

Guyana Cultural Association of New York Inc. on-line Magazine

GUYANA FOLK

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Issue
11

And Culture

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH GCA IN GUYANA

MASQUERADE JAMBOREE

Masquerade Lives!
DECEMBER
19 - 21, 2016

8 BIG BANDS FOR
FLOUNCE OFF!

PLAISANCE COMMUNITY
GROUND

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The month of November can be regarded as a mixed bag of anticipation, excitement, or for some, distress or sadness as the end of the year approaches. With summer taking to her heels and sprinting away, we are confronted with the early darkness characteristic of the season. Add to the mixed bag the nail-biting anxiety earlier this month of an election whose uniqueness captured the attention of the entire world. Is it any wonder therefore that we look forward to the end of year celebrations and the preparations involved, with the enthusiastic support of families and close friends. Not wishing to wait, some brightly lit homes have already begun to dot our streets, the owners with perhaps a resolve to boost our spirits. The frenzy of holiday shopping looms large, and stores have begun to entice us with their holiday displays and promises of upcoming sales.

While many shared the disappointment of the failed historical election of a woman President, we nevertheless pour accolades on Guyana's leading ladies. We congratulate Roxanne Persaud who retained her position as State Senator of District 19, New York. We acknowledge and support Consul-General Barbara Atherly who "hit the ground running" with effective Town Hall Meetings in New York and New Jersey.

We remain committed to the education and enlightenment of the community at large about news and events within the diaspora. High on our list is the long-anticipated culmination of "Masquerade Lives". Here is a celebration that should not be missed, a revival of a culture that faced near-extinction. We salute the work of many whose constant commitment enabled its fruition. For those of you planning to spend Christmas at home, the Masquerade Jubilee should not be missed. Read about the unfolding of this event as chronicled by Dr. Cambridge.

Included this month is the introduction of the first Coconut Festival in Guyana. An effigy of Lady Coco as a symbol of the coconut enterprise stands tall at the entrance to the Arthur Chung Convention Center in Liliendaal. The article on Jonestown reminds us of the important role of the Diaspora in helping to sustain healthy, productive and safe communities.

In dedication to the memory of GCA's Maurice (Mo) Braithwaite, the Guyana Arts and Cultural Center was presented with body microphones, an audio mixer, and amplifier equipment by Derrick John Jeffrey who was his childhood friend, and is an ardent supporter of the Arts. We appreciate this phenomenal gesture that will further enhance the growth of GACC's theater and stage production.

Friends, as we celebrate Thanksgiving, let us not forget the many who are less fortunate. Better still, let us contrive to provide continuous support beyond the holidays, to one person or organization in need.
 Happy Holidays!

Gail A. Nunes
 November Editor



A report on a commitment

Vibert C. Cambridge, A.A., Ph.D.

Mobile mural prepared by students of the E. R. Burrowes School of Art students from Masquerade Lives symposium, December 2014 at Umana Yana (now on display on the upper floor National Cultural Center, Guyana).

Photograph by Vibert Cambridge

The Jubilee Year Christmas is shaping up to be a special season. On Sunday, December 18, the **Festival of Carols and Lessons** will be presented at D'Urban Park. According to Dr. Seeta Shah Roat, this multi-media production will "involve the National Drama Company, National School of Music, National School of Dance, National Drama Company, five youth groups from different churches, Woodside Choir, Primary Schools Choirs, Secondary Schools Choirs, National Steel Orchestra, Police Band, Acapela singers, large screen projections, and masquerade bands."

The Festival of Carols and Readings has the status of a national event. It is a production that will showcase Guyana's "best voices singing traditional carols some with new twists."

Between December 19th and 21st there will also be several other events that will also contribute to the Jubilee Year Christmas season. These events are organized under the theme **Masquerade Jamboree** and are connected to the masquerade revitalization initiative launched by the Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc. (GCA) and the Department of Culture four years ago. The events will include:

- An eight-band masque-parade,
- Opening of the masquerade season,
- National Flounce Off,
- A spoken word event celebrating masquerade language,
- a mini-film and video festival on the Learning Channel, and
- the launch of Masquerade: My First Book—an early-childhood activity book.

Also anticipated is the **Concert for Puttagee**—a benefit for Rudolph "Putagee" Vivieros—a legendary exponent of the folk art. "**Puttagee**" is probably the last of Guyana's great masquerade flute men. The concert will pay tribute to "Putagee" and showcase new masquerade-inspired compositions and innovative arrangements by Derry Etkins.

Masquerade Jamboree represents another important moment in the revitalization of masquerade—a distinctive Guyanese folk art. This article is to provide background to the revitalization initiative and seek your ongoing support.

Background

Since 2002, the Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc., has been organizing an annual symposium. The symposium is one of the signature events of the annual Folk Festival season held in Brooklyn, New York. The symposium provides a space for reflection and action. Over the years these symposia have focused on many topics related to the Guyanese experience: music, literature, dance, diversity, biography, and identity.

In 2008, the annual symposium was held in Georgetown, Guyana. The theme for that symposium was **Creole Mehcheh Mehcheh" Celebrating Mac: Folk, Identity, and National Cohesiveness**. The symposium focused attention on Wordsworth McAndrew and his contributions to the fashioning of Guyanese identity in the post-independence era. For "Mac," Guyana's folk heritage was a rich, reservoir of wisdom, knowledge, and creativity that was fashioned from the long Guyanese experience.

For McAndrew, this communally owned reservoir offered resources for developing the interethnic trust so needed to build a just and caring society. McAndrew's work emphasized collection, documentation, and sharing (broadcasting and publishing). This aspect of his work directed the symposium's attention to issues of preservation, and ongoing documentation of Guyana folk heritage.

Masquerade Lives!

GCA's 10th annual symposium was held in Guyana in December 2012. The focus was on a distinctive Guyanese folk art form—Masquerade. This decision was influenced by Margaret Lawrence's 2011 short film Tradition which focused a young man's desire to dance masquerade despite family and societal objections.

The 5-day event was held in December (Guyana's Masquerade season) and was intended to raise awareness about the precarious state of an essential Guyanese folk art. The Call for Participation issued in June 2012, noted that masquerade has been in decline and for many; the few masquerade bands that take to the streets during the Christmas masquerade season are considered and treated as nuisances.

The mission of the 10th annual symposium was to collaborate with Guyana's Ministry of Culture and other Guyanese institutions to create a space for public education, the examination of the deep heritage associated with Guyana's masquerade traditions, especially its origins, history, international connections, and aesthetic dimensions--(costume, dance, music, craft, and performance). The symposium also aspired to an action plan—a strategy for the revitalization of the tradition.

The 2012 symposium featured an international conference, the unveiling of public art projects, premiering of music inspired by the masquerade heritage, a film and video festival, and an innovation—The Flounce Off. The international conference was held at the Umana Yana. The Masquerade mural was unveiled at in the compound of the National Museum, Water Street. The inaugural Flounce Off took place at the Community Center Ground, Victoria Village, East Coast Demerara.

- Among the "findings" of the 2012 symposium were the following:
- There were no active masquerade bands in Berbice.
 - Pervasive concerns about the quality of design and manufacture of costumes.



Masquerade Mural, National Library. Unveiled, December 2012.

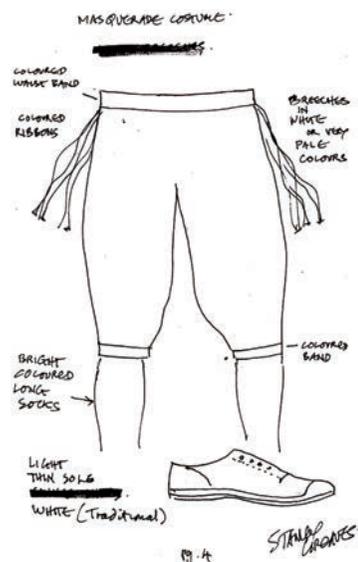
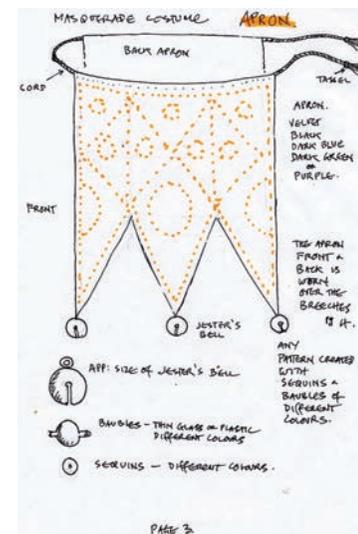
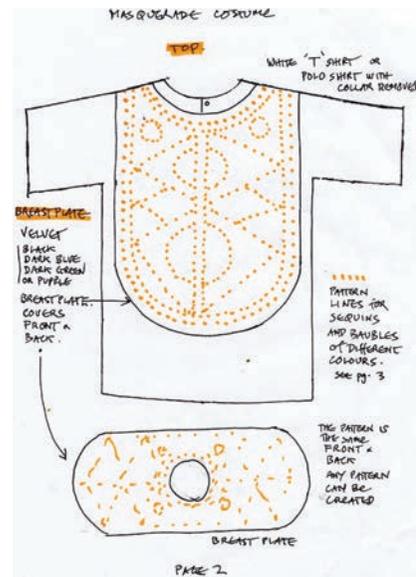
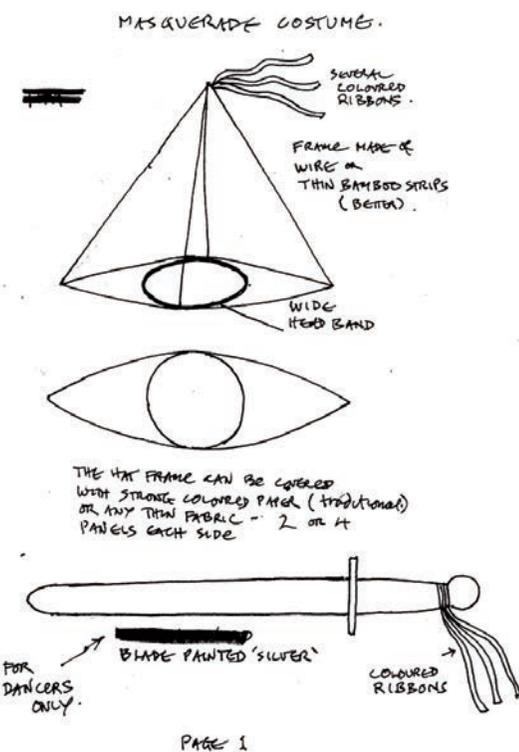


From Masquerade Flounce Off, Victoria, East Coast Demerara, December 2012. Rudolph "Puttagee" Vivieros on Penny Whistle. Photograph by Vibert Cambridge



Masquerade Lives! Bam Bam Sally at Flounce Off, Victoria, December 2012. Photograph by Vibert Cambridge

- Concerns about the state of masquerade music. Among the problems were the shortage of goat skins for drums and the rapidly declining number of flute men. In 2008, only two were identified—Puttagee and Three Foot.
- Innovation. Boysie Sage's protégée, Julio Thijs' commitment to taking stilt dancing and stilt technology to "another level."
- Cultural exchange. Contemporary masquerade practice suggested influential interethnic interactions and exchange dynamics were in progress. This dynamic was evident in music, costumes, dance movements, and performance venues. The symposium also generated a 2012-2016 action plan. The following were identified as elements in that plan:
 - "Mapping" of the geography of masquerade bands in Guyana;
 - Focusing attention and mobilizing help to areas perceived to be in crucial need;
 - Identifying Guyana's masquerade's global, regional, and national connections; and
 - Encouraging the study and celebration of masquerade's musical, literary, design aesthetics, and its history.
- Conduct biennial reviews starting in 2014.



Four templates for masquerade costumes by Stanley Greaves



Stanley Greaves at Masquerade costume design workshop, December 2014.
Photo by Vibert Cambridge

The rapporteur's report, prepared by Dr, Michael Scott, now Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Guyana is a valuable record of the symposium.

Masquerade Lives! Practicum

Now following the biennial schedule, a second masquerade focused symposium was held in Georgetown in 2014—again near the December masquerade season. This symposium featured an international teleconference and two week-long practical workshops. The two workshops were in response to the concerns about costume design and music. The costume design workshop was held at the E. R. Burrowes School of Art and the music workshop was held at the National School of Music. Among the participants in the international teleconference were the Director of Culture and senior officials from the National Archives, National Museum, National Cultural Center, E.R. Burrowes School of Art, National School of Drama and the Theater Arts, National School of Dance, and The Learning Channel. New York-based participants joined via Skype.

The 2014 symposium reviewed actions taken since 2012 and made plans for the 2016 symposium. It was agreed that the December 2016 symposium would be titled Masquerade Jamboree. Among the declared objectives:

- To contribute to enjoyment of the Guyanese Christmas heritage during the Golden Anniversary;
- To showcase the state of the masquerade folk art;
- To showcase contemporary creativity inspired by

Guyana's masquerade heritage

- To demonstrate masquerade's global, regional, and local connections;
- To support the development of heritage tourism as Guyanese product.

A quick chronology ...

By the 2014 symposium, there was evidence of work done by the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sport and other stakeholders to support the preservation and revitalization of masquerade as envisioned in 2012. For example,

- Director, National School of Dance, Linda Griffith had produced, with UNESCO's support *Movements of the Masquerade Dance*--a DVD documenting the steps of Guyana's masquerade.
- Linda Griffith and Andrea Mentore (National School of Music) through the organizing of regular Flounce Offs had "mapped" the distribution of masquerade troupes in Guyana. [No active bands in Berbice. Essequibo may have more active bands than any other region in Guyana—probably a function of the Bad Cow festivals sponsored by the Alphonsos. Demerara's "hot spots" are the East Coast (Victoria, Belfield, Golden Grove), Linden, and West Demerara]
- Masquerade movements were evident in the repertoire of dances presented at "high" national moments, such as the Flag Raising Ceremony.
- There are national and regional masquerade competitions during Mashramani.



From Masquerade costume workshop, December 2014.
Photo by Vibert Cambridge.



From Masquerade costume workshop, December 2014.
Photo by Vibert Cambridge.



From Masquerade costume workshop, December 2014.
Photo by Vibert Cambridge.



High school student participant, Masquerade music workshop, December 2014.



From Masquerade music workshop, December 2014. Rudolph "Puttagee" Vivieros on flute and to his right, Teacher Raghu on dhantal.
Photograph by Vibert Cambridge.

- Masquerade elements were evident in Guyanese new music. Derry Elkins' composition *Masquerade Sweet Suite*, premiered during the 2012 *Masquerade Lives* symposium, launched an initiative—exploring masquerade music as a “groove” to inspire contemporary Guyanese musical creativity. By 2014, there was evidence of this in the work of Ray Seales, Keith Waithe, Charmaine Blackman, and Bonny Alves, among others.
- Cultural Exchange. There was evidence of the presence of the masquerade bands in villages such as Enmore—a village of predominantly Indian heritage. In addition, there was evidence of dance innovations by young flat foot flouncers; increasing interethnic musical exchange and musical innovation, and growing private sector support, as seen in events held at venues such as the Sidewalk Café and Jerries' Late Night.
- In New York, GCA's summer heritage workshops

were featuring masquerade in its dance curriculum since 2012. This competence was showcased in the *Folk Feet in the Street* program sponsored by the Brooklyn Arts Council.

- Dr. Paloma Mohamed circulates for review her pioneering article, *Toasts, Boasts, and Memory: A Preliminary Look at the Lyric Traditions of Guyanese Masquerade*.
- Guyanese Masquerade ensemble attends Guyana Folk Festival in New York, September 2015
- In May 2016, Julio Thijs, presented the Golden Jaguar which led the Guyana National Service contingent during the Jubilee Day Mashramani costumed bands and float parade. Thijs was demonstrating his commitment to take masquerade stilt dance and stilt technology to “another level.”



Left to Right Boysie Sage, Julio Thijs, Richard Gomes at Boys' Scouts Jamboree, 1969.
Photo courtesy of Julio Thijs.



Boysie Sage International All Stars, Calgary, Canada. Featuring the Boysie Sage Mk7 stilts which are now in use in several countries around the world including Guyana, Canada, USA and Australia.



Julio Thijs, Golden Jubilee Celebrations, May 2016



Guyana Masquerade Ensemble at Guyana Folk Festival, Brooklyn, New York, September 2015

COME OUT & ENJOY THE Masquerade Jamboree 2016

As mentioned at the start of this article, the Masquerade Jamboree season will include:

- An eight-band masquerade-parade,
- Opening of the masquerade season,
- National Flounce Off,
- A spoken word event celebrating masquerade language,
- a mini-film and video festival on the Learning Channel, and
- the launch of Masquerade: My First Book—an early-childhood activity book.

What follows are the currently available details.

This information is subject to change:

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Participating Bands

1. Torch (Region # 10: Upper Demerara-Upper Berbice)
2. Showtime (Region # 10: Upper Demerara-Upper Berbice)
3. Ann's Grove Warriors (Region # 4: Demerara-Mahaica)
4. Victoria Renegades (Region # 4: Demerara-Mahaica)
5. Fyah in de Land (Region # 4: Demerara-Mahaica)
6. Golden Arrowhead (Region # 3: Essequibo Islands—West Demerara)
7. Fire Red (Region #2: Pomeroon-Supenaam)
8. Village Ram (Region #2: Pomeroon-Supenaam)

*Julio Thijs and the Brooklyn Jumbies, Guyana Folk Festival, Brooklyn, New York, September 2015.
Photo by Vibert Cambridge.*



OPENING OF JAMBOREE - December at the Umana Yana at 14:00hrs,

FLOUNCE OFF – 16:00hrs – Plaisance Community Ground
(a street parade in Plaisance beginning from Puttagee's home to the ground where bands will compete with each other. Prizes for the top three bands).

CHANT- Wednesday 20th Dec.17:00hrs at the Umana Yana -
A focus on masquerade language – a spoken word event,

READINGS – Thursday 21st 17:00hrs
- A child-centered event (nursery to 6) surrounding the launching of
Masquerade: My First Book—an early childhood activity book
developed by Dr. Juliet Emanuel.
Subject to modification.

The masquerade revitalization partnership is demonstrating an example of diaspora engagement. There are lessons learned, and those still to be learned, may have applicability to other sectors of Guyanese cultural life. In meantime, have a wonderful Christmas and please support and encourage a masquerade band during this Jubilee Christmas season.

This was an update date on a commitment.

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Website: www.guyfolkfest.org Tel: 800 774 5762 or 718 209 5207

WE WISH YOU ALL A JOYOUS HOLIDAY SEASON



The Executive and Members of **The Queen's College of Guyana Alumni Association (NY), Inc.** are pleased to announce this year's distinguished group of honorees and members who will be recognized at our



25th Anniversary Gala

On **Saturday, November 26, 2016**
7:00 P.M. to 12:00 MIDNIGHT



Antun's Banquet Hall
96-43 Springfield Blvd, Queens Village, NY 11429

Honorees:

Dr. Riyad Insanally
(Keynote Speaker)
Ambassador of
The Co-operative Republic of
Guyana to the United States



Ms. Roxanne Reece
Managing Director
Wings Aviation and Fly Jamaica Airlines

Mr. Stanley Ming
Chief Executive Officer
Ming's Products & Services, Ltd (Guyana)

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President, QCAANY |
| Mr. Aubrey Smith
Member, QCAANY | |



To purchase tickets, please visit us at
<http://qcguyanaalumny.org/formal-ball>

IN MEMORY OF HIS DEAR FRIEND MAURICE BRAITHWAITE

PLAYWRIGHT DERRICK JEFFREY DONATES AUDIO EQUIPMENT TO GUYANA ARTS & CULTURAL CENTER

Tangerine Clarke

Photos courtesy of Tangerin Clarke



Playwright Derrick Jeffrey (center) hands over equipment to GCA. L to R: Penny Bascom, Maurice Blenman, Derrick Jeffrey, Claire G and Rose Braithwaite



Photograph courtesy of Tangerin Clarke

The Guyana Cultural Association, NY, organizers of the Annual Folk Festival will now produce quality stage plays and dinner theater events, thanks to state-of-the-art audio equipment donated by legendary playwright and journalist, Derrick John Jeffery, who traveled from Luk Lam Ka, Thailand to make the presentation on Oct. 15.

Jeffery, a Guyanese-born resident of Southeast Asia for the last 19 years, and patron of the arts, presented six body microphones, one audio mixer, and six amplifiers among other equipment, to Cultural Director Claire Ann Goring at the Guyana Arts and Cultural Center, in St. Stephens Church Annex, in Brooklyn.

The author of *“East River”* — a thrilling fictional novel about murder, corruption and money laundering within the walls of the United Nations, where he worked for some 30 years — Jeffrey said the equipment was promised to his late childhood friend, Maurice “Mo” Braithwaite to help the performing arts festival where “Mo” was set designer, playwright and director.

“I felt that since I could not be in America to mourn my friend and to attend his funeral and say something nice about him, I thought this is a great way to celebrate his memory,” said Jeffrey, who recalled the great times he and his fellow artist buddy shared together.

Jeffrey, winner of the Cheddi Jagan Gold Medal for the Play, Standpipe, writer of Demerara short stories, and poem Conversation Tree, said the equipment would greatly assist in the performance, and the sound reproduction of the performer. This he added would separate the sound, tone, and volume to enhance the stage presentation.

Mo, who passed away three years ago, was the assistant cultural director of GCA. He was passionate about

building sets and taking care of the overall events of the festival.

His widow Rosemary Braithwaite who was on hand for the presentation called him a talented person.

“It is absolutely wonderful of Derrick to remember his boyhood friend, with whom he shared wonderful stories. GCA was dear to Maurice, and their work was very important to him. This donation is a good thing.”

Mrs. Braithwaite lauded Jeffrey for traveling from so far to donate the audio equipment to help the organization.

“I really value the fact that Derrick took the trouble to come from so far to donate this equipment to the GCA in Maurice’s name,” she added.

Goring said since Maurice Braithwaite’s passing, the association has not staged the performing arts festival, simply because of the emotional connection the organization had to him.

Now named, the **“Mo Braff Performing Arts Festival,”** Goring remembers the artist being the life of the performing arts festival and looks forward to the return of performances.

“His stage sets were remarkable,” said Goring, who admitted that the lack of the right equipment prevented the event from advancing. *“Sound was something he was concerned about, so this equipment will enhance our festival.”*

“Mo will be smiling now because plays will be better produced in terms of sound. We certainly appreciate the fact that Derrick will continue Mo’s dream, to make the next performance better,” said Goring.



Cultural Icons Marc Matthews and Derrick Jeffrey share a moment at the Guyana Arts and Cultural Center Group pix: GCA members and friends. Photographs courtesy of Tangerin Clarke



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ARTIST GERALD GITTENS

Recipient of the Medal of Service *“for his outstanding service in the field of art, promoting the use of indigenous material in art and as a former public servant”*.

Interview by Ms. Gentian Miller,
Head of Department, Language and Cultural Studies, University of Guyana.

Mr. Gerald Gittens, (in the first photograph) created the “Lady Coco” who stands tall at the entrance of the Arthur Chung Conference Centre, Lillendal, East Coast Demerara, Guyana. This “Lady” was the central focus and theme for the First Coconut Festival held in Guyana from October 21th to 23th 2016.

Mr. Gittens, for most persons, is an obscure artist and creator working behind the scenes. Gerry, as we call him, is a simple man who stands on no ceremony. His response on my approach for an interview was: *“I do not like too much attention”*. This may be considered ironic, for just this year, Mr. Gittens was awarded the Medal of Service, a national award *“for his outstanding service in the field of art, promoting the use of indigenous material in art and as a former public servant”*.

In Mazaruni Street, Guyhoc Park where we live, Mr. Gittens is always creating something in his space and we his neighbours would gravitate to his yard to assist or observe. It is always quite an opportunity to watch and learn about Gerry’s skills whether it is the annual Mashramani float parade or Carifesta X. Approached by Mr. Donald Sinclair, Gerald was commissioned to create and mount *“Lady Coco”* for the festival and he completed the task in three weeks. It was a reasonable time frame for him he said, since he had produced larger pieces in record time before. For Carifesta X, Mr. Gittens produced the jaguar.

For the 2004 Central American and Caribbean Body Building Championships he produced an image of a body-builder drinking from a large bottle of Tropical mist water. This image stood 28 feet tall on the lawns of the National cultural Centre and weighed 800 pounds. For *Lady Coco*, Gerry says that no paste was used. The shape holds it together. He says it could take some amount of weather but not for several years. Mr. Gittens speaks with pride of constructing the tilted head of the woman. The woman is captured throwing her head to the sky with the nut close to your lips. Getting that angle must have been difficult. Mr. Gittens notes that *“Lady Coco”* is life size, and he hopes that this work of art can be taken to various locations to sensitize people to what can be created with local, indigenous materials. His advice is not to allow *“Lady Coco”* remain outdoors.

Gentian: *What materials have you used?*

Mr. Gittens: Oil-paint and paper and it can take the weather. If you go into parliament buildings and look up, you will see a lot of filigree work done of cardboard base and they are there two hundred years now.

Interviewer: Who has done it the way you are doing it now?

Mr. Gittens: Nobody. That is the creation part. Art and creativity has nothing to do with an absolute God. Organized religion is too dogmatic. Effort is more important than prayer.

Which was your first creation?

In 1952, I won - at the age 11 or 12 – the League of Coloured People fair exhibition in the area of sculpture. And everybody say was a “fluke”. A clay model. The next year, I went back and win again and they say is child prodigy. My father walked around with the paper in his pocket, show everybody he meet. It was embarrassing for me because I never like the fore-front.

Interviewer: *At that time where were you living with your parents?*

Mr. Gittens: Kitty, my parents from Georgetown; thirteen of us children.

Was your father surprised? Where you got your talent from? So you aint do art in school?

I may not be able to trace it to parents or heritage but I adapted to it.

Yes, I went to J.E Burnham Primary and the teachers had me doing illustrations for them. Then as the art developed, I began seeking an art master, E.R. Burrowes but he did not consider me. He had an art class called Working People Art Class. There was a teacher called Ms. Golding, she, recognizing that I had won these things wanted to carry me to the next level. She carried me to Mr. Burrowes, so that I could get into the art class but I was rejected by the status quo. She make me walk down the road with this heavy winning piece in my hand and wait until the art class finish. In the class were the Savourys, the Sharples, and others.

I used to go by a church and one night they said to me, next weekend we will have an artist here, Mr. Anthrobus. I was in the centre, front seat to see him. A tall white man. His clothes . . . everything wanted pressing. Then they suspended the standing orders to accommodate Mr. Anthrobus. . . . An easel, He had his pastel and the organist started playing the tune: “Master the Tempest is Raging”, and to the flow of the music, he painted . . . four verses. At the end of the first verse, the whole congregation clapping. I approached him . . . I don’t think I was ever so impressed. I told him I wanted to be an artist but I don’t have a teacher. The man said, anytime. His name was Adrian

Anthrobus, a very humble person. Seven o’clock Saturday morning I gone. He said come in. Seven in the morn to seven at night. Eventually he gave me a special painting set of seven colours to use in the Art Examination room. I excelled, outpacing the students of Bishops High School and Queens College, outpacing Mr. Burrowes’ students.

I worked for Mashramani and earned a lot of money. Did a portrait of John Coltraine, Ophra Winfrey, Mike Tyson, Evander Hollyfield, Isaac Hayes . . . gave them the painting but kept the pictures I used.. Their portraits are life size . . . everything is life size, five feet plus.

Interviewer: *How long you say it take for you to produce Lady Coco?*

Mr. Gittens: I ask for two months but I complete it in three weeks. If you got to grid it out, this is the grid. All the folds for the dress. The image in front view, everything from the front or everything from the side. Drawn to scale and expanded. So it is Mathematics. You take what they tell you and do an image, then you do a profile, side view, front view, back view, side view. You got to wire it now. All the proportions are correct. You make the hand proportionate and you work out the posture. Put the dimensions together and you will get it right. Thicker wire and thin wires. Lighter wire in between. Then you start papering inside and outside. Then you embellish. Decide where you want it very strong.

Who are the men working along with you?

Edward Lashley, Samuel Ince and Stanley Rodrigues. But they don’t do art and that is the problem. You have to use art to conceptualize. They do not have the art background. It is a discipline like learning to play a musical instrument. My father loved classical music. My daughter Sabrina has these interests too.

Reading up on the kind of art that Mr. Gerald Gittens produces, I found it described as *“Wire and Paper Sculpture”*, something that was done by Pablo Picasso who *“abandoned the traditional art of modeling in favor of assemblage and construction. Picasso introduced non-art materials into his artwork, radically incorporating everyday objects into his sculpture”*. Mr. Gerald Gittens, may be, within this vein and has given to Guyanese us *“Lady Coco”* for the recently concluded first coconut Festival. Gerry remains a simple man, a celebrated artist who is justly recognized as a Guyanese sculptor. To some extent, I have deliberately retained Gerry’s speech that moves effortlessly in and out of Standard English and Guyanese English because it illustrates the versatility of the artist.





A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO BOOST PROMOTION OF THE COCONUT INDUSTRY

Ministry of Agriculture, Guyana

The Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Ministry of Business, Department of Tourism and the Essequibo Chamber of Commerce, hosted one of the first activities of Guyana's first Coconut Festival. As part of river appreciation, the Chamber hosted a river parade and exhibition at the Charity Market Square, which saw several organizations, mostly agro-processors, and patrons taking part.

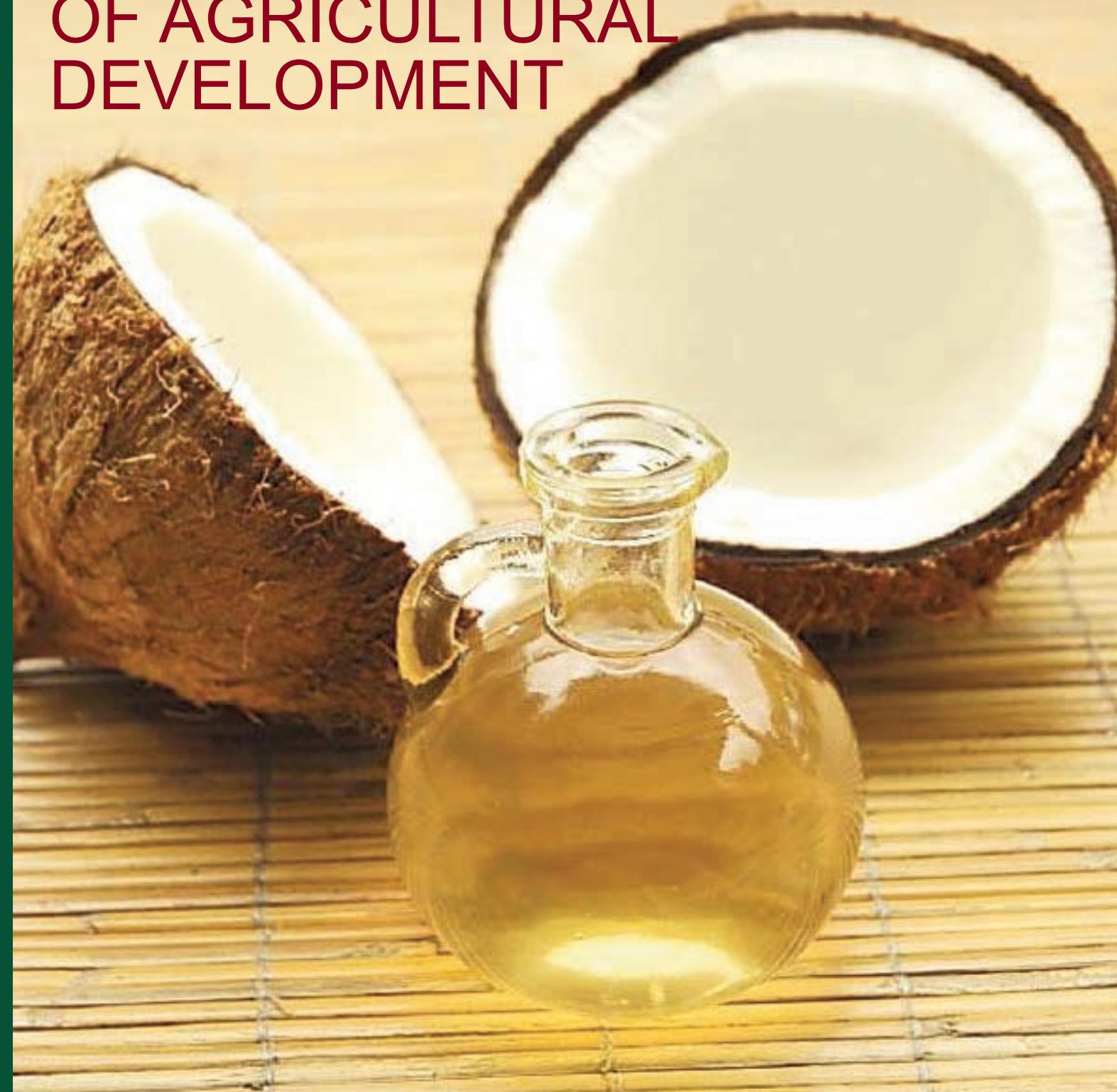
Given the potential the industry has to grow and seeing the significance of such an event, the Ministry of Agriculture contributed over \$5,000,000 to the Coconut Festival, which played an integral part in laying the foundation for the festival in Guyana.

Coconuts are the main crop coming out of the

Pomeroon region, with farmers cultivating over five varieties of this diverse crop. The National Agriculture Research and Extension Institute (NAREI) is working to increase coconut productivity and production potential through rehabilitation and expansion of Guyana's coconut production base. NAREI also continues to advocate for good agronomic practices, effective pest and disease management and better access to planting material.

Additionally, the New Guyana Marketing Corporation (New GMC) continues to collaborate with processors to further develop value added products of coconuts while strengthening the value chain for products to facilitate linkages that will increase market demand.

POMEROON AREA CRITICAL ELEMENT IN NEXT PHASE OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



THE COCONUT TREE, THE TREE OF LIFE

DID YOU KNOW?

Coconuts can float for long distances across the ocean and then put down roots again when they are washed ashore.

COCONUT BI-PRODUCTS & CRAFT

The Ministry of Agriculture featured prominently at this event, having most of the agricultural agencies demonstrating their direct or indirect link to the coconut industry. The Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) came on board displaying the different ways coconut products and dishes can be tied to rice. The National Drainage and Irrigation Authority (NDIA) provided detailed information of the importance of proper drainage and irrigation when cultivating coconuts. The Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) had on display an

array of products made from coconuts that were produced by the school. The New Guyana Marketing Corporation (New GMC), being the main facilitator of agro-processing in Guyana, had on sale a number of coconut bi-products that were produced locally. Other booths had several agro-processing groups and coconut bi-product producers displaying their products.

One of the Ministry of Agriculture's main focuses is to push agriculture production towards more value added products. The Pomeroon area is seen as a critical element in the next phase in the government's agricultural development effort.



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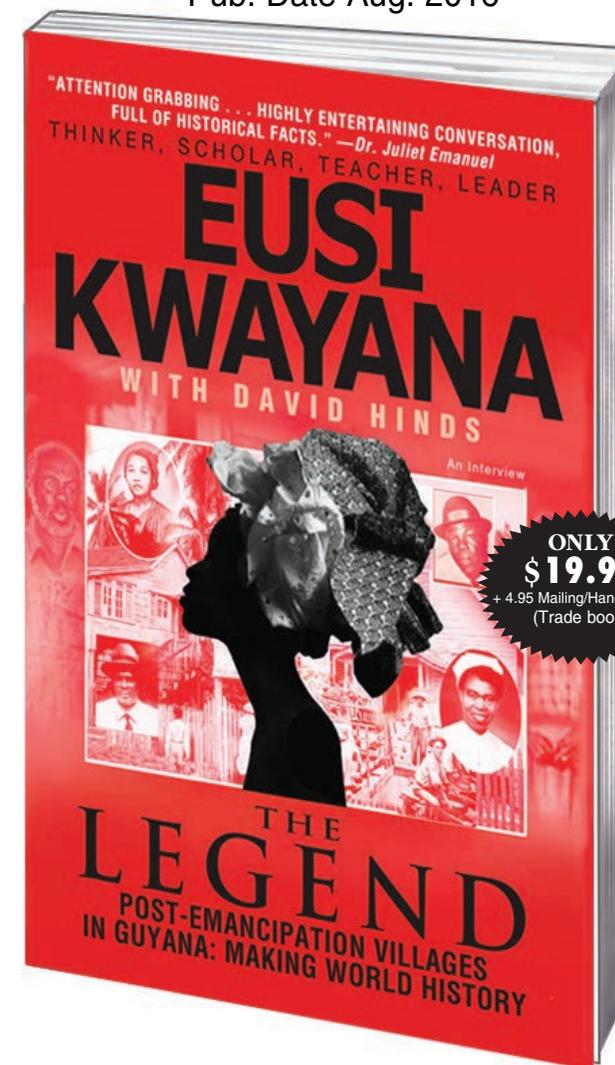


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This book was spun like a silk thread into existence, linking 'our then' with 'our now', linking our dawn with our dusk. This book was spoken, a real audio book, by Eusi Kwayana interviewed by David Hinds. Eusi is a legend in his own time. He is a consummate educator, a thinker, a teacher, a leader, a giant of a man!, a "village man," an elder at ninety-one . . . a griot at best.

It is a rare and long awaited historical interview. It is a conversation of how former enslaved Africans in Guyana collectively bought villages. They pioneered human living, civic rights and social change. The conversation outlines the general course of change going forward, winning and losing, but enduring. Being their own lawgivers, Africans created rights they previously didn't have.

Hard facts, glimpses of culture, custom, and opinions of scholars are included in this book. Many important persons, unknown as villagers, infused with life again, leap off the pages. This book celebrates the celebrated with many pages of a black-and-white photo insert. It's a chronicle of the effect of African people on Guyana's socio-economic history against the back-drop of the Caribbean world stage.

The interview took many years from 2004 to 2011, the UN International Year for People of African Descent. The conversation starts from the year 1839. "We give thanks for the ancestors who sent forth 'Dada' Eusi to teach us."

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DR. MICHELLE YAA ASANTEWA

BOOK LAUNCH Celebrating Guyanese Ritual, History and Memory

Chronicle Staff Writer

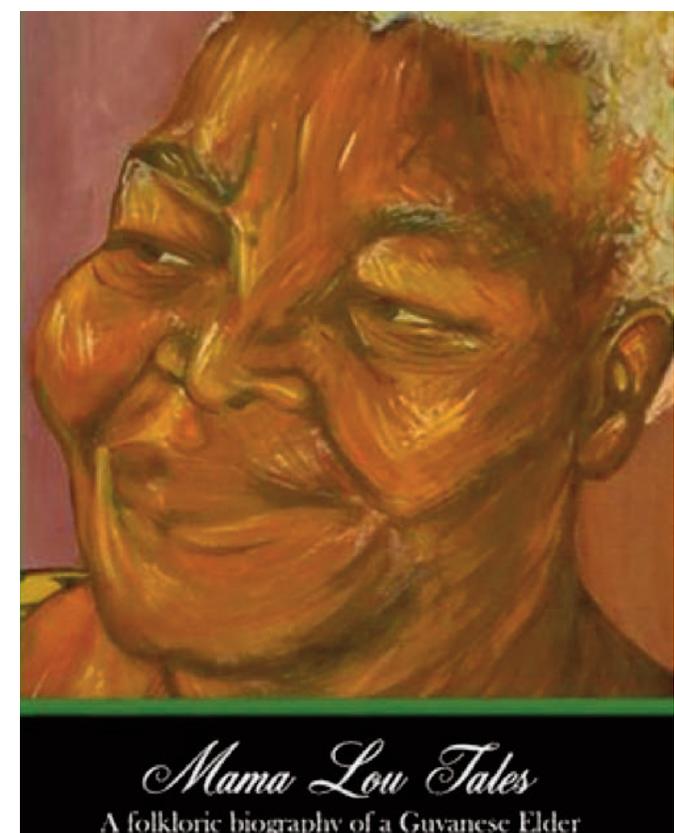
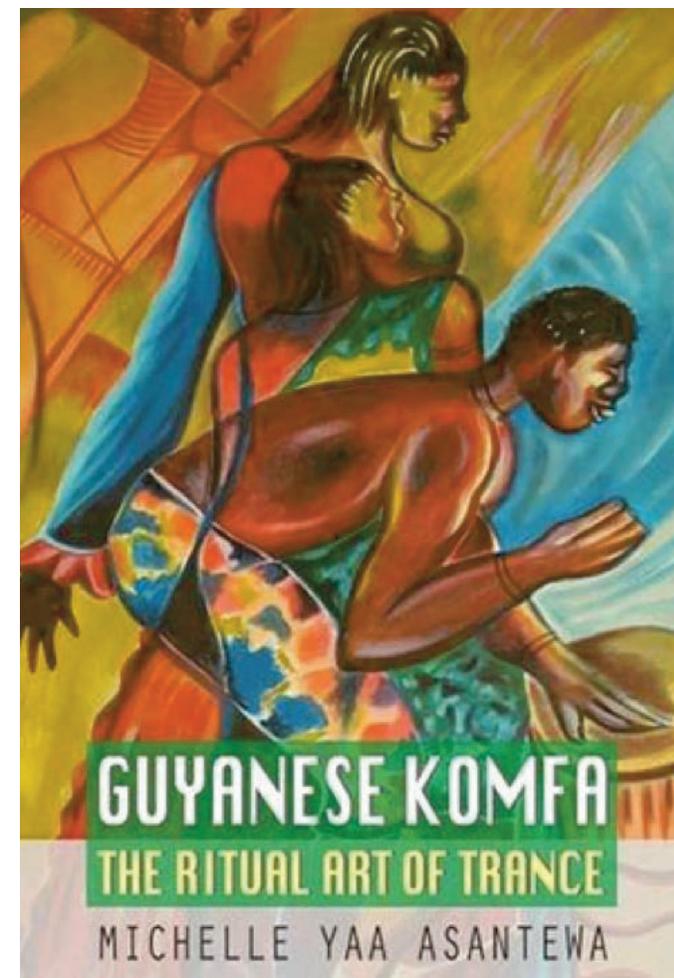


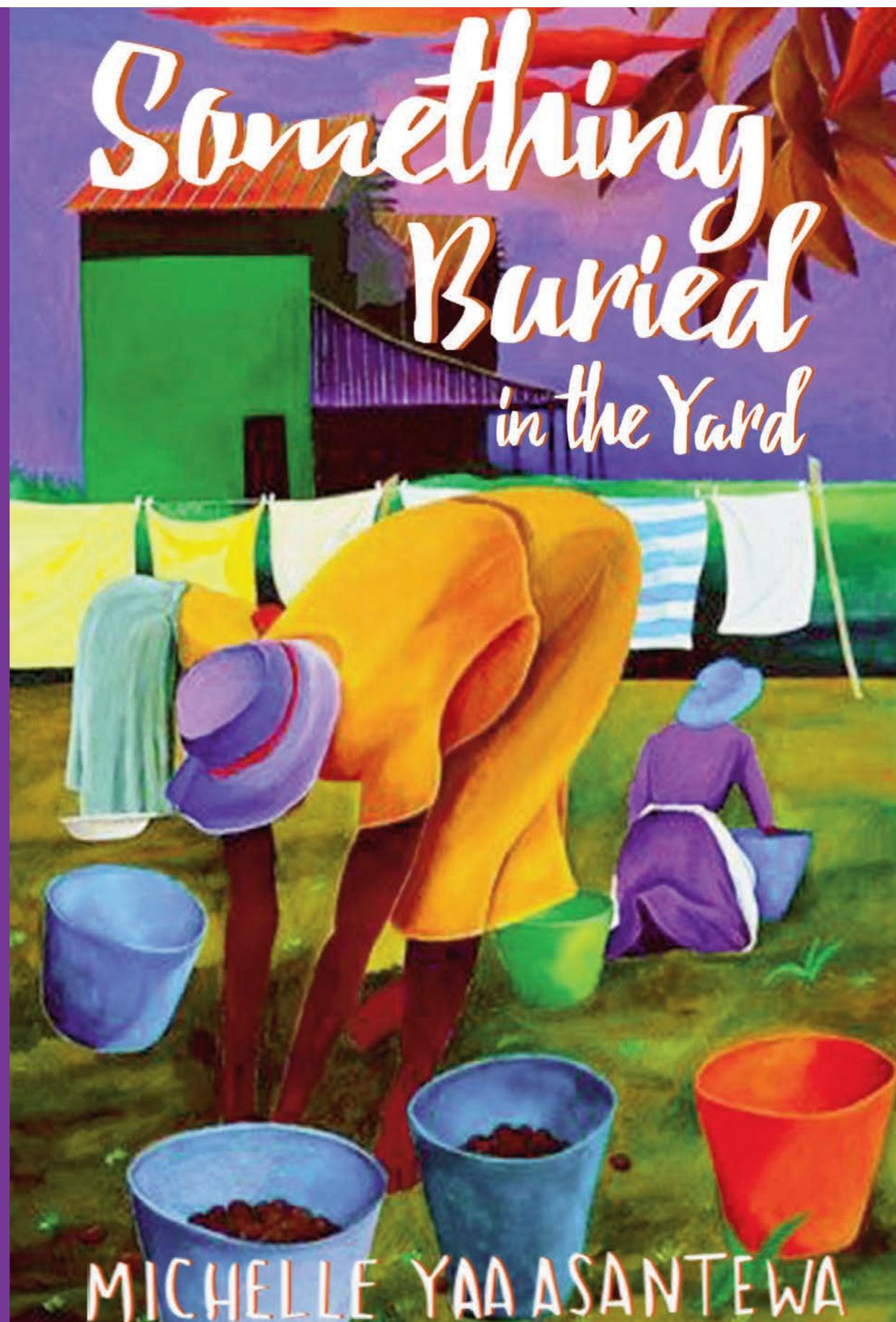
Writing on Komfa and Guyanese Folklore

As more and more young Guyanese writers refuse to become a part of our country's great literary tradition, which has emerged from the pens of great writers like Martin Carter, A.J. Seymour, Wilson Harris, Pauline Melville, and others, it does seem as if the literary landscape of Guyana will become a more and more barren one. For if our own people, those situated within the country, refuse to write about themselves and what is theirs, then who will do it for them? The importance of maintaining a core of local writers and ensuring that Guyanese people, especially young people, know their literary heritage are two things that Dr. Michelle Yaa Asantewa, a writer and academic of Guyanese heritage who recently returned to the country of her birth, is keenly aware of and, perhaps, is one of the reasons why she, as woman who was born in this country, continues to focus so much of her own research and writings on Guyana.

Dr. Asantewa has written three books that are all intricately tied to the Guyanese experience and she was recently hosted at a Moray House event where, in collaboration with the University of Guyana, she was able to launch all three books to Guyanese readers. The main book, called *Guyanese Komfa: The Ritual Art of Trance* was borne from Asantewa's PhD research. The research explored Komfa through the postcolonial lens, through literary criticism, through social anthropology; it was even viewed as literature, which clearly indicates the dynamic nature of Komfa and the multidisciplinary ways in which that particular Guyanese practice is so rich in meaning and content that it lends itself well to a variety of fields. Dr. Asantewa, has said that Komfa is ultimately "an artistic expression as well as an obviously spiritual one" and that she was intent on showing "how dynamic it is as a representation of art and also as a representation of cultural identity, especially Guyanese cultural identity."

Dr. Asantewa admits that conducting research for the book was quite difficult as there is not much literature that is readily available on Komfa. This lack of preservation of Guyanese folklore and oral traditions is something that will continue to plague writers and academics who are interested in our folklore and oral traditions. Although, it should be mentioned that there is potential for the preservation of such intangible literary heritage through the University of Guyana's Oral Literature course, which falls under the School of





“Like Kean Gibson, Asantewa observes that Komfa in Guyana recognizes an ethnic hierarchy or order of status. An ancestral Path or Way, not an organised religion had issued a formal finding in the discipline of Sociology or Political Science by observing life in its universe and reaching a consensus. My understanding of this structure is that it is a rendering or graphic of the reality of perceived status of race groups according to social power. Some will disagree with it; the Komfa people will not be offended, it is how they see life.”

Eusi Kwayana, Guyanese cultural activist

Education and Humanities’ English program, where students conduct field research in the field of Oral Literature every year. Dr. Asantewa’s struggles, therefore, to find material for her own research only emphasizes the need for more initiatives to preserve the country’s folk forms and literary traditions.

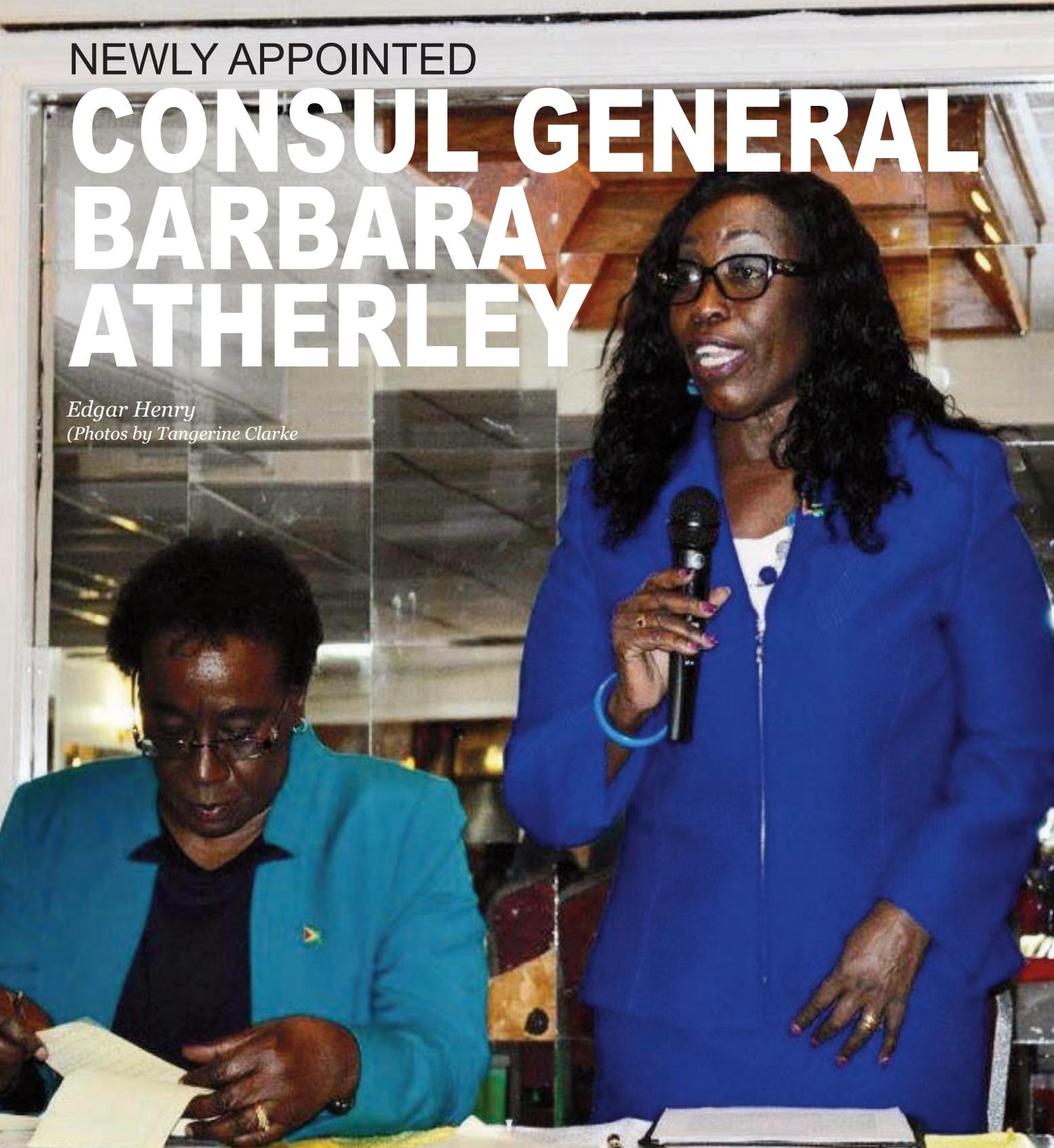
Another reason why it is sometimes difficult for proper research to be done when it comes to Guyanese folk traditions has to do with the fact that Guyanese practitioners of Komfa and other spiritual arts, probably because of stigma and label of being taboo that is attached to them by their fellow Guyanese, usually have to practice their arts in the underground, in secret, away from prying eyes. This is something that Dr. Asantewa seems very much against, as she says that were she to write another book on Komfa, she would want the practitioners to be named and photographed in the same way that other practitioners of similar folk traditions are represented in the literature of the Caribbean diaspora. “I would want them to be more proud and celebrative”, Dr. Asantewa says of the Komfa practitioners in Guyana. The way in which Komfa engages with all ethnicities present in Guyana (in the way that the practice sometimes includes spirits from varying racial backgrounds) is something that is also of interest to Dr. Asantewa, especially when Komfa, as a cultural, spiritual and artistic form that exists among the folk, among the people in the villages away from the city, and the way when it is juxtaposed against what exists outside of the rural and real background from which Komfa emerges highlights what might almost be considered an inclusivity of all the major ethnic groups in this one cultural form which means that, at its core and the way it which it engages all people, Komfa manages to form a nice contrast to the ethnic disharmony that is constantly plaguing Guyana.

Commenting on the stigma attached to Komfa and those who practice it, Dr. Asantewa taps into the postcolonial ideology that has wrapped up all of the Caribbean since the arrival of the Europeans to this part of the world and, according to her, Guyanese people need to get over some of the stigma of Komfa because such an attitude to the art means that “even though we are independent... even though we are no longer under the yoke of colonialism, we, in fact, still are... They [Guyanese] need to embrace all the aspects of our culture.” She finds it quite interesting that because of cultural imperialism and the existence of a persistent colonial ideology that there are Guyanese people who wholeheartedly embrace foreign traditions, such as Halloween, and yet become confused and even shun Guyanese traditions that deal with the spiritual, such as Komfa itself. Similarly, she was able to point out, based on her travels in Guyana, that Guyanese children are not reading enough of our local literature and highlighted an experience she had in Austin’s Book Store where Guyanese teenagers were unable to name a single Guyanese author when asked. Summing it up quietly nicely, she remarked that such experiences show her that we as a people are looking outside ourselves instead of looking inwards and seeing what we have and what we can celebrate.

The second book released at the launch by Dr. Asantewa is called *Something Buried in the Yard* and like Guyanese Komfa also came out of the research Asantewa was doing for her PhD research. *Something Buried in the Yard* is a novel presenting a storyline that has to do with Komfa and the spiritual. The third book is *Mama Lou Tales* which Dr. Asantewa describes as both a biography of her mother and a collection of stories that her mother often told. All three of the books can be found at Austin’s Book Store, where they can be bought by the Guyanese reader interested in learning more about the rich culture of Guyana.

NEWLY APPOINTED CONSUL GENERAL BARBARA ATHERLEY

Edgar Henry
(Photos by Tangerine Clarke)



On Friday November 11, 2016, Guyana's newly appointed Consul General to New York, Barbara Atherley and her colleagues addressed a huge gathering at the Town Hall Outreach meeting at the well-known Woodbine Catering Hall - 2281 Church Avenue in Brooklyn.

The main purpose of the scheduled gathering was to meet and greet the Consul General and her staff, to inform the public of the mission and functions of the Consulate, to liaise and have an open dialogue with the community. Further, the intent was to identify and address ensuing problems and concerns and how best the consulate and its staff could provide services and direct individuals to the appropriate government Ministries in Guyana to effectively respond to individual needs.

The Consul General informed the well attended assembly that she and her staff were prepared to meet on a regular basis to discuss and solve ensuing problems and welcomed feedback from the community. Her aim is to address these issues, provide informed counsel and appropriate direction on matters of immigration, travel documents and related queries.

She went on to explain that the Consulate intends to

reach out to the Guyanese Diaspora in New York, New Jersey and its environs. This will be done through existing organizations, or on an individual basis to bring about awareness and understanding of needs and interests in the community. Specifically, she stated that her office was not limited to processing applications for passports, birth certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates, notarization of life certificates / legal documents and information on remigration. Her office also offers consular services for clients who are hospitalized, bed ridden at home and also in nursing homes around the Diaspora. Additionally, a data base of Guyanese organizations and businesses is being compiled to create linkages sensitizing persons of various functions and events. Most of all she emphasized her commitment to working with Guyanese organizations and individuals to solicit assistance in cases of emergencies in Guyana.

The Council General expressed the belief that through outreach programs she will be able to better serve the community and by receiving first hand information she would be in a position to deliver a more efficient service and bring excellence to the fore and at the same time provide immaculate service.





Many questions and answers arose from the floor. They included remigration; the need for auto response from the website; confirming acceptance and acknowledging of emails; a numbering system at the consulate for faster professional services and customer relations; timely response to phone calls; rehabilitation of deportees; The noticeable increase of requests for visas among Chinese; pertinent information on Guyana and where it could be found; information about the activities and status of Exxon mobile; Guyana gold fields; the need to visit the authentic website at guyanaconsulate.org, not confusing it with guyanaconsulate.com and many more topics of interest by the very interactive audience.

After a two-hour duration of healthy conversation and deliberation, refreshments were served and the enthusiastic attendees appeared to be filled with information and promise for improved relations come 2017.

The next scheduled Town Hall meeting which will be hosted by the Consul General is slated for New Jersey on Friday November 18th from 6.30p.m. to 8.30p.m. at the New Jerusalem Apostolic Church at 1120 South Orange Avenue, Newark New Jersey 07106.

Patricia Cambridge

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The Jonestown community: Lessons learned and role of the Diaspora

Lear Matthews

(Photo by New York Times Co./ Neal Boenzi / Getty Images)

In his recently published book: *A New Look at Jonestown: Dimensions from a Guyanese Perspective*, Eusi Kwayana wrote, “one of the first scholarly responses to the Jonestown tragedy came from University of Guyana sociologists Drs. Lear Matthews and George K. Danns.” An appreciative compliment.

As members of the Faculty of Social Science, Ken and I became interested in the People’s Temple, citing significant sociological implications. Not only from a social welfare perspective, but the political, economic and religious ramifications of a virtual foreign/immigrant community were particularly intriguing. We posited that its creation was motivated by socio-cultural push/pull factors on both sides of the Atlantic. Guyana at that time was in a state of economic turmoil, which resulted in political posturing and strategic planning by the powers that be. Virtually unknown to most

Guyanese, Jonestown was evidently a part of the government’s development and security plans.

Communities and Development

We seized the opportunity to study Jonestown as part of a larger research on historical and contemporary issues regarding communities in Guyana and the Caribbean region. To that end, we published a monograph entitled: *Communities and Development in Guyana: a Neglected Dimension in Nation-Building (1980)* in which one chapter focused on the People’s Temple Project. The principal goal was to fill a knowledge gap on significant (but often hidden) dimensions of change and development, and add to the paltry number of publications by local authors/researchers. The publication has since been included as recommended reading for students of Caribbean history and social development.



Aftermath Of The Jonestown Tragedy
Caption: Members of a US military team prepare aluminum coffins for shipment to the United States, following the more than 900 deaths in the mass suicide staged in Jonestown by members of the People’s Temple and their leader, the Reverend Jim Jones, Georgetown, Guyana, November 24, 1978.

(Photo by New York Times Co./ Neal Boenzi / Getty Images)

Guyana has a notable history of human settlements including plantation communities, free village communities and ethnic communities. As Dr. Vibert Cambridge, president of GCA stated, Jonestown emerged as a ‘commune’, an ideological community in the era of scientific/evolutionary socialism. We were not interested in examining the Jonestown that was exterminated, nor was the concern with the events which led to its final tragic destruction, but to analyze the Jonestown settlement that existed under the guise of a community development project. The emergence of Jonestown was viewed within the context of social change and innovative, albeit deceptive efforts by its sponsors to deal with conditions of poverty, both in North and South America. Guyana, known as an under-populated nation state with approximately two-thirds of the land unsettled, the government was determined to implement a hinterland expansion program and counteracting failures to overcome resistance to resettlement beyond the coastland. Encouragement and resources for hinterland development, including the invitation to foreigners to settle in the interior of the country, were offered. Ironically, the leverage given to Jim Jones and his Peoples’ Temple seemed to contradict the Guyana government’s intrusive approach to local communities at that time. Jonestown was promoted as a model experiment in community development.

Role of the Diaspora: Helping sustainable community development
As we reflect on the Guyanese socio-political journey over the past 50 years since independence, or since the Jonestown tragedy, the concept of community development and the circumstances under which that settlement emerged, have certainly changed. Since that time, there has been an increase in out-migration, which has affected the diversity and size of the Diaspora and invariably depleted local human capital.

Despite the claim by some that the Diaspora is in “slow diminution” (i.e. becoming insignificant to the home country) there is evidence of its increasing development role, not only with the tradition of sustaining families through the sending of remittances, and medical missions, but with local community infrastructure building and community stabilization.

‘Diaspora engagement’ has become a popular concept among immigration scholars. However, a key question is, with whom should the Diaspora engage: The government; Communities or both? This question was raised at a recent Diaspora planning meeting in New York City when a participant stated, “we support the nation, not the government”. The implications of such thinking need to be explored. An examination of the more than 300 ethnically diverse Guyanese Hometown Associations in North America often spearheading various community reconstruction projects in the homeland, could reveal the extent to which these organizations engage directly with communities of choice in comparison with government institutions. The challenges include: What kind of infrastructure (health, safety, recreation) and cultural competence is needed by the Diaspora for progressive community building/change?

Looking ahead

The Jonestown model is certainly not one to emulate, but it should help us see how that experience can inform the future. Currently, with the increased interest of many in the Diaspora to ‘give back’, the stakeholders are predominantly Guyanese expatriates who seem to embrace the ideals of good community. Their ‘place attachment’ and ‘place identity’ are presumably informed and motivated by their commitment to change in the home country. The mission statements of their Hometown Associations promote the desire to help build safe, healthy and productive local communities and cultural preservation through an engagement alliance.

In this process, the use of internet technology and maintaining aspects of Guyanese cultural heritage (including the reintroduction of ‘cooperatives’) could be instrumental in forging community sustainability. However, whether or not government involvement and support are necessary, careful attention should be given to the methods, beneficiaries and consequences of Diaspora engagement. This would ensure the framing of successful engagement efforts. The hope is that this article stimulates reflection and action among stakeholders in Guyana and the Diaspora.

I close with a quote from our book: “National” development can only come about through community development. A nation is not a nation without communities and therefore, to develop communities is to develop the nation. . .”



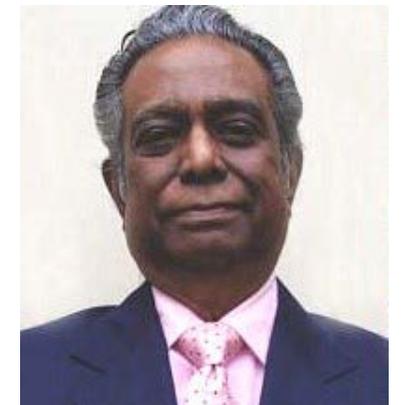
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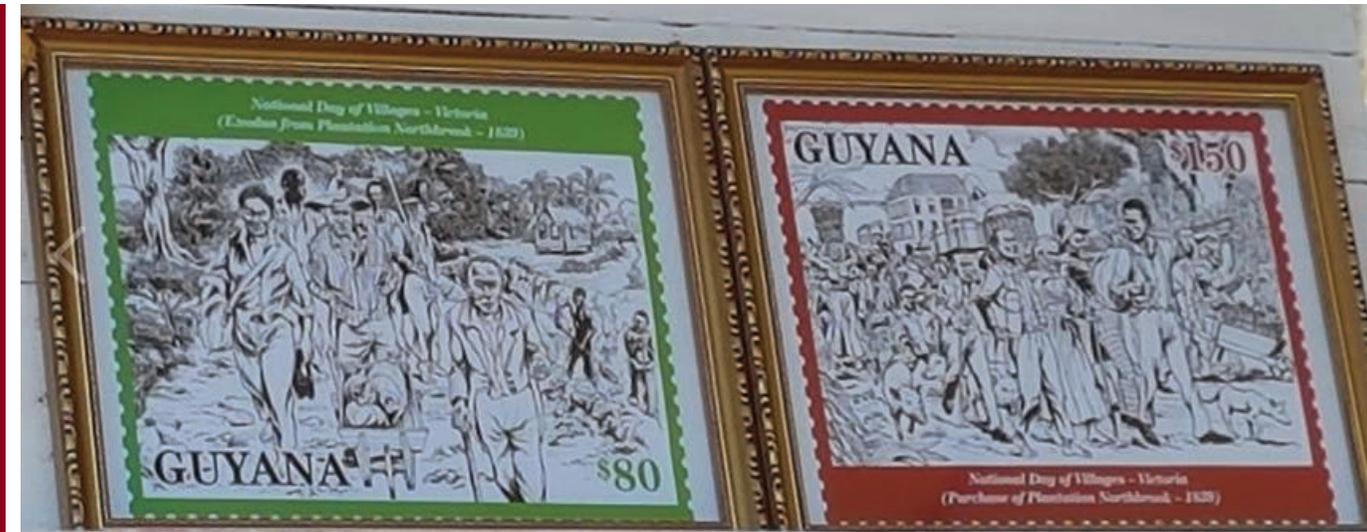
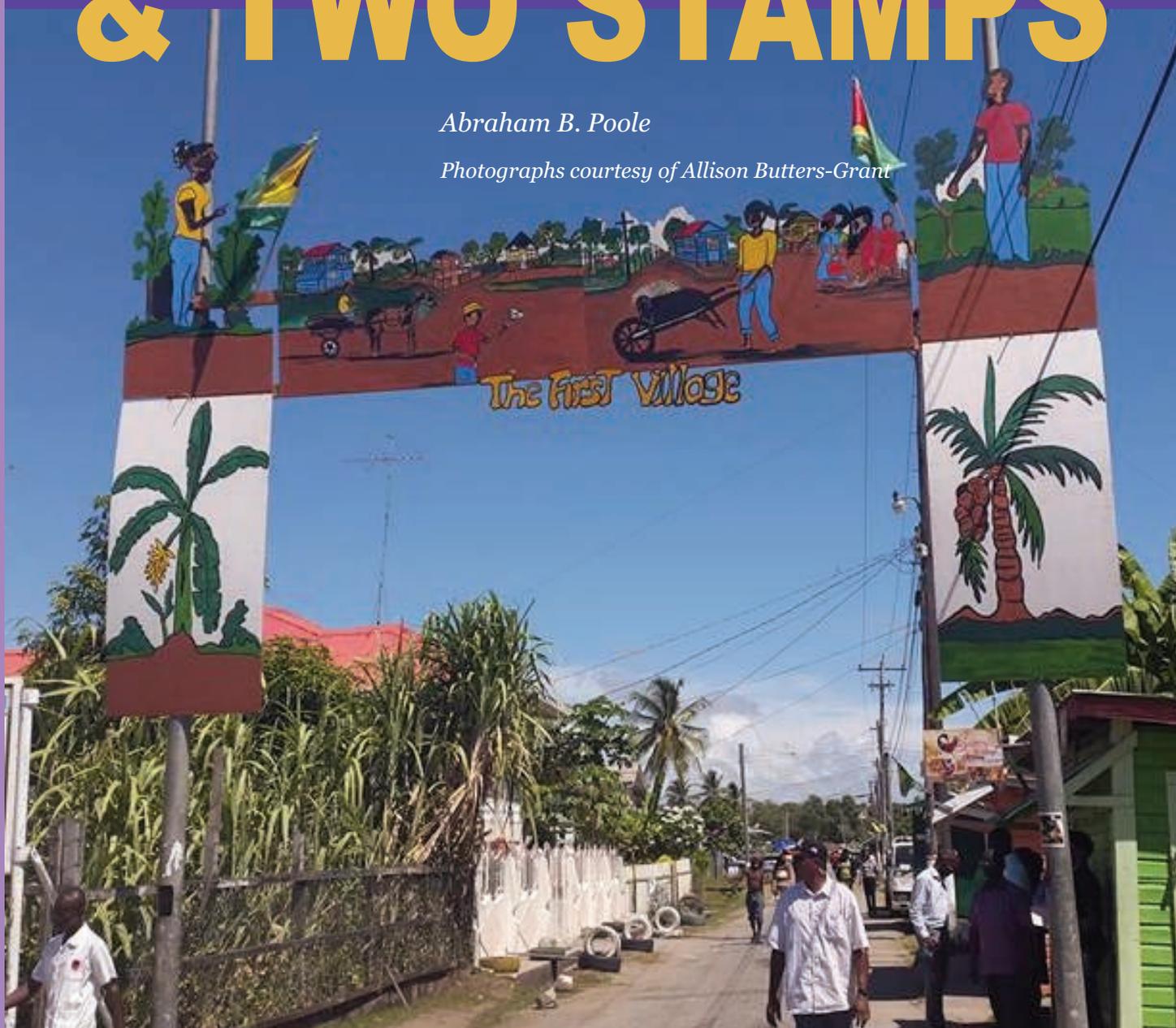
CELEBRATING THE 177TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PURCHASE OF VICTORIA VILLAGE

NOVEMBER 7: NATIONAL DAY OF VILLAGES

A DAY, A PENNANT, & TWO STAMPS

Abraham B. Poole

Photographs courtesy of Allison Butters-Grant



Every village student will recall Indaba as a “wonderful day to write ourselves in the history of our country” when “Sendall Park was transformed into an outdoor classroom,” and that a few fortunate students shook the hand of President David Granger. Adults will remember National Day of Villages, a fluttering flag, and the unveiling of the Exodus and the Purchase.

On this occasion the Indaba Planning Committee selected “Reconstruction” the comprehensive term to speak to decrepit village conditions reflected in villagers’ dejection and deposition rather than focus only upon decaying infrastructure. “Reconstruction” has been selected as a reminder that our addition to the stock of wealth bequeathed to us by our Ancestors is the best form of homage we can pay to them.”

The five-day village conference opened in the outdoor at Kingston & Benn streets with an impassioned call for the village leadership to merge their visions and combine their energies. The Honourable Madam Justice Jo-Ann Barlow demanded that villagers “imagine what discord would have existed if the purchasers had stopped to bicker and each had decided that he didn’t trust the other with his money? Think of the confusion that would have ensued if everyone had looked to see what the contribution of the other was? Picture the inevitable failure of the venture if each one of them wanted to lead.”

“imagine what discord would have existed if the purchasers had stopped to bicker and each had decided that he didn’t trust the other with his money? Think of the confusion that would have ensued if everyone had looked to see what the contribution of the other was? Picture the inevitable failure of the venture if each one of them wanted to lead.”

Justice Jo-Ann Barlow

Her conclusion was that “The accomplishment of the purchase of this Village must inspire in us a spirit of trust and a willingness to work together. It is a valuable lesson that must guide us today. Victoria will not return to its glory days without a willingness to revive the spirit of working together for the common good.”

Before the Guest Speaker’s Address and for the first time in the 177 years of Victoria a Village Pennant depicting the Purchase of Plantation Northbrook was hoisted besides the Golden Arrowhead and set to flutter beneath it. This symbolic deed was repeated on the concluding day of the Indaba and National Day of Villages when President David Granger addressed the nation from Sendall Park.

Villager Hugh Saul came home to assist in charting a new course for repositioning agriculture in the village economy; farmers considered the nexus between agricultural practices and climate change; Ras Leon Saul discussed his inspiration for the dramatic production of "Legend of Victoria;" and ninety-four year old Evelyn Bacchus unveiled the Exodus and the Purchase – two postage stamps memorializing courageous acts of our enslaved fore-parents who upon leaving the sugar plantation purchased Plantation Northbrook thereby initiating the Village Movement.

The Village lauded President David Granger's foresight and the significant symbolic decision to designate November 7 – National Day of Villages – describing it "as a posthumous honorific bestowal on our Ancestors – the 83 Proprietors who daringly purchased Plantation Northbrook and emerged a local government code."

For the first time in the 177 years of Victoria a Village Pennant depicting the Purchase of Plantation Northbrook was hoisted besides the Golden Arrowhead.

Two postage stamps memorializing courageous acts of our enslaved fore-parents who upon leaving the sugar plantation purchased Plantation Northbrook thereby initiating the Village Movement.



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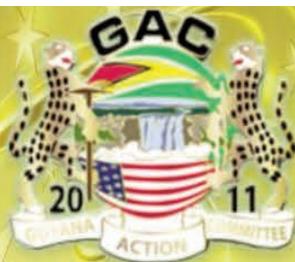
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