

GUYANA FOLK

And Culture

GUYANA'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

I Love Thee, O I Love Thee!



Guyana

This time, it was extraordinarily special. It was simply magnificent and beyond being described with mere words – the pomp and the pageantry, the ascendance of the Golden Arrowhead on the flag-pole, the spectacular fireworks at the newly created Durban Park. The performance by the military in its magnificent regalia and splendor reminds us of the need to defend our dear land in light of the continuous threat to our sacred borders. Thousands of Guyanese at home from foreign lands for this historic occasion, as well as their compatriots stranded abroad witnessing the event through live streaming, stood tall with pride engendered by the collective love of the homeland set aglow in their hearts.

Looking back over the 50 years of our journey, we can justifiably take pride in what we have achieved. A small developing nation with no mighty army and with few gold bars in the treasury, we have charted a proud place among the nations of the world. Since we achieved our independence on May 26, 1966, our diplomats have played a leading role in the dismantling of the evil system of apartheid in South Africa, and in the liberation of other countries in Southern Africa. We also strengthened our role in world affairs by joining the Non-Aligned Movement, the group of countries committed to striving for the attainment of a just world order including political freedom, as well as economic and social justice for all of the people in the world. Conscious of the need for individual countries to belong to regional groups to preserve their existence and development in the reality of this rapidly changing world, we have led the way in the formation of a number of regional and sub-regional bodies, including the Caribbean Free Trade Association and later, the Caribbean Community and Common Market.

In our efforts to establish the institutions to build a better life for our people in Guyana, we have resorted at home to the same measure of audacity, as we did on the international stage. Drawing on the post-emancipation experience of working together to establish the village movement, we dared, in the post-colonial context, to declare the cooperative as the primary institution through which to develop various sectors of the economy of Guyana. But that novel experiment is still not as great a part of the Guyanese reality as envisaged. Cooperatives still have a role to play. In the context of the economic reality in Guyana, it has been decided that private enterprise would be the engine of growth of the economy.

In seeking to create a better life for the people, successive administrations have strengthened the infrastructure for the economic development of the country with such projects as industrial estates, drainage and irrigation schemes, electricity, the Georgetown to Linden highway, the Demerara Harbor Bridge, and the Berbice River Bridge. It is such projects that are closing the gap between the quality of life in the city, on the one hand, and the villages and the hinterland, on the other. Perhaps, most significant of all, for developing the minds and the technical skills for the optimal utilization of the human resources of the country, is the University of Guyana.

We have reflected on the visible material steps we have taken on our journey of a thousand miles during the 50 years since our achievement of independence. However what may have eluded us is that we have made progress commensurate with something special, something below the surface. That something is our spirit of being Guyanese, our consciousness of our Guyanese identity. We have been inspired by our strivings to achieve unity of diversity, our ongoing efforts to weave a cultural mosaic out of the different cultural strands passed on to us by our ancestors from Africa, Asia and Europe. We must therefore recognize as one of our most cherished blessings the creativity of our festivals, folk songs, masquerade band and writers released by the inspiration of independence. In the awakening of Guyanese at home and in the Diaspora, the Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc. has been playing an outstanding role. For 15 years, the GCA has been preserving, promoting and propagating Guyana's culture through its work in the Diaspora among the youths through the Guyana Folk Festival seasons and the recognition of contributions to our national cultural heritage.

We have passed safely through the night. Joy has come in the morning. And even as we are mindful of the effects of the efforts of the journey of fifty years on individual citizens, our brothers and sisters who paid great prices, in mind and body, we continue on our collective path, still learning as we proceed.

Today, therefore, we stand tall in the glow of the Golden Jubilee of our independence. Let us take new courage and new inspiration from this historic moment to do our part in making a reality of our dream of establishing a developed Cooperative Republic of Guyana with equal opportunities for all, regardless of race, color or creed.



Guyana Stands Tall

*Percy Haynes
May Guest Editor*

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THE GUYANA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK, INC.

A HAPPY GOLDEN JUBILEE GUYANA!!!

O beautiful Guyana
O my lovely native land
More dear to me than all the world
Thy sea-washed, sun-kissed strand
Or down upon the borders
Looking out upon the deep
The great Atlantic
Blown into a fury, or asleep.
At morn, at noon - or better
In the crimson sunset's glow

**I love thee,
Oh I love thee.**





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*All common things, each day's events,
That with the hour begin and end,
Our pleasures and our discontents,
Are rounds by which we may ascend.*

Longfellow

GUYANA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK, INC.
THE GUYANA ARTS & CULTURAL CENTER

**CONGRATULATIONS TO
OUR PRESIDENT,
DR. VIBERT CAMBRIDGE**

Juliet Emanuel

The Officers and Members of Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc. and its agencies: Guyana Folk Festival and Guyana Arts and Culture Center are happy to record in Guyana Folk & Culture, their online newsmagazine the following:

Golden Arrow of Achievement-awarded to any citizen of Guyana who has performed an outstanding and specific act of service or achievement of an exceptional nature, or is given for long and dedicated service of a consistently high standard in responsible offices, local government services, social and voluntary services, industry or trade unions, or in any other area of public service - was awarded on May 26th, 2016 the Golden Jubilee of the Independence of Guyana to its President,

Social Historian and Cultural Activist, Professor Emeritus, Ohio University, Vibert Compton Cambridge, PhD.

While his numerous academic qualifications and achievements are prominently on record, it is for the determination and vision of his service to the people to his native land that his herald now comes. In short, he has worked consistently with the government sector to promote viable programs that explore and sustain the multivariable culture of Guyana. He has worked with and promoted multimedia initiatives at the tertiary level and within the theatrical and folk communities in Guyana. He was tasked by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, with the resuscitation and amplification of the Institute of Creative Arts and the maintenance oversight of its status quo. He has initiated and secured a long standing



scholarly exchange, in the general field of communication, including the visual arts, between Ohio University and the University of Guyana. For all these efforts and more, in Guyana, Dr. Cambridge has been acknowledged for his years of doggedness and vision.

In addition, New York, in particular, under the aegis of Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc. and as its current President, he has vigorously supported the mission of this association to preserve, promote and propagate Guyanese culture. This is achieved through nine signature annual events: the Awards Ceremony, the Family Fun Day, the Literary Hang, MoBraff Performing Arts Theater, Kwe Kwe Night, the Film and Video Festival, the Art Exhibition, the Annual Symposium, two organs, the monthly online newsmagazine, Guyana Folk and Culture and the annual journal Folk, and the Caribbean Heritage Summer Workshops. During his tenure, GCA has also created the first of its kind - the Guyana Arts & Cultural Center, a community space designed to support emerging and established artists in our diaspora.

A collective tip of the hat to Dr. Vibert Cambridge!



WE WILL BE MAKING A FUNDAMENTAL MISTAKE IF WE CONSIDER THE MAY EVENTS AS THE CULMINATION OF GUYANA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE SEASON

Vibert Cambridge



*Hand painted logo in office of SINGER (Guyana), Water Street, Georgetown, Guyana.
Photograph courtesy of Vibert Cambridge*

Background

Guyana’s Golden Jubilee celebrations are the latest in a history of ceremonies to mark important occasions. Since 1887, with the celebrations for Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee, governments of British Guiana and, later, the independent state of Guyana have funded or supported programs to celebrate key events. Among the objectives have been to promote and to encourage loyalty and patriotism.

The postcard below from British Guiana shows a “procession” of the Police that might have taken place during the Coronation of King Edward VII in 1902.



Photograph courtesy of Wayne McWatt.

Some of the events associated with these moments—the decorated and illuminated buildings, ceremonial parades, fireworks, and national exhibitions—were refined during the 1930s and provided a template for the 20th century. That template was evident during the May events of the Jubilee year.

Background

Let us look at the celebrations of a few key events during the 20th century to identify the pattern and to make the case that we should not consider the Golden Jubilee celebrations over with the end of May.

Centenary of the Union

October 1931 marked the centenary of the union of the colonies of Demerara, Berbice, and Essequibo to form British Guiana. Despite the economic conditions, an ambitious program was organized featuring decorated and illuminated buildings, the tableau British Guiana 1831–1931, the large model of the Kaieteur Falls at the British Guiana Centenary Exhibition and Fair, military displays, rallies for school children, the publishing of books, feeding programs for the poor, and balls. Among the legacies from the British Guiana Centenary celebrations was Reverend Hawley’s Bryant’s Song of Guiana’s Children.

Centenary of the Abolition of Slavery

Despite the ongoing economic crisis, the people of British Guiana commemorated the centenary of the abolition of slavery in 1934. This event was spearheaded by the Negro Progress Convention with marginal support from

the state's coffers. Within the limited means, a program of events was organized in each county. The emphasis was forward-looking. As had been the practice since slavery, efforts at African mobilization in the colony were met with derision. The editorial tone of the Daily Argosy sought to minimize African agency and efficacy in the struggle for the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of enslaved Africans in the colony.

The Centenary of the City of Georgetown

The centenary of Georgetown in March 1937 was more upbeat. Despite the ongoing global economic depression and signs of rising military tensions in Europe, there were signs of optimism in the colony's economic life. There were improvements in the rice industry as a result of reorganization and improvements in planting methods. The entrepreneur R. G. Humphrey donated \$5,000 to launch the development of the Georgetown Pure Water Supply Scheme, which was estimated to cost \$120,000. His donation represented the aim to raise the funds for the scheme through local subscriptions in the spirit of "assisting ourselves" that was being encouraged in the face of the persistent economic depression.

The Silver Jubilee of the Coronation of King George V

Illuminated buildings were among the highlights of the 1935 celebration.

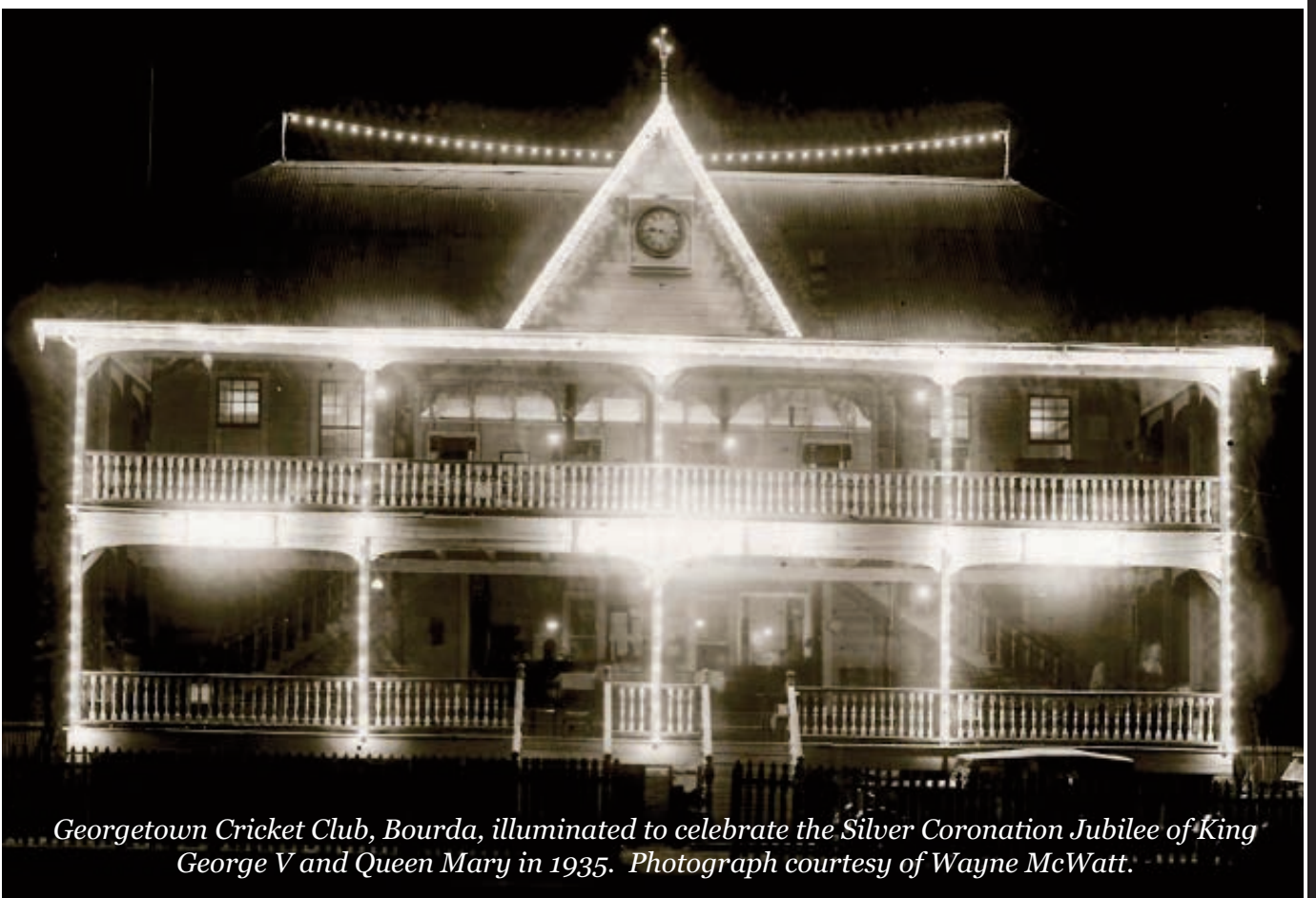
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Fogarty's new store illuminated to celebrate the Silver Coronation Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary in 1935. Photograph courtesy of Wayne McWatt.



*Bookers Universal Stores illuminated for Coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953.
Photograph courtesy of Wayne McWatt.*



Georgetown Cricket Club, Bourda, illuminated to celebrate the Silver Coronation Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary in 1935. Photograph courtesy of Wayne McWatt.



Bookers Head Office, Water Street, illuminated to celebrate the Silver Coronation Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary in 1935. Photograph courtesy of Wayne McWatt.

The Coronation of King George VI

May 1937 marked the coronation of King George VI. From May 8 to 17, 1937, virtually every community in British Guiana held activities to celebrate the coronation. There were illuminated buildings, show window displays, a regatta at the Rowing Club, ceremonial parades, torchlight parades, religious services, fireworks displays, coronation balls, and new musical compositions. By 1937, British Guiana's broadcasting infrastructure had international connectivity, thus allowing the nation to hear the broadcast of the coronation ceremony from London's Westminster Abbey live.

The Centenary of East Indian Immigration to British Guiana

The program to celebrate the centenary of East Indian immigration to British Guiana in 1938 was led by the primarily urban British Guiana East Indian Association. This event, like the centenary of the abolition of slavery, also received some state support. This program was also forward looking. In a speech to mark the moment, B.G.E.I.A. president C. R. Jacobs envisaged a future that was primarily rural, idyllic and bucolic—one that contributed to the building of a “greater India in British Guiana.”

So, by the end of the 1930s, British Guiana has established a framework for organizing the celebration of national moments. It is a framework dominated by an active state.

The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

This colonial project took place in June 1953, a pivotal year in Guyana's post-World War II history. It was a high point in the struggle for independence. The first election under universal adult suffrage in British Guiana had been held in April 1953. The victors in that election, the People's Progressive Party, were expelled in October 1953. One of their “sins” was refusing to send a British Guianese delegation to a regional coronation event in Jamaica.

Like previous state-sponsored events there were decorated and illuminated buildings.



*City Hall illuminated for Coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953.
Photograph courtesy of Wayne McWatt.*

But within the context of this political drama there emerged a movement that began to put the stamp of a home-grown sensibility on state-sponsored celebrations. The planners for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II would eventually morph into the National History and Culture Week Committee (1958). This gave way to the National History and Arts Council; later the Department of Culture; followed by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sport; and currently the Department of Culture, Youth, and Sport.

Princess Margaret's State Visit of 1958

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Bookers Universal Stores during royal visit of Princess Margaret in 1958. Photograph courtesy of Wayne McWatt.

The post-independence years built upon this history of ceremonies. These moments have on occasion given rise to decisions that have had significant consequences for Guyanese creativity. The meetings of Caribbean artists and intellectuals in 1966 (independence) and again in 1970 (republic) influenced Guyanese cultural policy. A policy that informed the organization of Carifesta '72 gave rise to the Institute of Creative Arts, as well as Guyfesta. Carifesta X in 2008 and the launching of the Caribbean Press are other examples.

Clearly, Guyana's Jubilee celebrations drew upon this history. The national colors made for rich decorations, and Main Street's illuminations were memorable.

Guyana Geology and Mines Commission in Jubilee Colours. Photograph from Guyana's 50th Anniversary of Independence Facebook page.





*Guyana Revenue Authority in Jubilee Colours.
Photograph from Guyana's 50th Anniversary of Independence Facebook page.*



*Lobby, Arthur Chung Conference Center.
Photograph courtesy of Vibert Cambridge*



Main Street illuminated for Guyana's Golden Jubilee. Photograph courtesy of Vibert Cambridge



An important element in the Golden Jubilee program was the work of the Academic Working Group of the National Commemoration Commission. Its signature events were the Jubilee Literary Festival and the National Symposia Series. These two programs sought to launch an intergenerational conversation on four interrelated questions—Who are we? What has the journey been like? What can we become? How can we get there? It is felt that through this global conversation, Guyanese will be able to find the commonalities of heritage and aspiration and begin to fashion the steps for building interethnic trust and community.

The Jubilee Literary festival is an international collaboration of Guyanese around the world who have endorsed the goal of improving Guyanese literary life through a distinctive and sustainable literary festival. Jubilee LitFest, this inaugural festival, was conceptualized as a multi-day, multi-event program. It was designed to:

- Raise the nation's awareness of Guyana's literary heritage,
- Encourage reading and support literacy,
- Increase the competencies of emerging creative writers in Guyana,
- Improve Guyana's standing as a destination with a distinctive cultural product, and
- Establish an organization to ensure sustainability of the literary festival.

Gitanjali (Indian Monument Gardens, May 7), Lunch with Peter Kempadoo (Port Mourant, May 14) and Lunch with Mittelholzer (New Amsterdam, May 20) provided opportunities to meet and to explore themes in Guyanese literary life, as well as to explore Guyana's literary geography. Gitanjali explored Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali in Guyanese consciousness and its place in the Prayers of the National Assembly (also referred to as the Universal Prayer). The celebration of Peter Kempadoo and Edgar Mittelholzer in Port Mourant and New Amsterdam, respectively, drew attention to the county's central place in Guyana's literary heritage. It set in motion a demand for the ongoing exploration of our literary geography. The community engagement, especially the participation of school children, was refreshing.

The Digital Tent is a website that aggregates information about Guyana by Guyanese and non-Guyanese. It was launched on May 2. This upgradable site has been described by former University of Guyana vice-chancellor and current director of culture Dr. James Rose as having “overwhelming implications for research activities.” He anticipates that “as it grows and expands to include new nodes of knowledge, it can become indispensable to the education system.”

The National Symposia Series focused on the four interrelated questions over three days—May 23 & 24 at the Arthur Chung Convention Center, Guyana, and June 5 at York College, Queens, New York. This was another example of international collaboration.

At the end of May, it was clear that many questions have been asked and suggestions offered about the future of the nation. Justifiable questions and comments have been raised about the management of the May events, including questions about ethnic and class inclusion. These are the easy observations associated with a perspective that sees the May events as the culmination of the Jubilee season—the end of a period of reflection and celebration. These observations fail to recognize the initiatives that were launched.

Guyanese youth were engaged in the exploration of Guyana’s literary heritage. *Gitanjali* was an innovative production by students of the Guyana’s School of Theater Arts and Drama, National Dance School, the Theater Guild, and the Nrityageet Dancers.



From Gitanjali, Indian Monument Gardens. Photograph courtesy of Vibert Cambridge

The production held on May 8 at the Indian Monument Gardens was poorly attended. Were poor publicity and promotion the causes? Was it a clash with the private events of Mothers’ Day? This production ought to be rescheduled. It represents an important contribution of our Indian heritage to Guyanese consciousness. Verse 34 of *Gitanjali* has inspired the prayers of Guyana’s National Parliament and was the Universal Prayer read at the Jubilee Flag Raising. This event should be repeated again during the Jubilee Year.

In the post-May season, we should build upon the spirit of Port Mourant and New Amsterdam as we move forward with the work to improve literary life in Guyana.

The body of knowledge generated during the National Symposia Series has to be shared and added to. This is work that has to be continued.

*Students attending Lunch with Kempadoo, Port Mourant, Berbice.
Photograph courtesy of Vibert Cambridge*



The works launched by the National Parks Commission and the Protected Areas Commission must be continued. The rehabilitation and creation of new recreational spaces, including spaces for the literary arts, such as the scheduled Pineapple Fountain and water park in the Botanical Gardens, are crucial to building a just and caring society.

As with all celebrations of national events, there were programs organized by non-governmental agencies. We saw this with the centenaries of the abolition of slavery and East Indian immigration to British Guiana in 1934 and 1938, respectively. These moments are still celebrated each year with small support from the state. One that stood out for me was the launch of the Philip Moore Artists' Retreat and Maroon Sculpture Walk—a projected collaboration between the Yukuriba Artists Retreat and the E. R. Burrowes School of Art.

We need to sustain the conversation that was started using all means of communication. The Digital Tent must expand. The intergenerational conversations that were started in Jubilee May must continue. This requires



L-R: Rachel Williams, Marva Gordon, Meera Singh. Rachel and Meera read from Peter Kempadoo's Guyana Boy.

improved performance from the state's communication capacity. It will be a fatal mistake to think this work ended in May 2016.

The organization and management practices that characterized the May 2016 season must be evaluated. There is need for improved interagency coordination among the state players. This is crucial in the media sector. There is a need for better coordination among the stakeholders as we move forward in the jubilee year and prepare for the 50th anniversary of the Republic in 2020.

The Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc., will continue to bridge in the Jubilee Year—our 15th anniversary. We look forward to seeing you in Brooklyn during our annual Folk Festival Season and in Guyana in December for Masquerade Jamboree, a part of the Golden Jubilee Christmas.



OUR PEOPLE, OUR CULTURE, OUR HISTORY: **CELEBRATING GUYANA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE**

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THE HUG

...A PROMISE UNFULFILLED

Prime Minister Forbes Burnham and Leader of the Opposition Dr. Cheddi Jagan embrace each other just before the ascent of the Golden Arrowhead at the National Park on Thursday, May 26, 1966.





A distinguished son of Bartica, Mr. Oscar Smartt, celebrates his 102nd milestone.

Oscar Ethelbert Smartt was born on September 29, 1914 in Bartica, British Guiana, to the late Ethel Maude and

Francis Augustus Smartt, native of Barbados who migrated to British Guiana, and subsequently moved to Bartica to work, and who with an innate gift became a boat-builder.

Oscar the third of eleven children including (Clementine Isaacs, Rev. Frederick Augustus Smartt (Chaplain to the Government of Grenada) Ivy Miller, Ivan Smartt, Eugene Daniels/Walsh, Herman, George, Milton, Sybil Meertins, (deceased) and Eustace Smartt.

On July 1944, Oscar married the love of his life Olga Eleanor Long (deceased June 2004 after 60 years of marriage). Together, they were blessed with seven children: Maurice, Esme, Merlyn, Kathleen Clarke (deceased), Cheryl Hall, Olivia Thomas, and Osmond Smartt.

Immediately after completing his formal education at St. John the Baptist Anglican School in Bartica, Oscar worked with his father Francis as an apprentice in his Boat Building Shop at the age of 15. Following in his father's footsteps he became one of the leading boat-builder of his era, building boats for many in that region including the Mazaruni Prisons.

In those early years as a young man Oscar and his older brother Frederick called Freddie operated a mail service established by their father, transporting mail and cargo to the Upper Mazaruni District, Potaro, Kurupung and Isanno. After giving up the service, Mr. E.F. Corria took over the service, but Oscar continued to build the boats.

Mr. Smartt's talents, skills, competence, integrity, professionalism, and interactions with people were valued, highly. He was respected.

Mr. Oscar Smartt participation as a contestant in the Bartica Regatta, earned numerous awards for the performance of the famous boats which he built. For instance, Cashba, and Monaliza, distinguished both him and Eugene Correia, the leading competitors of their time. Mr. Smartt, subsequently, became involved in the Regatta Committee after his retirement. He served as starter for the boat races which attracted many viewers including enthusiasts from Georgetown. The viewing point for the races was on the waterfront where the (Bazra) a disabled steamer was grounded. From this vantage point and on the beach, it was spectacular to view the races!

As a successful businessman in the community which he served, Oscar became the Chairman of the Bartica Village Council in the early 1970s. A park was named in his honor and is located in the vicinity of the band stand. Mr. Smartt served as a Justice of the Peace for the Bartica Region. As a businessman, Oscar owned a Beer Garden that he built on lot 45 First Ave. It was called the "EL Cabana" and patrons flocked on Saturday nights for entertainment.

Additionally, Oscar enjoyed playing the piano, cooking, making bread, stimulating political discussions (with anyone) and, birthday celebrations giving him an opportunity to socialize with his family who continue to hold a prominent place in his life. Oscar relishes having all his family around him. He particularly enjoys the exchange of stories, the laughter and fun with his grandchildren and great grandchildren. They are the apple of his eye and the light of his life. Oscar's children, family and friends all enrich his wonderful life.

Mr. Oscar Smart, an avid churchgoer, served as the Organist at the St. John the Baptist Anglican Church in Bartica. He played the organ there until he migrated to the United States of America in 1982. Residing in Brooklyn, New York, Oscar became a member of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Bushwick where he sang in the choir. A special son of Bartica and, living in Brooklyn, New York, Mr. Oscar Smartt's life journey continue. We salute you, dad, granddad and great granddad!



THE GUYANESE DIASPORA GOES 'HOME'

CELEBRATING THE 50TH AND SUSTAINING CONNECTIONS

Going 'home'

"Yuh goin' home fuh de independence celebration?" "I would'nt miss it fuh nut'n!" "I book my flight six months ago gyrl, Ah cyan't wait!" "Sheeluh and she whole family goin down!" "I ain't able wid duh confusion, I gong guh laytuh in de year!" These comments characterize remarks heard among Guyanese in the Diaspora as they anxiously anticipated participating in the commemoration of the nation's 50th independence anniversary.

Lear Matthews

Raison d'être – More than a celebration

For some the visit was merely a fleeting nostalgic moment of euphoric excitement. For others it is a significant pilgrimage to the land they love. Or it could be their last sojourn to the country of their birth because, based on observation, perception or rumor, they worry about the development prospects of the nation under ANY administration. Yet for many, the moment may represent the dawning of a new era when Guyanese will

be drawn back to their homeland, physically or symbolically.

This unprecedented milestone has attracted thousands of 'home sick' expatriates. Simultaneously, several parallel Jubilee anniversary events sponsored by hometown associations and specially formed 50th Commemoration Committees have been planned at various locations in the Diaspora.





These include an array of cultural extravaganzas, Sports events, educational symposia and Flag-raising ceremonies, reflecting the nation's historical, contemporary and future journey. One welcomed observation is that in planning the various events, Guyanese across ethnic groups and educational levels have worked collaboratively, seemingly cognizant of the importance of inclusion and cross-cultural representation for such an historic occasion - A rarely acknowledged dimension of Guyanese social relationship reminiscent of the struggles toward independence.

The opportunistic enthusiasm to return 'home' is testimony to the strong emotional 'attachment' to one's country of origin. Perhaps more pervasive than some would admit, there is a deep-seated yearning to return to the home country, a yearning which may have been reignited by the recent change of the governing administration.

Sustained connectedness

Although visiting jubilee celebrants have been reportedly referred to by locals as "the foreigners" (a label some starkly resent), many in the Diaspora still view Guyana as 'home', keeping 'in touch' with transformations therein, through frequent visits or social media. Others may be returning for the first time or after many years, to a 'strange land' which they once knew as 'home'. Decisions about the nature of sustained connectedness or commitment to contribute should be informed by a number of factors. While in Guyana, it is hoped that visitors observe keenly, not only visually, but by having conversations with local residents, young and elderly (across the ethnic/race and class spectrum) about their feelings, ideas and wishes. Such interaction should be conducted in a non- patronizing, validating manner.

Visitors should also travel beyond Georgetown, to other regions of the beautiful land of many waters; understanding that some aspects of the infrastructure and culture have changed drastically and are different from the 'home' they remember, while other aspects appear to have remained the same. The latter may either conjure up a recaptured love for country or

viewed as a frustrating sign of lack of progress.

Some people view the change of administration as a good opportunity to contribute to the advancement of their country of birth. However, this phenomenon could forge their desire to return unconditionally if not impulsively, which may be a function more of sentimental connectivity than practical, rational consideration.

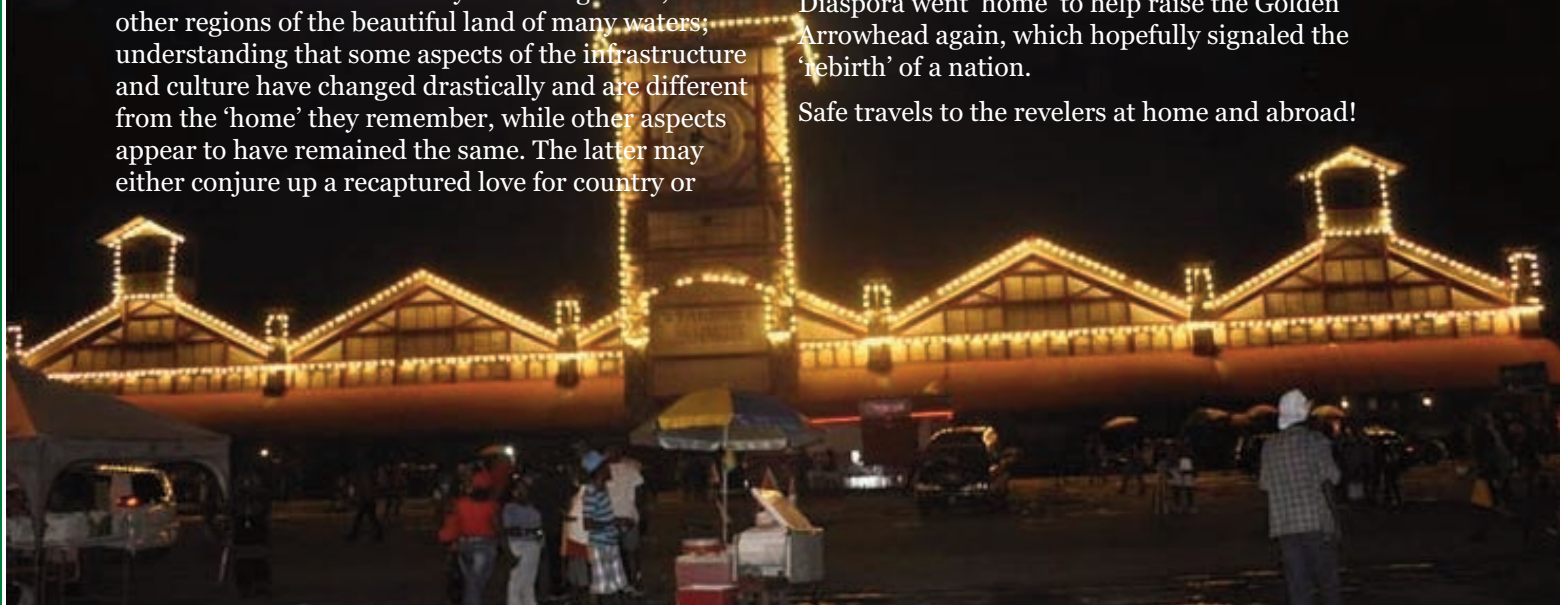
Diaspora vision for the nation at 50

In light of the above-mentioned attributes and perspectives, it is evident that many in the Diaspora, whether they made the commemorative pilgrimage or not, want the same things for the nation as people at home. These include: good jobs; equitable resource distribution; affordable housing; education and training for the youth; a fair and just legal system; adequate health care; programs for the elderly; sanitary conditions in both rural and urban areas; security; crime reduction and an effective criminal justice system; clarity, fairness and accountability; and the opportunity to invest financially. While some would like to 'go back home', others prefer to contribute by joining home town associations and sending remittances.

After celebrating –rebirth of a nation

After the celebration, enhanced by a few drinks, nuff gyaff, soor and tantalyzin' wid dem hometown boys; some 'tahk name' wid de gyrls; partying, eating wild meat and reminiscing. After the Awards and assessing the journey from 'BG' to 'GT', and pontificating about what the government 'should' and 'shouldn't' do. After the surprises, criticisms, disappointments, observed accomplishments and frustrations, singing of praises and giving thanks. After walking in li'l mud and getting drenched by a good Guyanese rain, let the BRIDGIN' continue for the future of our country. The Diaspora went 'home' to help raise the Golden Arrowhead again, which hopefully signaled the 'rebirth' of a nation.

Safe travels to the revelers at home and abroad!



GOLDEN JUBILEE COMMENTS

“I am having a great time in Guyana attending the different events, but I don’t like being called a ‘foreigner’. This is my homeland and it’s where I was born. I am not a stranger. I saw a lot of my friends I hadn’t seen in years. This is a momentous occasion”

Guyanese visitor from Canada.

“I watched the streaming of the flag raising ceremony. I really like the soldiers marching in their formation and routine performance. It reminded me of ‘the good ole days’ and made me feel proud to be a Guyanese”

Ann Lynch-Zephyr (Brooklyn, New York).

“I think that the mere cleaning up of the city has gone a very long way in earning plaudits for the government. The President’s image as an honest and upright man stands out. The mood is Nostalgic.”

M. Parris (Georgetown, Guyana)



NIGHT OF THE LEGENDS

Gail Nunes

Supported by accomplished musicians, their accompaniment recreated the sounds just like we remembered. Love flowed as we smiled and chatted with folks we would probably never see again. This is what Night of the Legends did for us.

Joy and happiness is the simplest description of the large audience present that night. They crooned, they swayed, they sang and waved, and some even waltzed in true Guyanese three-step fashion.

Among the legends representing were Sammy Baksh, Rita Forrester, Ivor Lynch, Gordon Bevaun, Fluff Miller, Hilton Hemerding whose O Guyana could not have been more appropriate.

(I was embarrassed to realize that unlike the majority, I only knew the refrain). A frail but determined Johnny Braff served up his signature, It burns inside. Aubrey Mann treated us to some Champagne and Wine. Other performers included Winston Caesar, The Mighty Rebel, the iconic Yoruba Singers, Keith Waithe and the Macusi Players, Terry Gajraj, our Guyana Baboo, and Celia Samaroo. Tributes were paid in song to the late Aubrey Cummings and Pamela Maynard.

The crowning moment at the end of the show was a rousing performance by Dave Martins and the inimitable Tradewinds who upped the tempo and brought the audience to its feet for a grand finale. From the ever-hilarious Honeymooning Couple to the powerful Is We Own, it was touchdown time. The unofficial Guyana anthem, Not a blade o' grass brought thunderous applause and a fitting end to the show.

This was a truly memorable event, one where we as Guyanese recognized and acknowledged those to whom commitment to our national pride was no small matter. Legends, we salute you. Guyanese, let us not forget. Is we own!

Being in Guyana for the Jubilee celebration was euphoria in its truest form. Being in Guyana for an evening of music that evoked sweet or bittersweet memories was the metaphorical icing on the cake. The combination of these emotions presented itself to us at the Night of the Legends at the National Stadium on the 21st of May.

Guyanese, known to the world as lovers of oldies were treated to a night of "legendary" music where songs remembered or forgotten were delivered to an appreciative audience.

Voices might have rusted just slightly. Life's rigours might have been visible on some faces, but who cared. Our Legends delivered one hundred percent and we shouted our appreciation.

I had a very exciting, yet very painful experience, just about a month ago.

On May 11, 2016, a theatrical production called, "ONE!" was held at the National Cultural Centre, under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Cohesion. Russel Landcaster produced and directed the show, and honoured me by asking me to compose the sound-track.

I was particularly excited because, one, there would be original music; two, Mr. Landcaster and I are on the same page, as far as producing music that is distinctly Guyanese is concerned, and; three, the music would be played LIVE! These three conditions, to my knowledge had not simultaneously existed in Guyana in quite a while. There would be two violins (one violinist was pregnant), a flute, a steel pan, two keyboards, electric bass, electric guitar and, Indian and African drummers.

GUYANA NEEDS MORE LITERATE MUSICIANS

Derry Etkins

Over a six-week period, I was back and forth with Russel, fine tuning ideas and concepts, and later, with Mrs. Marilyn Dewar, who served as music contractor and, along with Andrea Mentore, rehearsal co-ordinator. I would be sending charts and MP3 audio files to Marilyn, so that the musicians in the ensemble could familiarise themselves with the music, so that the dancers could hold preliminary rehearsals.

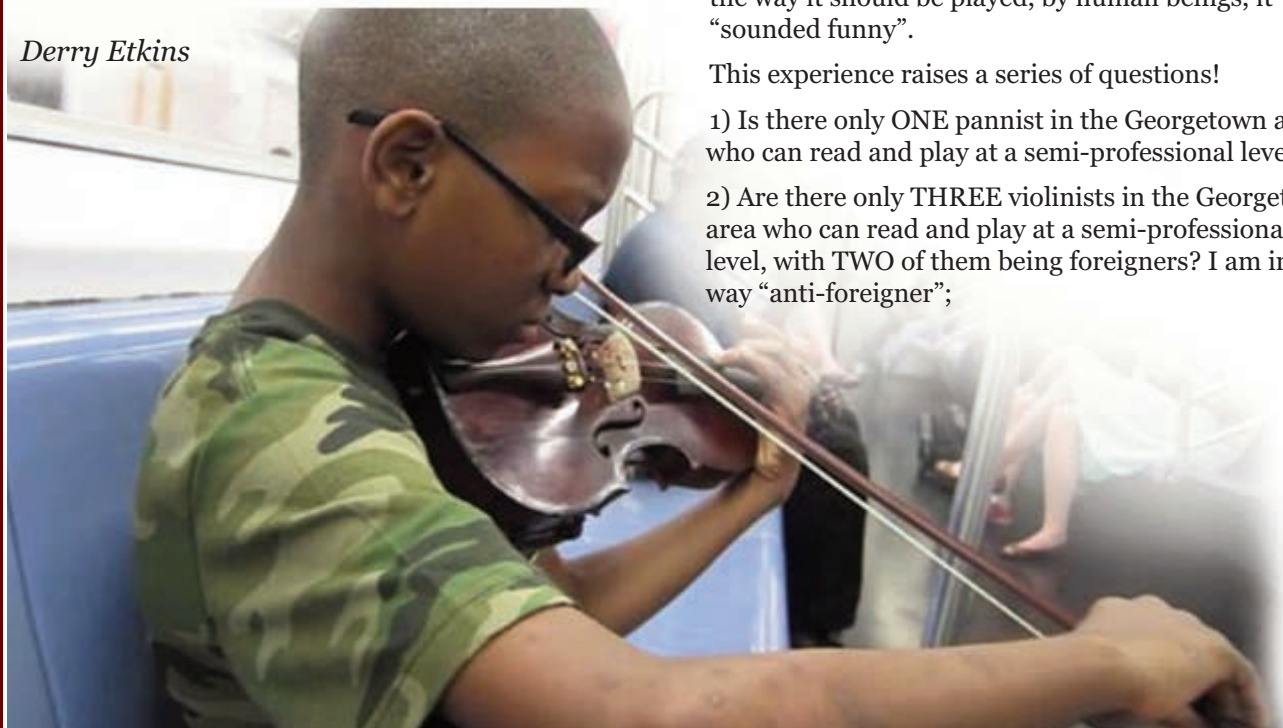
One week before show-time, we found out that the pregnant violinist was expecting her baby during the week of the show. That same week, the other violinist decided, that she was no longer available. Further, it turned out, that the flautist could not read music, contrary to his earlier claims. Marilyn contacted a third violinist who had not been actively playing or practicing for quite some time, and who agreed to help the situation.

On the night of the first official rehearsal, the bassist had an engagement with his band, so he could not attend. With the flautist missing, we had to have three keyboards, with Marilyn playing the flute parts on one keyboard and, the other two keyboardists alternating between second violin, cello pan and the bass line. The drummers were present. "Where was the cello pan?" you ask. The pannist could not attend any rehearsals because of his job commitments; neither did he have the opportunity to familiarize himself with his charts, so he could only play some of the notes required of him.

The dancers opted to dance to the recorded tracks because, on hearing the music played for the first time, the way it should be played, by human beings, it "sounded funny".

This experience raises a series of questions!

- 1) Is there only ONE pannist in the Georgetown area who can read and play at a semi-professional level?
- 2) Are there only THREE violinists in the Georgetown area who can read and play at a semi-professional level, with TWO of them being foreigners? I am in no way "anti-foreigner";



it's just, that by sad coincidence, one of the violinists is Guyanese by marriage, and, the other is "honorary Guyanese" because she lives and works in Guyana. This reflects very badly on Guyana!

3) Is there only ONE electric bassist in the Georgetown area capable of reading and playing at a semi-professional level?

In four jurisdictions that I know of, the bassist would have sent a replacement to cover the rehearsal while he did the engagement with his band and, that replacement would have been literate, and thus would have fit in perfectly.

In two jurisdictions that I know of, the pianist would have recommended one of several available literate pianists, while he honoured his job commitments.

Literate violinists, flautists and drummers are bountiful in three jurisdictions that I know of, and would be readily available.

The dancers in this production explained, that they have not had much experience working with live musicians, hence their discomfort on hearing the music played live. This needs to be corrected!

Guyana needs to put the necessary systems in place to afford our music practitioners the opportunity to acquire the necessary literacy skills to match their technical ability. There is no shortage of musical talent in Guyana, but talent alone will not take us where we can and need to go.

There are three things that we need:-

EDUCATION! EDUCATION! EDUCATION!

Our schools, from Nursery to Secondary, need structured Music Education programmes. To facilitate that, our Teacher Training College needs to produce trained specialist Music Teachers to deliver these programmes. Our post-secondary Institute For The Creative Arts needs to be equipped and staffed to cater to the needs of the talented people who are above school age.

Apart from the immediate Cultural benefits, Guyana is ignoring the potential for an entire industry; one that will contribute to the growth of the economy, the reduction of crime, the reduction of un-employment, and the enhancement of our Tourism product, to name a few areas.

I urge our movers and shakers to take this situation seriously. This could be Guyana's last opportunity to get it right, and regain her place among the Cultural and economic leaders of the region.

CAN WE DO IT? YES WE CAN!





POEM

TO THE GUYANESE IN GUYANA BORN AFTER 26 MAY 1966

On Independence morn
Before you were born
I resolved to stay
Down Guyana way
The rest of my life
Despite all the strife
Of poor versus rich
And leaders that switch
Of ethnic distrust
And separation lust
I did not see vice
But cultural spice
And much verse and song
That said "You belong"
So I stuck around
And guess what I found
Challenging projects
Building big objects
And beautiful faces
Which said "Forget races"
So let's celebrate
We did not migrate!

Joe Holder





CELEBRATE GUYANA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE: STRUGGLES. STRENGTHS: THE FIRST TIMEHRI FILM FESTIVAL IN GUYANA

Vidyaratha Kissoon

(The first Timehri Film Festival was held at Moray House Trust, in Georgetown from 18 to 20 May, 2016. Admission was free.

A grandmother in Martinique prepares for the departure of her grandson to France in the film *Ti Coq*. A grandmother in Guyana prepares for the departure of her grandson to USA in the *Seawall*. A 10 year old challenges his teacher and class about not wanting to be a vet or a doctor when he grows up. A Jamaican man serving time in prison cries after singing at a farewell function for a prison superintendent. Derek Walcott cries after reading a poem dedicated to his late mother. He laments the conversion of the Pitons to tourism resort properties and marvels at Ramleela. These stories and more were told in documentaries and fiction films during the first Timehri Film Festival.

...it's a fantastic vision and a wonderful platform for Guyanese filmmakers, producers and other creatives."

Carinya Sharples

The Timehri Film Festival (TFF) was conceived by the Caribbean Film Academy (<http://www.caribbeanfilm.org>) and the Rewind and Come Again (RACA) blog (<http://http://rewindandcomeagain.com/>). The organising team included Romola Lucas, Director and Justen Blaize from the Caribbean Film Academy, and Alysia Christiani who manages the Rewind and Come Again (RACA) blog. The team members are part of the diaspora of Guyana and the Caribbean in the United States. There was support from SASOD in Guyana, and a US based humanitarian NGO – Blossoms of Guyana. They were able to use a crowdfunding campaign to raise the resources to host the festival.

The Caribbean Film Academy was established in 2012 by a group of film enthusiasts who wanted to promote Caribbean films and support Caribbean film making.

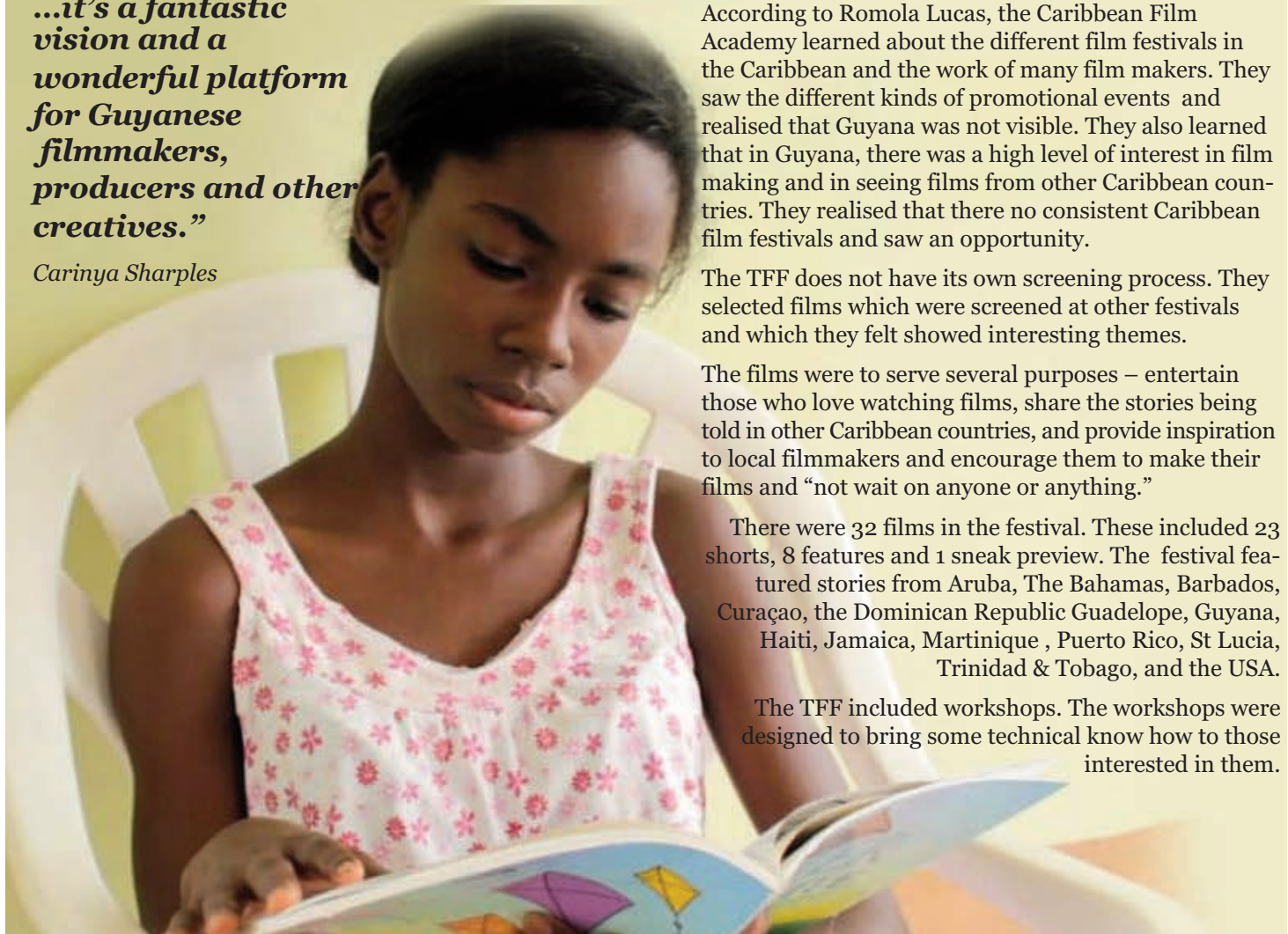
According to Romola Lucas, the Caribbean Film Academy learned about the different film festivals in the Caribbean and the work of many film makers. They saw the different kinds of promotional events and realised that Guyana was not visible. They also learned that in Guyana, there was a high level of interest in film making and in seeing films from other Caribbean countries. They realised that there no consistent Caribbean film festivals and saw an opportunity.

The TFF does not have its own screening process. They selected films which were screened at other festivals and which they felt showed interesting themes.

The films were to serve several purposes – entertain those who love watching films, share the stories being told in other Caribbean countries, and provide inspiration to local filmmakers and encourage them to make their films and “not wait on anyone or anything.”

There were 32 films in the festival. These included 23 shorts, 8 features and 1 sneak preview. The festival featured stories from Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic Guadelope, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Puerto Rico, St Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago, and the USA.

The TFF included workshops. The workshops were designed to bring some technical know how to those interested in them.





OUR PEOPLE, OUR CULTURE, OUR HISTORY: CELEBRATING GUYANA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE

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The festival was packed over three days during the busy May 2016 jubilee events. There were screenings during the day and the evening. The attendance fluctuated. According to Romola Lucas,

“People enjoyed seeing the films and learning about what is going on in the wider Caribbean in terms of storytelling. People marvelled at how connected they felt to the stories and characters they saw in the films. They loved the variety and quality of the films.”

There was no intentional theme except to represent the Caribbean. There were films by film makers resident in the Caribbean which used Caribbean locations and stories. There were films which were made by film makers from one Caribbean country and whose films were set in another country.

The films labelled with country Guyana were all short films – ‘The Seawall’ by Mason Richards, ‘Antiman’ by Gavin Ramotar, ‘Rebecca’s Story’ from the Witness Project, ‘Standing’ by Kojo McPherson, the SASOD film about its film festival ‘Painting the Spectrum : A Commemorative Documentary’ and the film Love Below by Chelsea Odufu of Guyanese and Nigerian heritage.

There was a sneak preview of ‘A Bitter Lime’ which used Guyana as a location for the story – the man in the story was looking for a place where no one else had visited.

The films were poignant in how they dealt with Caribbean issues. There were common experiences across different countries. Migration stories were told in different ways. There was the quiet, emotional loss of family/break up in the stories about children and their grandmothers in Ti Coq and The Seawall. There was the brutality of the yolas, the boats between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico in Yolanda. The stories in the documentary ‘My Father’s Land’ about Haitians in The Bahamas were reflected in the experiences of the young Guyanese woman surviving in Barbados in the fiction-almost-true ‘Diaries of an Immigrant’.

A few of the films featured children as central characters. Aurora is a film about a girl who is abandoned by her family and who finds another family. Rain is a film about a girl moving to live with her mother who is a drug addict. El Cast is about a boy who has to find a lost package.

The films also reflected Caribbean culture. Papa Machete lovingly tells the story of Avril Alfred, one of the masters of tire machèt, the martial art created by enslaved Haitians to fight Napoleon’s armies. The soucyant/ ol Higue is brought to life in The Skin.

Martial arts are imagined in Sensei Redenshon. Poetry is an Island shows poet, playwright, painter and Nobel prize winner Derek Walcott in St Lucia.

The TFF received generally positive feedback. There were recommendations to change the times of screening to after working hours. People suggested adding new venues, out of Georgetown, and including outdoor venues and schools. There were suggestions to screen Songs of Redemption in the prisons. Songs of Redemption is about a rehabilitation project in a Jamaican prison. The organisers hope to add more Guyanese films as the films become available. They recognised that they have to do more work in publicising the festival – according to Romola Lucas “it seemed to distress a lot of people in attendance, that more people were not there to enjoy what they were enjoying”

Journalist Carinya Sharples wrote on her blog (<https://hummingofthebird.wordpress.com/2016/05/22/highlights-of-the-first-timehri-film-festival/>) that despite the imperfections, “...it’s a fantastic vision and a wonderful platform for Guyanese filmmakers, producers and other creatives.”

The TFF hopes to get financial support from a few local businesses in Guyana and media support, so they can reach out to more people.

Some of the films from the festival, and other films are available to watch on Studio Anansi TV at <http://studioanansi.tv/>

The Timehri Film Festival is going to be an interesting event in the annual calendar in Guyana.

THE WOMEN OF MOUNT AYANGANA

*Sherah Alleyne
The Guyana Chronicle*

The Golden Arrowhead being hoisted at the top of Mount Ayanganna as an annual feature dating back to 1966 when a team headed by the Late Mr. Adrian Thompson, and including members of the Guyana Defence Force and Amerindian Guides planted the National Flag on the summit of Mount Ayanganna.

Each year, on the eve of Guyana's Republic Anniversary soldiers would brave the many flowing rivers, mountainous terrain and harsh weather conditions to hoist the Golden Arrowhead at an altitude of 6,700 atop Mount Ayanganna. One notable feature, however, is that over the years female soldiers have taking up the challenge to overcome the crest of Mount Ayanganna. The Women's Army Corps made history when the first female conquered the peak in 1992 and again when an all-female patrol climbed the mountain in 2005 and 2009.



This year, a team ventured to the top of the mountain to raise the flag for Guyana's 50th Independence anniversary and that team included Lance Corporal Shannon Ross –Cox, the only female in the contingent. Guyana Chronicle recently had the opportunity to meet the first woman soldier to climb to the top of Ayanagana for the event, and the most recent female soldier to do so, namely, Ross-Cox. Staff Sergeant (ret'd) Beverley Somerset made history when she was recorded as the first female climbed the mountain 24-years ago. Her accomplishment paved the way for other females to take on the challenge of conquering Mount Ayanganna.

Somerset said that she requested to climb the mountain to send a strong message to the male soldiers. This was after she was denied the opportunity to complete the para-trooping course. The patrol left Timehri on February 8, 1992 for Imbaimadai with eleven male soldiers including two Officers – Captain Lee and Second Lieutenant Jackson, along with Somerset. When she left the airport, she was very excited. She stated that she undertook vigorous training before the trip so she was physically fit. They went through the Mazaruni River to Chi Chi Falls in Region 8 (Potaro –Siparuni), which is about 350 feet high. They then headed to the Chinoweng which took them about four hours. On arrival at the village, the villagers were curious as to why she was on the expedition, since they were accustomed to seeing only men. Some of them even encouraged her not to go, as they explained to her the challenge she would have face when climbing to the summit. But Somerset used their discouragement as motivation to complete the patrol. Somerset explained that out of the twelve persons who were on the patrol, only six of them made it to the summit.

They had to cover difficult terrain and contend with harsh weather conditions at the same time, even going through a rocky tunnel where they were guided by each other's footsteps. But as they reached the summit, it was what Somerset described as savannah. She stated that

the view from the summit was amazing. "There is a very large rock on the summit, it is clean without mass, and it is very shiny." When they reached the peak, she felt that she had accomplished that mission she had set out to do; indeed she had. When asked if she would do it again she said "I will because I have the belly."

The Women's Army Corps made history again when Lance Corporal Shannon Ross –Cox (the Medic) was the lone female who participated in Operation Arrowhead after successfully completing the mission of raise the Golden Arrowhead on the summit of Mount Ayanganna, in observance of Guyana's 50th Anniversary of Independence.

The members of the Guyana Defence Force patrol was headed by Lieutenant Wavon Samuels, and included Lance Corporals Milton Isaacs, Teusimar Peters and Privates Kenroy Samuels, Chavez George, Colliin Hinds and Winston Williams. Ross- Cox described the experience as a wonderful one. She stated that while the walks were long and the climbing was rough, she was prepared for it. Unlike Somerset, who had to cover an additional set of walking from for Imbaimadai, Ross- Cox and the team were dropped off at Chi Chi and they walked to get their guide at Chinoweng, who took them to the mountain foot.

She stated that the climb was most challenging of the expedition; she compared the climb an assault course, where she was under and over trees among other obstacles. When she reached the peak, the team said the Army creed, sung the song of the Republic and said the National Pledge and planted the flag. Ross-Cox was satisfied that the task was accomplished. After all, she had the responsibility of bearing the flag through the journey and that has imbued in her a sense of deep pride. Indeed, she swore to put country first, and by accomplishing this feat, she has surely demonstrated her loyalty to country.





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