he was invincible and so asked everyone in his kingdom to worship him. But his own son Prahlada who was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu refused to do so. Enraged by this act he would go on to try various methods to make his son stop worshipping Lord Vishnu. He went so far as to kill his son but Lord

Vishnu would save him every time.

Eventually he decided to ask his sister Holika to help. Holika like Hiranyakashyap also had received a boon which made her invincible to fire. Hiranyakashyap asked her to enter a fire with Prahlad. Holika did so. She entered the fire with Prahlad in her lap. But her boon only worked when she entered the fire alone. She was burnt to her death. But Prahlad who kept chanting Lord Vishnu's name remained unscathed.

It is due to this event that Holika is burnt every year during Holi. Later on, the fire from the Holika bonfire is taken by people to their homes. It is believed that this would help make their homes become pure and disease free. The ashes from the bonfire is also applied on the body which signifies the beginning of the festival of colours.



Holika Dahan 2016

by Amanda Richards

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PHAGWAH

By Parmanand Sukhu J.P. Kaieteur News

until eight days after Phagwah.

Holi was celebrated before the Prahalad's legend.

However, the story of Prahalad added new dimensions. Prahalad's defiance of the many impositions of his father, King Hiranyakasyapu is testimony and evidence of firm faith in Truth and God. The burning of Holika (Prahalad's Aunt) is reminiscent of his victory over evil. King Kasyapu contrived various diabolical means to kill his son Prahalad, who went against his will, but all his efforts were in vein. King Hiranyakasyapu; has a blessing (boon) that he would not die in the day or night, nor inside or outside of his house nor would he be killed by man or beast. So he felt that he was God and proclaimed that all worship must be henceforth Given to him.

Soon after, Lord Vishnu came in the awful form of Narsingh (half man and half lion) at twilight (neither day nor night). Lord Vishnu brought to an end the tyranny, arrogance and atrocity of the evil King (Hiranyakasyapu) in the centre of the doorway (neither inside nor outside of the house).

Holi in all embracing has a historic meaning with a strong social content which caters for reunion, social exchanges, greetings and visits, it also provides for spiritual communion and economic assessment so that the New Year can experience the emergency of a world free from want, poverty, full of justice and goodwill.

When the winter is over and nature rejoices, it is time for us to bring out the abeer, abrack, powder, perfume, beat the drums, sound the jhaal, sing and dancing for it is harvest time. The spring crop is reaped and everyone is in a happy mood, bubbling with enthusiasm and in joyous jubilation as they celebrate.

The coloured water/powder symbolized the unique floral beauty of spring and the vanishing of hatred feelings, jealousy and enmity, and bringing into the community a feeling of togetherness. This celebration sees all cast and class as one. The red does not represent anyone's blood.

. Let us celebrate Holi in the true spirit of friendship, joy, merriment and love.

'Let noble thought and actions be your guide and the fragrance of Bassant rejuvenate your life'

"A HAPPY AND JOYOUS PHAGWAH TO ALL!"

Phagwah is one of the most ancient, joyous and colourful festivals of the Hindu calendar. This festival was brought down from Indian in 1838, by Indian Indentured Immigrants.

Holi is celebrated forty days from the planting of Holika (Castor Oil tree). The burning of Holika takes place on the Eve of Phagwah (full moon night). A huge structure (pyre) is built and kindled at the appropriate time in a symbolic act. Phagwah commemorates the New Year for Hindus.

Phagwah started at a time when India was facing a serious drought, affecting the various crops. However, the rain eventually came pouring down to the satisfaction of the people (farmers) who came out in the fields; playing with the water in joyous jubilation as they throw it on each other. Soon after, they start reaping their bountiful harvest (crop).

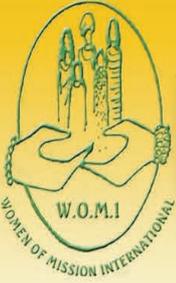
There are special forms of music and songs which are associated with Phagwah; Chowtaal singing is the dominant style, which is heard from Basant Panchmi night



Happy Phagwah

***P**hagwah is a Hindu religious holiday observed in March. Phagwah celebrates the triumph of good over evil, where participants traditionally wear white and indulge in the throwing upon each other of a harmless liquid called "abeer". Powder, perfume, and water are also thrown on family, friends and neighbors on this day by Hindus and non-Hindus alike, conforming what is one of the most amusing, multicultural, good-natured and joyful celebrations annually held in Guyana.*





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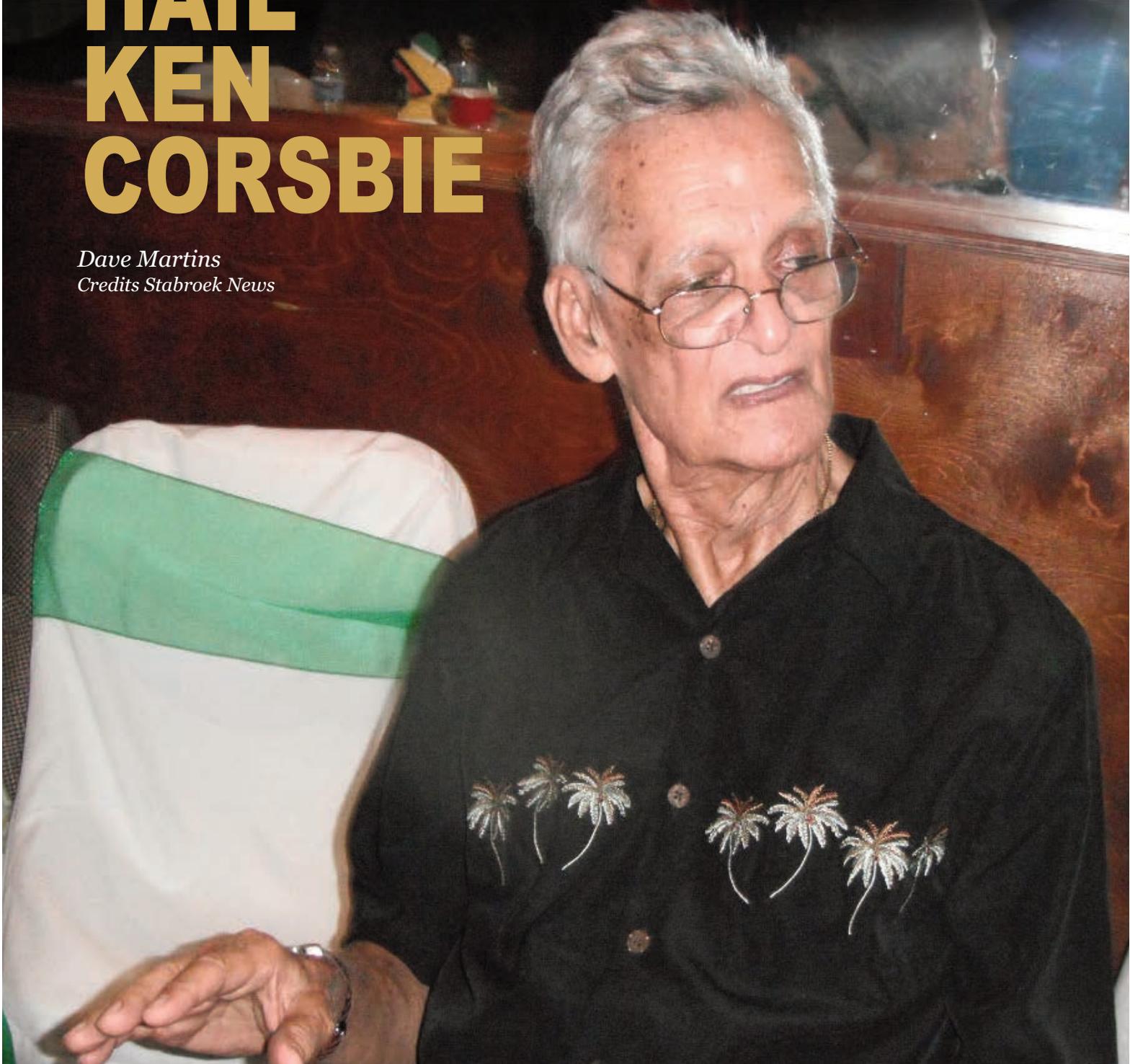
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HAIL KEN CORSBIE

Dave Martins
Credits Stabroek News

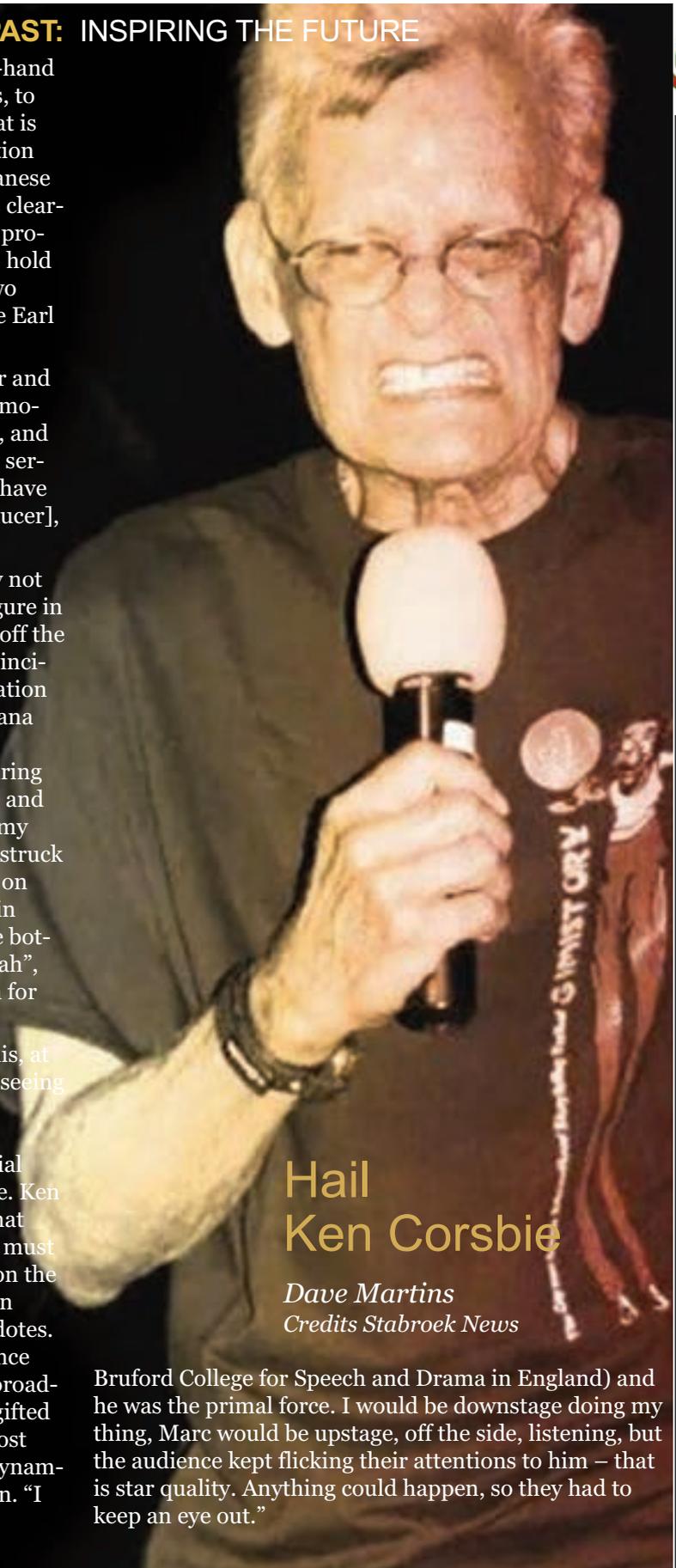


Since living in Guyana again I have seen first-hand the need for us to hold up our own achievers, to shout about them, not only for the praise that is due but, more pivotally, for the powerful information about our worth that is passed on to the new Guyanese wending their way, here and abroad. While that is clearly a national mission, we should all do our part in promoting the image and today I come in that vein to hold up the name of Ken Corsbie who was honoured two weeks ago in Barbados as the 2016 recipient of the Earl Warner Trust Lifetime Achievement Award.

The late Earl Warner was a skilled theatre director and the Trust was set up by his wife, Karen, to commemorate his name, to assist up and coming dramatists, and to honor those who had given a lifetime of theatre service in the Caribbean. (Other Guyanese awardees have been Michael Gilkes [poet, playwright, video producer], and Clairmonte Taitt [actor, violinist, director].

Although our younger Caribbean generations may not know his name, Ken Corsbie has been a pivotal figure in regional theatre, operating in a number of genres off the stage and on it, for years. He came into my life, coincidentally almost 50 years ago, when with the formation of the Tradewinds band in Toronto I came to Guyana for a performance and was in the audience at the Theatre Guild for a show called ALL AH WE featuring Ken, Marc Matthews, Henry Muttoo, John Agard, and panman Camo Williams. Starting out far away in my own quest to write songs on Caribbean themes, it struck me instantly that ALL AH WE was independently on that same path. It is important to remember that in those years dialect material was something for the bottom house or the rum shop. To see it in “the theatah”, full blown and no apologies, was a shot in the arm for me at a time when I was searching for my future.

I was to learn later than Ken had started out on this, at the time, perilous venture in the early 1970s after seeing a Theatre Guild performance by the Guyanese actor/poet/playwright Slade Hopkinson, based in Trinidad, part of which featured Caribbean material which drew the biggest reaction from the audience. Ken recalls, “As corny as it sounds, in that theatre at that time, I had an epiphany – that was the direction I must try, I will make.” Just a few weeks later, Ken was on the Guild stage, “HE ONE” in a programme focused on Caribbean literature – poems; short stories; anecdotes. He remembers being buoyed by the instant audience enthusiasm, and shortly thereafter the epiphany broadened when he teamed up with Marc Matthews, a gifted actor with an imposing presence, for the now almost legendary DEM TWO. “Our opposite aesthetics, dynamics, personalities were the perfect match,” said Ken. “I was the technician (I had my 2 years at the Rose



Hail Ken Corsbie

*Dave Martins
Credits Stabroek News*

Bruford College for Speech and Drama in England) and he was the primal force. I would be downstage doing my thing, Marc would be upstage, off the side, listening, but the audience kept flicking their attentions to him – that is star quality. Anything could happen, so they had to keep an eye out.”



DEM-TWO was an instant hit, popping up all over Guyana and touring Barbados, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Antigua, Bahamas, Belize, Jamaica, Trinidad and Dominica. Expansion of the group came with the addition of actor/designer Henry Muttou in the mid-70s. "We were ripe for an upsizing and outreaching," said Ken. "Henry instantly changed and expanded our repertoire and more importantly, our dynamics. Much later it forcibly hit me that we were the Caribbean on that stage – we were Chinese, Scottish, African, Amerindian, East Indian, Portuguese. And then, Johnny Agard joined us – oh goodness – we were complete. Wherever we performed, we surprised the audiences with our Caribbeaness." That's what hit me the first time I saw ALL AH WE. There was this instant connection; it was me up there on the stage. It's interesting to look back on that unit 50 years later and see that Marc has won the Guyana prize for his poetry, Johnny has the Queen's Gold Medal for his poetry, Henry has an MBE and Hon. Doctorate from the Cayman Islands College, and Ken has several awards from Guyana, Barbados, Trinidad, Cayman Islands, and Guyanese associations in the diaspora. Ken Corsbie has generated a long career in theatre and performing. He moved to Barbados in 1979 to be coordinator of the Theatre Information Exchange (TIE) funded by the Inter American Foundation of the USA to

Hail Ken Corsbie

Dave Martins

Credits Stabroek News

form channels of communication and cooperation between the theatre activists in the Anglophone Caribbean, and although the project funding ended after three years, it had brought Caribbean dramatists closer together.

Along the way Ken was involved with a unique television documentary programme called Caribbean Eye, created written and produced by Banyan Studios in Trinidad run by Christopher Laird, Tony Hall and Bruce Paddington, partly funded by UNESCO. Ken hosted the series where various themes were chosen to illustrate the connections in Caribbean cultures. He won a Narrator's Award for his work, and his natural stage presence and relaxed delivery lent a professional warmth to the programmes some of which are still available on You Tube. Over the years, he has also been very busy as a solo stage performer, replaying his HE ONE personality, and since moving to the USA in 1996 he has been all over the diaspora map doing his one-man shows.

There are people in Caribbean history who make a significant contribution to their countries by, so to speak, stretching the fabric of their societies to offer new directions or to bring alterations to old ones. They change the landscape of the culture, and we are often unaware of the change at the time; it is only in retrospect that we see it. They come in diverse forms but they are a special breed. Louise Bennett of Jamaica is one with her riveting impact on dialect poetry. Guyana's Henry Muttou with his contribution in theatre and set design is another; Henry has delivered highly acclaimed influences on Caymanian culture with his innovative and dedicated work. Similarly, John Agard has put Caribbean language into the awareness of the British society where he lives. And there are others too numerous to mention here. Every one of those innovators, while doing their own work so trenchantly, are also opening windows for other artists to come through, and as I pointed out in my song, "Where Are Your Heroes, Caribbea", our societies don't always recognize their efforts. Ken Corsbie, a salient part of that ALL AH WE team, is one of those change merchants. It is rewarding to see a Caribbean institution, the Earl Warner Trust, recognizing his hand and his talent and his commitment. It is an honour long due.

Edgar Henry
presents
Peter Halder's
BOOK LAUNCH

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**A 50th Independence Anniversary
Masterpiece from the mind of
an accomplished Guyanese author
PETER HALDER**

PERSPECTIVE ON GUYANA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE: PART 11

16

*“And though I rove o’er hills and dale and brave
old Neptune foam ...I still will turn me home”*



Lear Matthews

Who are we away from ‘home’? A VIEW OF DIASPORA IDENTITY

In Part I, we explored the relevance of terms such as ethnicity and race to reflect on “who are we?” and the journey to where we are. The analysis would be incomplete without interrogating the question as it relates to the Diaspora (i.e. Guyanese immigrant community), many of whom will participate in the Golden Jubilee commemoration.

Diaspora Identity: How is it shaped?

The experience of immigrants can be both gratifying and challenging, characterized by opportunities and risks. Adaptation and identity are shaped by trans-cultural and psychological factors, including the extent of

social/emotional attachment to the country of origin. Bi-national labels (e.g. Caribbean American) reflect ethnic grounding and national pride, and is a function of sustained links to the homeland. Cultural practices/customs among immigrants demonstrate expressions of connectedness and identification with the home country.

Guyanese-American may also be less symbolic than significantly representing the essence of a transnational existence, rooted in as much the country of origin as in the adopted country. Most Guyanese in the Diaspora, regardless of ethnicity or self-identity are defined by the host society’s subculture niches as ‘people of color’ or ‘black’ (e.g. in North America). They are seen as part of a ‘minority group’ because of physical appearance or ‘otherness’ which sets the parameters of socially clustered categories.

PERSPECTIVE ON GUYANA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE: PART 11

**Who are we away from 'home'?**

A VIEW OF DIASPORA IDENTITY

Lear Matthews

Who we are perceived to be or the labels assigned to us, is informed by a history of global transmigration and geo-politics. Ultimately, pre-migratory socialization coupled with experience as transnationals is of consequence. Immigrants may be viewed as foreigners, displaced persons, expatriates, even "traitors" (for abandoning country of origin). Does how we are perceived by others matter? To what extent does the place we call 'home' define what/who we are? How well does a Guyanese/Caribbean culture translate into aspects of 'American' or 'Canadian' or 'British' culture? Are we ever complicit in denying our true heritage? Such questions may be at the core of a collective identity, although for some, personal/professional achievement, not heritage, is the essence one's identity.

We often forget that Guyanese immigrants comprise more than the major ethnic groups, namely, Guyanese of East Indian ancestry and those of African ancestry. There are also Guyanese-born Chinese, Portuguese and Amerindians in the Diaspora. They too have stories about the immigrant experience, which redefine who they are and what they have become.

In search of a collective consciousness: "Ahwee Own":

As we seek to answer the question: "who are we?" in the Diaspora, remember ethnicity and class affect self-concept. In addition, racial politics in the home country planted the seeds of ethnic divide. The resulting cultural baggage and its political ramifications penetrate virtually every aspect of Guyanese life, which includes group relations at home and abroad. Consequently, the capacity to assess needs, solve problems, and collectively commit to meaningful change has been compromised.

Furthermore, relations between the Diaspora and homeland are in a state of tension, particularly with

regard to the role, ambivalence and expectations of "comebackees". Along with perceived "ethnic imbalance" at planned Diaspora events, these tensions need careful unpacking and measured response. A collective consciousness ("ahwee own") influenced less by politics than openness to diverse ideas from stakeholders is essential.

Diaspora Engagement: Helping to chart our destiny

To successfully chart our destiny we must have a vision. Commitment to national unity and the legacy we leave our children should frame the definition of who we are. Such a commitment is symbolically expressed at ceremonial events when the pledge: "One People, One Nation, One Destiny" is recited to reaffirm national harmony. The hope is that this is a genuine reflection of who we thrive to be, regardless ethnicity of color or creed.

The inclusiveness promoted by the new government of Guyana should help us get past the reluctance to talk honestly about racial/ethnic issues. Let us reflect on our journey and strengthen relations with groups. With hundreds returning for the jubilee celebration, Diaspora engagement could be pivotal in launching various development initiatives. As we celebrate this unprecedented milestone, we hope to emerge with a better understanding of who we are, making the nation a place where people embrace 'oneness' regardless of country of residence or political affiliation. The goal is to harness ideas, resources, skills and enthusiasm across nation states. Guyanese need to loosen the bonds of mistrust between ethnic groups, homeland and the Diaspora. The national symposium series exemplifies timely collaboration between the Diaspora and homeland. This will enhance inclusiveness in the new political climate.

Beyond the 50th: What we can become?

The thoughts expressed above apply mostly to first-generation immigrants and their children, who tend to define themselves as Guyanese –American. For the third-generation, ethnicity, and the country of their grandparent's birth may no longer be a major part of defining "Who am I?" They tend to assimilate into the mainstream society, accepting it as "home" and identifying with it. However, as we affirm our heritage and political independence at 50 years, assessing the realities of a Diaspora identity is essential. Self-knowledge, involvement of the youth and partnership with the homeland could help construct what we can become, as we engage across cultures.

JOURNEY TO THE JUBILEE

18

GUYANA'S NATIONAL FLOWER

Victoria Amazonica



This water lily is named after Queen Victoria and is native to the Amazon and surrounding areas in South America. In 1836, the flower was first discovered by E.F. Poeppig, a German explorer. He named the lily Euryale Amazonica. During the same year, another explorer, Richard Schomburgk described the same flower in British Guiana. He named it Victoria Regia, after the Queen of England.

The official name was accepted as Victoria Amazonica, however it is still known to the locals as the Victoria Regia.

The are several different species of large water lilies named Victoria. The Amazonica is perhaps the largest. Its leaves can grow to more than 8 feet across, and are green or yellowish green in colour. The outer side of the rim is dark pink and can grow to approximately 5 inches in length. The flower of the Amazonica blooms for about two but can nevertheless measure up to 10 inches across when fully opened. This beautiful flower emits a powerful smell that is reminiscent of its tropical origins and is a combination of bananas and ripe pineapple. The seeds are quite nutritious and are used as food by the natives of the Amazon.

A new and innovative Guyana music style entitled the “Guyana Lumbay Music,” came to life on Sunday February 21 on the 2nd floor at the St. Stephens church extension at 2806 Newkirk Avenue, Brooklyn New York.

This event signaled the first of its kind in collaboration with the Guyana Arts and Cultural Center (GACC), an off-shoot of the Guyana Cultural Association (GCA) as we celebrate 15 years of existence outside of Guyana this year.

This special afternoon concert came to being when the Fanoko Singers, a New Jersey based musical group graced the presence of Brooklynites with a grand afternoon entertainment.

The Fonoko Singers leader, a student of the art, Carlyle Fraser educated the audience about the origin and passage of Lumbay, which dates back to time immemorial, prior to slavery, during slavery when the drum was used as a communication device, to our independence, demonstrating the position and existence of rituals such as Kwe Kwe; folk songs; the Afro-centric Yorurba Singers and how the different musical styles evolved. The group’s three recent compositions: “Come Leh Awi Lumbay”; “Somebody Fart In The Minibus” and “Dem Clean Up Dee Place One Shot” exemplified and connected his Lumbay satirical style message from nostalgia to modern day activities in Guyana.

He also explained the research and communications of his personal experiences as a youngster and the Lumbay legacy he intends to pass on which was exquisitely confirmed when he turned the microphones and instruments over to the youths with an age limit of 10. Needless to say their youthful, energetic presentation and expressions brought the house to a standing ovation.

This marvelous, unprecedented recital attracted an audience of family and friends from a wide cross section of the community who were at the edge of their seats, clapping hands and tapping feet to the beat, sounds and rhythmical patterns of the performers.

Mr. Fraser summarized the evening’s concert by stating that Reggae had preambles of Rock Steady and Sca. Similarly, Lumbay had its passage and his hope is that the younger generation will fully embrace the glorious musical art form and technique of the Guyana Lumbay Music, steeped in our cultural heritage.

Everyone in attendance received a recently minted souvenir Fanoko Singers Lumbay CD with much delight and appreciation.



Come Leh Awi “Lumbay”



Early Broadcasters: Jack Cashmir, Rafique Khan, Ed Fung, Ayube Hamid, Olga Lopes-Seale, Lillian Fraser & Friend

BROADCASTING PROPELLED BG INTO THE 20TH CENTURY

Hubert Williams

Bridgetown, Barbados, February 18, 2016

It was like magic transformed in Georgetown (the then rustic seaside colonial capital of overwhelmingly white-painted wooden buildings) that citizens could be in their homes or walking on the streets and hearing their own people talking to them, telling familiar stories and presenting general information and the music they adored.

Broadcasting had at last come to this lone British colony on the northeast coast of the South American

continent, presenting citizens with an open window to the world and widespread relief from the trauma of the recently ended First World War (1914-1918) which took an estimated 17 million lives (20 million wounded), including some of their own countrymen.

Yes, “blackouts” had ended, the lighting restored throughout the city and along the Atlantic Coast after what had seemed unending darkness; but nothing prior could match the people’s excitement when four years later local technicians and Guianese voices presented the first attempts at local radio programming.

Broadcasting, though limping badly, had finally “landed” and would in time cause a revolution in social habits in British Guiana, where most people’s whole existence was lived in their villages, hearing almost nothing of elsewhere and having very little contact with the capital Georgetown.

One negative consequence might well have been diminution of traditional cultural practices in near and far-flung coastal villages and rural and hinterland communities.

Retired Caribbean Development Bank Vice-President (Finance) and Bank Secretary Neville Lyttleton Grainger, a Guyanese, makes the observation that broadcasting might have brought about significant cultural changes, for he asks: “ Did the advent of radio and other forms of electronic broadcasting serve to dilute our cultural heritage? Was there value to us as a society in children sitting in the moonlight listening to the tales of yore from our grandparents? These experiences might have, to some extent, served to shape family values.”

Guyana’s pioneers in broadcasting were a few enthusiastic amateurs who in 1926 established a small wired service relaying shortwave broadcasts over the local telephone system.

I was fortunate to be part of a team at the Guiana Graphic Co. Ltd. in 1963 that produced the 1964 Guyana Yearbook (some years prior to Independence in 1966, the spelling GUYANA was used in the Yearbook’s title).

It records that the initiative in 1926 was followed a year later “by experimental low-power short-wave transmissions which were carried out on a basis of two hours a week until 1931”.

Serious economic difficulties aborted that initiative, until in 1935 “another group of enthusiasts decided to broadcast commentaries on that year’s MCC cricket

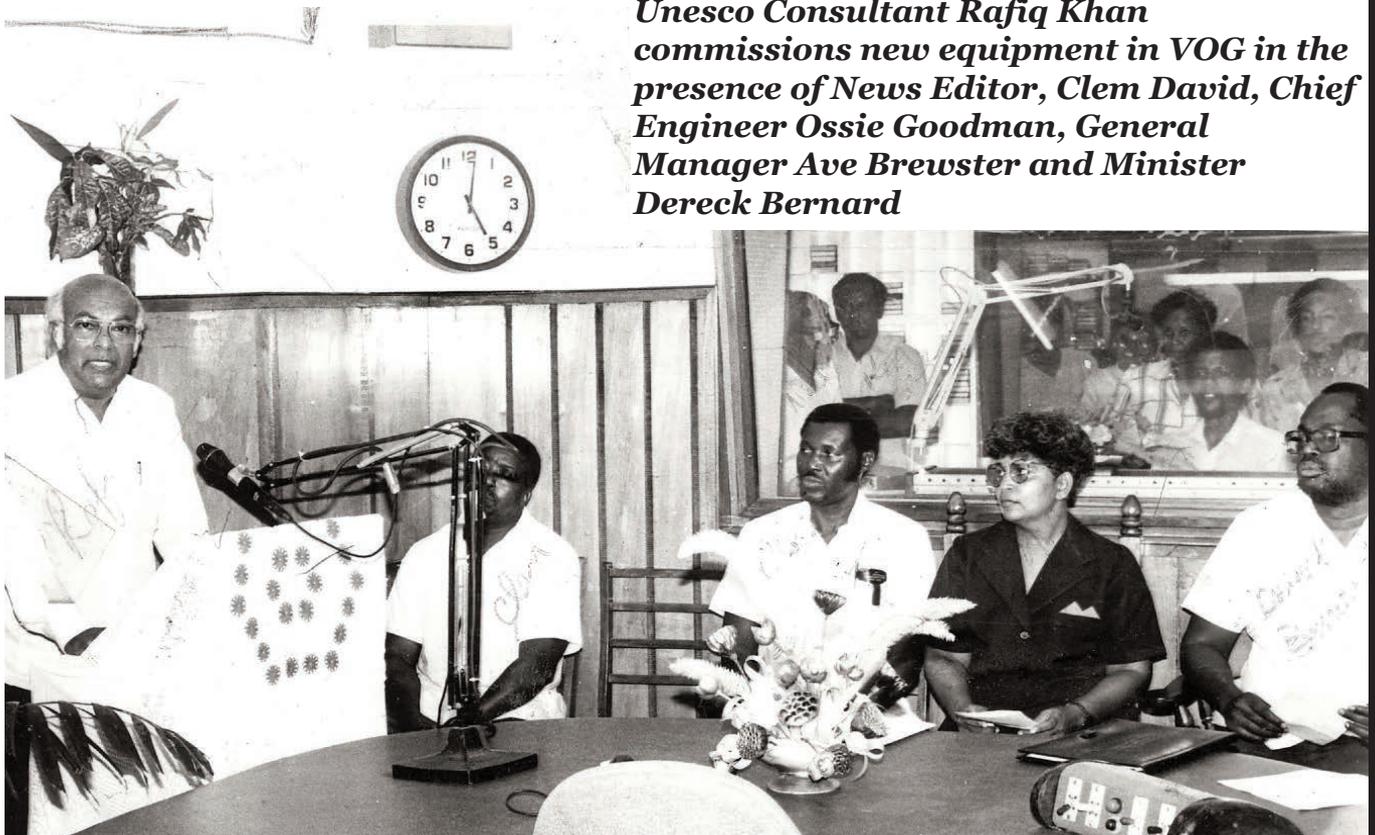
matches... Encouraged by the success of the cricket broadcasts, two separate stations, VP3BG and VP3MR, began operating commercially until 1938 when they amalgamated on the formation of the British Guiana United Broadcasting Company Ltd.”

In 1949 - four years after end of the Second World War (which took an estimated 60 million lives) and more interminable blackouts across coastal BG – “a medium-wave transmitter was brought into action in addition to the short-wave transmitter.”

The effect was a remarkable change in local broadcasting ! Until then, just a few homes, mostly of well-to-do families, could produce at-home music through pianos, other instruments, and their RCA Victor gramophones, mechanically operated and using heavy vinyl records (His Master’s Voice): After each record was “played”, the spring had to be re-wound with a metal device that looked a smaller version of the old starter crank for motor vehicles.

Such families around Georgetown and in a few rural coastal locations had shortwave radios and, nightly, crowds (mostly men) would assemble at vantage points on the streets to listen to the 7:15 BBC News & Commentary, with the families facilitating this social sharing by “turning up” the volume, though often reception would fade out.

Unesco Consultant Rafiq Khan commissions new equipment in VOG in the presence of News Editor, Clem David, Chief Engineer Ossie Goodman, General Manager Ave Brewster and Minister Dereck Bernard



Sonny Mohamed, Ivor Tinniss, Ishri Singh, Bruiser Thomas, Raymond Azeez, George Nurse, Alma Rohlehr, Gwen Parris, Avril Legall, Alan Fenty



The well-to-do in rural communities did likewise, and oldsters from Hague Village on the West Coast of Demerara could likely tell of similar occurrences where listening-in was facilitated by business persons like the Barcellos family (relatives of Dave Martins of “Tradewinds” fame) who were the village shopkeepers.

On the nights of world title boxing matches, these various points of neighbourly accommodation would overflow with listeners. Near bedlam erupted when the Black American heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis (Joseph Louis Barrow) knocked out Germany’s Max Schmeling (Maximillian Adolph Otto Seigfried Schmeling) in the first round to avenge an earlier defeat.

The Yearbook records that “In July 1950, Overseas Rediffusion Limited purchased a controlling interest in the broadcasting company and it was from this time that broadcasting in British Guiana was placed on a sound professional basis.

“Changes in broadcasting policies and programmes were denoted in a further change in the name of the station,

and from 1951, ZFY became Radio Demerara.”

BBC transmission programmes were also very popular as citizens in this, at the time, very English colony, feasted on the musical treats of singers like Richard Tauber (later knighted) and Vera Lynn. In time, they were also to be enthralled by hearing the Guianese voice of Joe Sanders coming through on the BBC’s daily programme “Calling the Caribbean”.

Later developments led to the construction and commissioning of the first privately-owned modern broadcasting station at High Street, Georgetown, and later another broadcasting station was built at Hadfield Street, Lodge Village.

Mr. Grainger underlines the positive impact of broadcasting on private sector development and general commercial activity: “Broadcasting as an enabler in the area of commerce would also be another important change agent of our early commercial landscape, with businesses being able to advertise their products and hence put them more readily within the reach of consumers.

And of its social impact, he recalls: “Some programmes, such as the nightly “Death announcements, have withstood the test of time and have become part of the national culture. For example, in times past, at its commencement time of 9:10 p.m. the musical introduction to this programme was regarded as a signal for young men visiting their girlfriends to say goodnight and leave.”

The now distinguished scholar and international diplomat Sir Ronald Sanders was a main player from the late 1960s in the development of broadcasting. He was the second general manager (succeeding Hugh Cholmondeley) of the new post-independence station GBS, having earlier returned from England where he had attended university and trained at the BBC in radio and television broadcasting.

He reminisces: “The advent of GBS in 1968 improved broadcasting in Guyana considerably. Rediffusion no longer had a monopoly in Radio Demerara and the old BGBS. The new GBS expanded the range of programming through documentaries on the social and economic issues of the day, in-depth interviews with leading political and private sector decision-makers, and immediate and live coverage of major events through an Outside Broadcast Unit. Indeed, GBS’s coverage of fires that destroyed buildings in Georgetown led to the popular saying that “if yuh scratch a match, GBS is there”.

The GBS production team pushed the envelope of what could be covered by and discussed on radio. It was not a space in which Radio Demerara sought to compete for two reasons: those programmes cost more to produce, and GBS had trained persons capable of delivering such information, news and educational programmes in an entertaining way.

Remarkably, GBS was able to sell its high-cost programmes to advertisers who quickly realised that they had a wide audience. Further, through its outside broadcasts, GBS filled the void of visual images with the images created by the voice. In this way, the storytelling tradition of Guyana was continued through GBS outside broadcasts, none more impressive than coverage of events at the inaugural Caribbean Festival of the Creative Arts (CARIFESTA) in 1972 when even dance became a visual image conveyed through the voice.

The very popular programme “No Big Ting” created, scripted, and produced by Sanders and Keith Barnwell, with appearances by Ken Corsbie, Marc Matthews and Joseph “Reds” Perreira, was the first and only locally-produced satirical programme that poked fun at politicians and events in Guyana. It was revolutionary - hated by politicians and loved by the public. Barnwell and Sanders started it in 1969 and it was a Christmas-time staple after that.

Ron Robinson from Radio Demerara subsequently took the name and the format of the programme into stage production at the Theatre Guild’s “Playhouse”.

The broadcast segment of the information/communications sector has expanded considerably over the decades. With onset of economic stringencies, dilution of the government’s socialist policies, and relaxation of state control of the media, there has been the establishment of numerous privately-owned radio and television stations - of varying capabilities and differing levels of professionalism.

In my view, the 20th Century heights attained by broadcasting in Guyana were less due to technological advances and overwhelmingly so to the outstanding quality of the personnel it attracted. In time, many took their skills to the Caribbean, North America and Europe – heading major regional organizations and becoming global functionaries within the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

I was privileged to know most of them... who set the bar so high it is a constant struggle for today’s generation of broadcasters to seek to emulate... of course, different folks, different times.

Many of those who strove against the odds to develop what has become an important sector in Guyana’s economy were outstanding in both broadcasting and administrative skills... and capably nurtured their successors.

There are many great names in Guyana’s broadcasting, functioning within the radio stations as well as through the Government Information Service (Lloyd Searwar, Victor Forsythe, Percy Haynes, author Peter Halder, the now celebrated British poet Grace Nicholls, Cecily Smith and other outstanding staffers, including, for a short time, Ron Sanders, Keith Barnwell and Wordsworth McAndrew) with its many public affairs productions and special programmes targeted at schools (particularly so by the sisters Lynette and Celeste Dolphin), agriculture and other main sectors of the economy. (A listing by me of a hierarchy must necessarily exclude personnel whose entry was subsequent to my departure from Guyana in 1977).

There were these main categories within Guyana’s broadcasting corps: (a) Capable administration personnel who were also superb announcers; (b) Brilliant announcers who were promoted into administration positions; and (c) outstanding announcers who extended the in-studio activities and took their talents into expansive community and charitable programmes.

Prominent among the early greats at the microphone were Ulric Gouveia, Lillian Fraser, B. L. Crombie (whose sterling work inspired "Reds" Perreira into sports broadcasting), Pat Cameron (Aunty Cumsee), Olga Lopes-Seale, celebrated for her singing with Jack Casimir, her social work and annual lavish Christmas Party for the underprivileged (she transitioned to Barbados, maintained a high profile in broadcasting and social work and earned the island's highest honour, equivalent to a knighthood).

Rafiq Khan, the suave golden-voiced gentleman, not only fascinated listeners with his voice, style and professionalism, he went to the country's leading boys colleges and personally recruited the next generation of Guyanese leaders in broadcasting and public communication, including Hugh Cholmondeley, Clairmonte Taitt, Vic Insanally.

The Khan corps of bright, enterprising young men helped to raise the standard in local broadcasting, discussion programmes and on-air entertainment. Most progressed into prominent positions in other countries and international agencies.

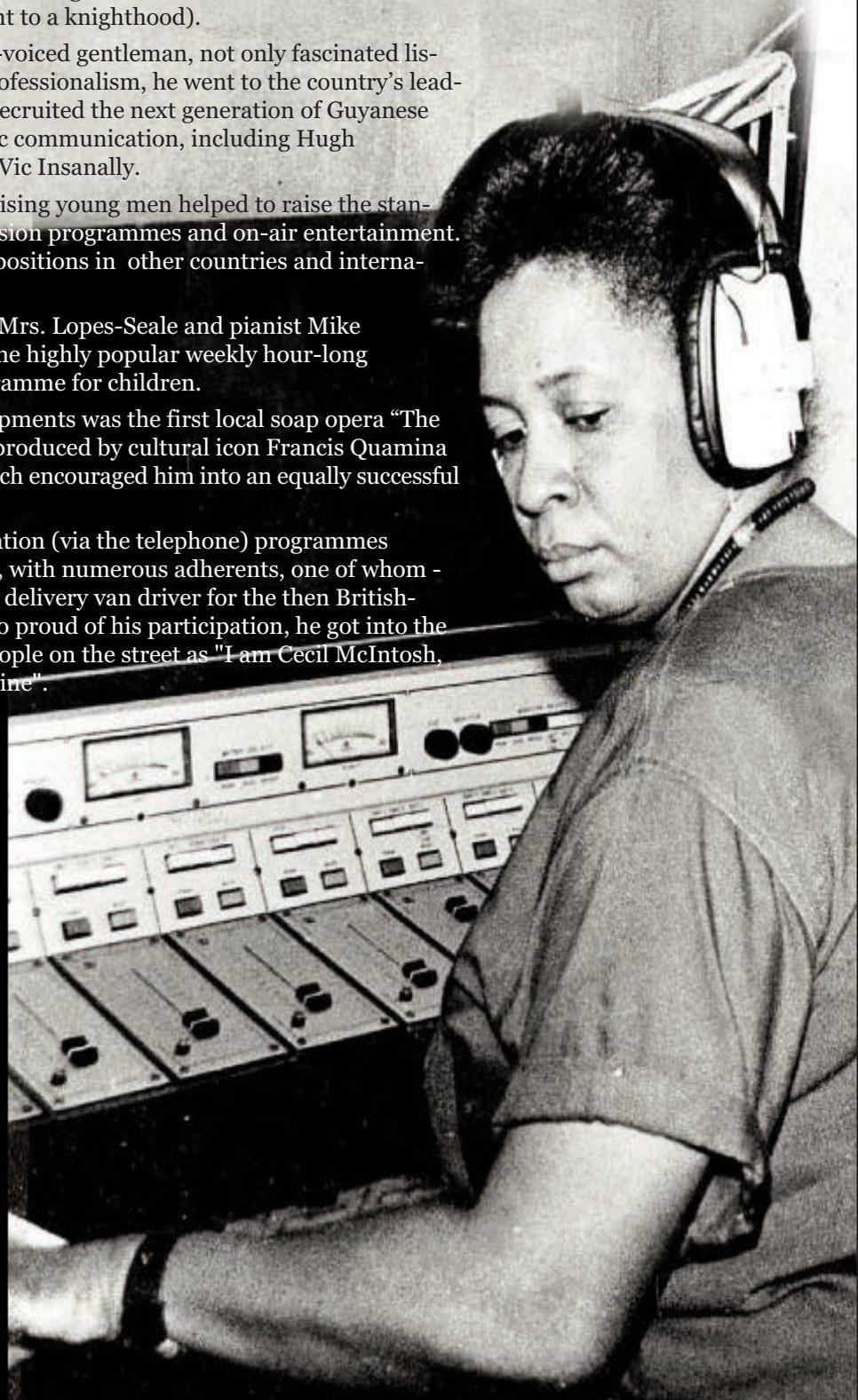
Senior announcer Ayube Hamid, Mrs. Lopes-Seale and pianist Mike McKenzie were leading lights in the highly popular weekly hour-long Ovaltine-sponsored singing programme for children.

One of the history-making developments was the first local soap opera "The Tides of Susanburg" written and produced by cultural icon Francis Quamina Farrier, the huge popularity of which encouraged him into an equally successful sequel.

Widely acclaimed public participation (via the telephone) programmes included one called "Action Line", with numerous adherents, one of whom - Cecil "Rugged Mack" McIntosh, a delivery van driver for the then British-owned Bookers Stores Ltd., was so proud of his participation, he got into the habit of introducing himself to people on the street as "I am Cecil McIntosh, the man who appears on Action Line".

Of equal radio fame was a contributor who called himself Abrahms. He phoned in nightly and announced himself with one word, "Abrahms" and always began by saying "in my last broadcast..." If interrupted by the presenter, he would listen in silence and then take up precisely where he had left off in a carefully scripted statement.

Another great favourite was a friend of mine Sidney Gonsalves, a near idiot-savant but who remembered everything he had ever heard or read, and in the programme he impressed by correctly responding to general knowledge questions from the public. One night someone called in to ask: "what year was my father born?"





Memorable also was a personality like Bertie Chancellor (at the time widely regarded as the world's oldest teenager, for the great ease with which he interacted with youths).

Former Guyana Graphic Ltd. General Manager Ricardo Smith recalls: "Without a high school education and coming out of very modest circumstances, Bertie was dogged and indefatigable in his determination to make a contribution to radio programming and national development."

Bertie Chancellor worked in the days of ZFY and Radio Demerara with Vivian Lee who bought time on the station for programmes that he produced and presented. Bertie later became the Librarian at Radio Demerara, but he was popular mostly for "Teenagers' Choice" on Saturdays. It attracted hordes of teenage girls who turned up at Radio Demerara to select records and to explain their choice live.

Broadcasting inspired cultural excellence, with "Theatre Guild" in the forefront through its many outstanding stage presentations. Its early stalwarts included Billy and Frank Pilgrim, their sister Cecily, Frank Thomasson and wife Carlotta (nee Croal), Beverley Ann Roberts (nee Rodrigues), Ricardo and Jean Smith, Wilbert Holder, Ken Corsbie, Marc Matthews, Henry Muttoo, Wordsworth McAndrew, Robert Narain, Cecily Robinson, Elizabeth Cholmondeley/Wells (nee Coltrass), Canadians Keith and Glenna Tisshaw; and that remarkable cadre of new-breed White expatriates like Graham Jones and Peter Drury who with fellow Briton Thomasson built

the first Theatre Guild "Playhouse" virtually nail by nail, and with their own hands.

Broadcasting and the "Playhouse" helped to produce what one Guyanese who both participated in and observed the scene referred to as "that interesting social phenomenon of upper-class, mostly light-skinned young ladies, and a few rather more brown-skinned ones too, being recruited as announcers"... which is to say that broadcasting in those days was considered a not insignificant element of the social hierarchy.

In the mid-1960s, the government selected some stalwarts within the broadcasting network and sent them to England for training in television broadcasting, but the hoped-for launching of TV in Guyana with the team's return did not then occur.

Today in Guyana, as so often is the case elsewhere in the former British Caribbean, technology/mass production/new age standards is trumping quality in broadcasting. The infusion of freely accessible material from sources abroad and the amazing all-round capability and storage capacity of cell phones appear to pose the greatest challenge to the survival of broadcast systems in the country as I knew them. Today's systems will have to adapt, improve and compete, or disappear.

As Guyana celebrates its 50th Anniversary of Independence, it can well take pride in the quality of broadcasting personnel and services it has produced; and in the fact that its experience therein is fast approaching the very significant milestone - A CENTURY.

A NEW LOOK AT JONESTOWN

by Eusi Kwayana

\$19.95 (includes S&H) within the USA

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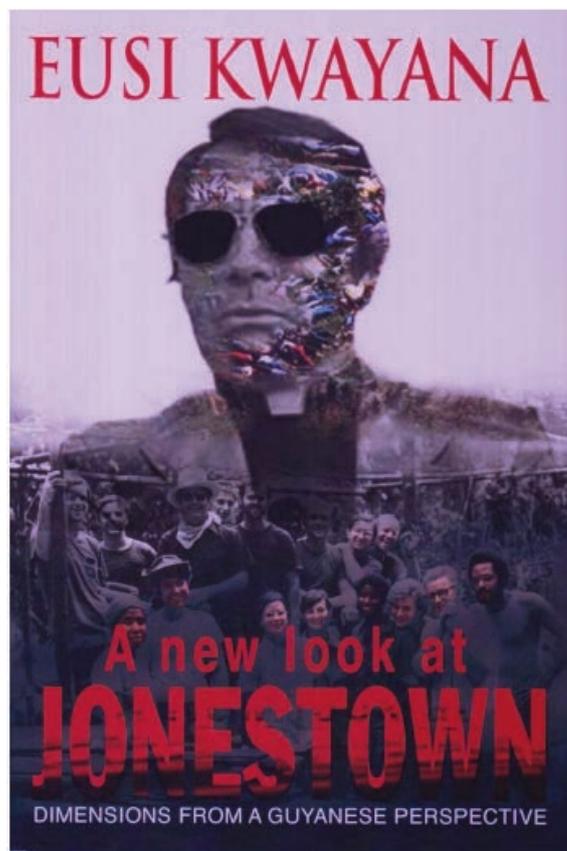
jmassay1@ verizon.net

Tel # 347-228-6939

Extracts from a review by Dr Glenville Ashby

Eusi Kwayana summons the most resourceful of contributors, each painting a disturbing picture of 1970s Guyana where good governance is sacrificed at the altar of immediacy, entitlement, corruption, and concupiscence. We read from a former member, “They [Guyana government officials] even slept with some of the women, the white women [of Jonestown]. They had a thing for white women. They thought that it was gold. We had beautiful black women but they would never gravitate toward them.” Kwayana delves far deeper. To understand Jonestown we must understand racial dynamics in bygone America. Jones’ vision, according to the author, was subliminally tied to the World Peace Mission of Father Divine, a New Thought movement that attracted disillusioned blacks in the 1930s. Father Divine claimed to be God in flesh. Jones, no doubt studied this equally compelling figure, fashioning his model after “Divine’s’ ‘heavens’ or housing accommodations for blacks across the US. The principal difference was that Jones moved his dream overseas.

The Jonestown Plantation by Drs Lear K. Matthews, and George K. Danns, lends another layer to this narrative. While cooperative socialist experiments were not alien to the economic culture of Guyana, the People’s Temple Agricultural Project was a foreign transplant that was unique and dissimilar to the norm. Matthews and Danns argue that “Jonestown was an atavism, a recreation of a slave plantation with similar characteristics. The master and his white lieutenants came to Guyana similar to the transatlantic journeying of earlier white colonizer, “where blacks were made to sublimate their passions and orient their behaviour in accordance with the austere demands of Jim Jones.....The community of Jonestown residents, like slaves on the plantations, did not own anything except their individual



labour power.” And although short on details they added that, “not only were the CIA and American embassy more informed about People’s Temple than were local military officials, but the latter were ostensibly prevented from investigating that “isolated community” until after the tragedy.”

Kwayana’s revelatory essays, in particular, Father Divine and Rev. Jim Jones, and Race and Gender in the Peoples Temple, present a piercing look at race, history, and the phenomenology of sexual exploitation. Of Jim Jones, he writes: “His sexual activity impinged on the governance of Jonestown.” He agrees that Jones and a narrow circle of white women managed Jonestown. “This small band would therefore have great influence with him...Had the most trusted advisers not been bed intimates of Jones and loyal and devoted to him, being under his spell, then a number of influential colleagues, men or women, might have swung White Night (mass suicide rehearsals) proceedings away from the apocalypse.” ‘A new look at JONESTOWN’ is an elucidating, mesmerizing read that transcends Jones’ captivating, precipitous slide into madness. It is a call to prudence and responsibility on a personal and national level. The sanctity of life and human dignity must never be compromised, but we are warned repeatedly that the wiles of political agents – domestic and foreign – are ever-present.

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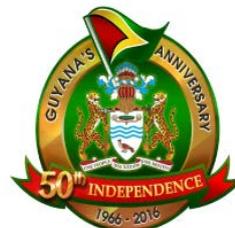
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The Parade will comprise marching bands, floats of various sizes, masqueraders in costumes choreographed to depict various themes that reflect our nation’s rich cultural heritage, vast natural resources – like El Dorado –as well as its natural beauty.

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 .



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Route: Church Ave and Bedford Ave, to Ralph Ave to Flatlands Ave, Brooklyn

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Kester Clarke, 2014



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