

GUYANA FOLK

And Culture

FOLK FESTIVAL 2014

A "HEAD HELD HIGH" SEASON

THANK YOU

FOR YOUR SUPPORT



Greetings!

Once again we have completed a productive year with an affirmation to promote our cultural heritage through the Arts, literary traditions and other forms of connections to our rich Guyanese customs. From the bottom of our hearts we thank you for your unwavering support. Often in our eagerness and zeal, we become overwhelmed by the demands of closure and tend to forget to say “Thank You”, not willfully but because of some measure of anxiety.

We begin with a message of appreciation and profound gratitude from the president of GCA, Dr. Vibert Cambridge, who reminds us of the need for collective effort, perseverance and commitment to achieving a common goal. The emphasis on celebrating the accomplishments of our youth was at the forefront of this year’s multifaceted forms of artistic display, reflecting diversity and transition to a new generation. We strongly believe that integrating the traditional with the modern has the unfathomable potential of creating positive change that lasts.

In this issue we present a tapestry of pictorial images depicting various dimensions of celebratory expressions of our history, traditions highlighted during the 2014 season of Guyana Cultural Association’s activities, ardently promoting the 2014 theme, “WE BRIDGIN.”

We showcase the varicolored designs and scenes woven within the various GCA events, from the Kwe Kwe Night to the Family Fun Day, experiencing the talent of ABC’s rising star Lisa Punch, all of which is not only a testament to the creative abilities of our community, but represent the genius, courage and cultural awareness of participants, supporters and sponsors. Complementing such display of Diaspora splendor was the remarkable literary presentations by a cadre of talented, ethnically diverse Guyanese writers at the Literary Hang. In addition, the Annual Awards Ceremony, held at the Brooklyn Borough Hall, was once again an opportunity to celebrate with folkloric pride, the creativity of our Guyanese heritage by honoring achievers in various cultural fields.

Please remember to join us at our final event at this year’s Symposium where our theme “Identity, Diaspora and the Creative Arts” is scheduled to be held in Guyana from November 1st.- 8th.

To further demonstrate the “BRIDGIN” concept we included an article on celebrating Amerindian Month, notwithstanding the recent devastating loss of the Yumana Yana. We also bring your attention to an important “BRIDGIN” issue regarding the sustainability of Hometown Associations, which has not been given due attention.

We hope that this kaleidoscope of our annual cultural extravaganza is both colorfully enlightening to savor your enthusiasm and substantive enough to add a little more to your compendium of knowledge, history and heritage.

Walk Good!

Lear Matthews

September Editor

IN THIS ISSUE

- PAGE 3-19: Folk Festival Season
editorial & in pictures
PAGE 20-21: Commentary from
Dhanpaul Narine
PAGE 22-26: Amerindian
Heritage Month
PAGE 27-28: A call to action
PAGE 28-32: Convocation-Institute
of Creative Arts
PAGE 33: St. Gabriels International
Day 2014

September Editor

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WE REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO THE STUDY & CELEBRATION OF GUYANA'S RICH MULTIETHNIC & MULTICULTURAL HERITAGE

Dr. Vibert Cambridge, President
The Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc.

*Pics by Vibert Cambridge, Dhanpaul Narine,
Michael Hadaway - VisionInPictures*

**FOLK FESTIVAL 2014
WAS ANOTHER
MANIFESTATION OF
GUYANESE ENGAGING
WITH THEIR HERITAGE
AND REAFFIRMING
THEIR LINKS TO THE
“LAND OF MANY
WATERS.”**

There were many examples of inclusion, national pride, innovation, community and global connections, and contemporary creativity. The season reaffirmed the important role of the creative arts in building trust and national cohesiveness.



FROM THE PRESIDENT,
GUYANA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF NY, INC.

Dr. Vibert Cambridge

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT

Dear Family,

We, the volunteers of the Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc., thank you for your ongoing support, which ensured that the 2014 Folk Festival season was a success. We thank you for the many kind wishes and other expressions of thanks we received. We reaffirm our commitment to the study and celebration of Guyana's rich multiethnic heritage.

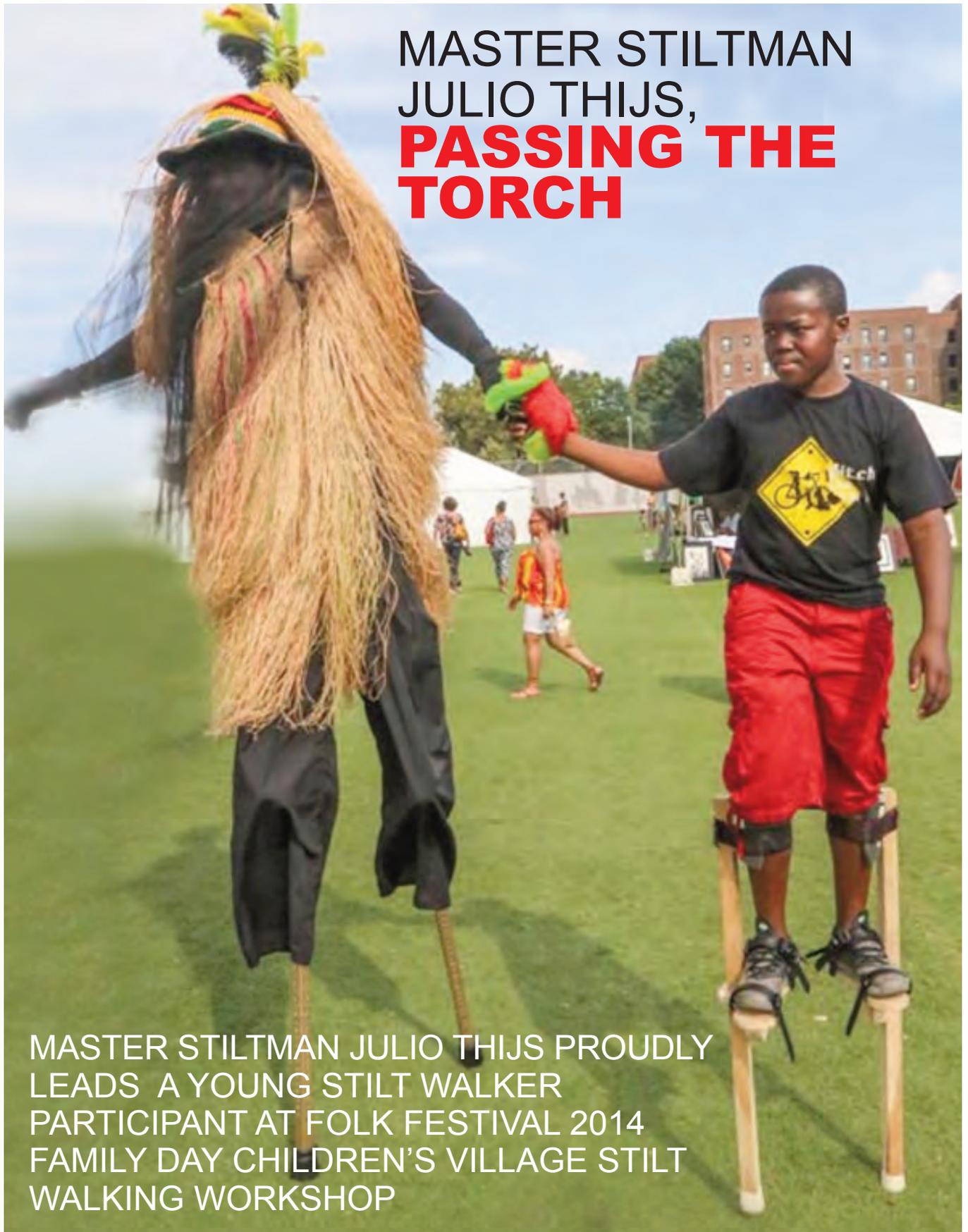
As Claire Goring, our cultural director, reminded us before she took ill last Tuesday, "Five down and one to go!" She was referring to the Diaspora and the Creative Arts symposium scheduled for November 1 to November 8 in Guyana. A number of themes, ideas, and experiences emerged from the recently concluded Folk Festival 2014 events. Some of these are important for the organization and outcomes of the upcoming symposium.

The audiences for the 2014 season were larger and

WE REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO THE STUDY & CELEBRATION OF GUYANA'S RICH MULTIETHNIC HERITAGE

more diverse. The season started with the Caribbean heritage summer workshops for children. These workshops provided a context for the intergenerational exploration of many dimensions of Guyana's rich multicultural heritage. Among the contributors to the workshops were Rudy Bishop, Roy Brummell, Selwyn Collins, Rose October-Edun, Dr. Juliet Emanuel, Francis Farrier, Claire Goring, Hilton Hemerding, Edgar Henry, Winston 'Jeggae' Hoppie, Claudette Howell, Yaphet Jackman, Patricia Jordan Langford, Jackie Newton, Claire Patterson, Keith Proctor, Akoyaw Rudder, Dr. Moses Telford, Doris Harper-Wills, Verna Walcott-White, and Counselors in Training. The efforts of young participants were evident across the season—the Awards Ceremony, the Literary Hang, and the Children's Village at Family Fun Day.

MASTER STILTMAN JULIO THIJS, **PASSING THE TORCH**



MASTER STILTMAN JULIO THIJS PROUDLY
LEADS A YOUNG STILT WALKER
PARTICIPANT AT FOLK FESTIVAL 2014
FAMILY DAY CHILDREN'S VILLAGE STILT
WALKING WORKSHOP







CELEBRATING OUR FOLK GAMES

THE GAMES WE PLAY!

One of the goals of the annual folk festival seasons is to showcase connections.





CELEBRATING GUYANESE ACHIEVEMENT

A MOMENT OF PRIDE

The annual Awards Ceremony was expanded to include the inaugural winners of the Godfrey Chin Prize for Heritage Journalism. This was a moment of pride to recognize and to celebrate Guyanese achievement.





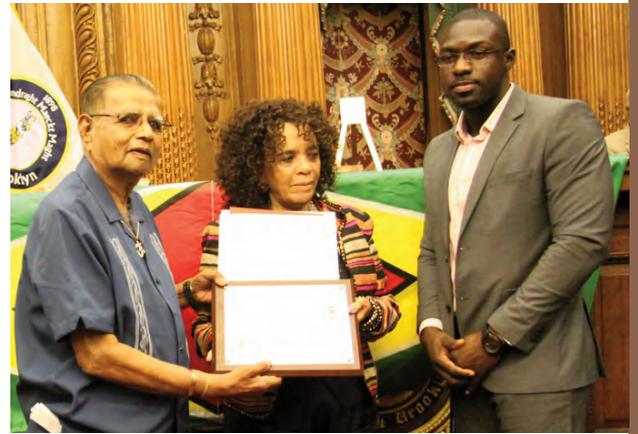
There were many examples of inclusion, national pride, innovation, community and global connections, and contemporary creativity.





*Hugs &
Congratulations!*

FOLK FESTIVAL 2014 SEASON: A MOMENT OF PRIDE





THE GCA LITERARY HANG: THE LONGEST RUNNING ANNUAL GATHERING OF GUYANESE LITERARY TALENT

The Literary Hang has now established itself as the longest running annual gathering of Guyanese literary talent. This daylong event featured Guyanese non-fiction and fiction writers from Atlanta, London, Toronto, Montréal, New York, and North Carolina. Among the participants were Gaiutra Bahadur, Frank Birbalsingh, Roy Brummell, Valerie Coddett, Ingrid Griffith, Ronald Lammy, Pat Jordon Langford, Charles Liverpool, Dr. Lear Matthews, Kennard Ramphal, Dwarka Ramphal, Yvonne Sam, Romesh Singh, Barbara Verasami, and Florence Yukon.





OPEN DE DOOR LEH DE MAN COME IN!

All ahwee ah one family!

The spirit of innovation was alive throughout the season. Victoria Village-based saxophonist “Saxie” brought additional flavor to the versatility of Hilton Hemerding, Winston “Jeggae” Hoppie, and Akoyaw Rudder—the Kwe Kwe Combo. The spirit of innovation was alive in the Maypole dancers as well. It was alive in Wayne Daniels’ “We bridgin,” new choreography executed by the Impression’s Dance Company and the Wayne Daniels Dance Troupe.





Dis ahwee Tadjah!



Gal, show Me Yuh Science!

FOLK FESTIVAL 2014 SEASON: SHOWCASING CONNECTIONS

One of the goals of the annual folk festival seasons is to showcase connections. Tobago's Roxborough Folk Performers; Grenada's fashion designer, Louise Robinson; and Guyanese stilter Julio Thijs and his international community of stilters performed at the Family Fun Day. Julio Thijs and his stilters also participated in the opening parade and taught a stilt walking workshop in the Children's Village.

The 2014 Folk Festival continued to provide a space to showcase contemporary Guyanese creativity. Taking center stage in 2014 were ABC's Rising Star Lisa Punch, GCA 2014 Awardee Adrian Dutchin, and Michelle "Big Red" King. These performers jammed with the popular Ninja Band, an exciting brass ensemble.

Altogether, the 2014 season was a "heads held high" season. Thanks to you, Folk Festival 2014 was another manifestation of Guyanese engaging with their heritage and reaffirming their links to the "Land of Many Waters." There were many examples of inclusion, national pride, innovation, community and global connections, and contemporary creativity. The season reaffirmed the important role of the creative arts in building trust and national cohesiveness.

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FOLK FESTIVAL 2014 SEASON:

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These are the sentiments that inspire and motivate the organization of GCA's 2014 symposium "Diaspora and the Creative Arts, scheduled for November 1 to November 8 in Guyana. You will be able to participate on-line on November 1 if you cannot be there in person. The deadline for submitting panel proposals is September 15, 2014. The details for the symposium are available at <http://guyfolkfest.org/symposium/>. Please encourage Guyanese at home and in the diaspora to submit proposals.

To Facebook group Anything Guyanese First/Anything Guyanese; the Brooklyn Arts Council; the Chin Family; St. John's Anglican Church; the Hall Family; Laparkan; Western Union; Lisa Punch's manager, Mary Brown; and Guyana's Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sport, we express our special thanks.

*Again,
Thanks to all.*





DR. DHANPAUL NARINE: **Literary Hang in Brooklyn**

It was the eight year of Literary Hang, an event that celebrates authors in the Diaspora. This year's "Hang" was held at St. John's Episcopal Church in Brooklyn and as in previous years it was sponsored by the Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc.

The event was dedicated to board member Muriel Glasgow. The program began with opening remarks and a welcoming speech was given by Dr. Juliet Emanuel. Dr. Vibert Cambridge the President of the Guyana Cultural Association also sent greetings. There was a Youth Section in which young wordsmiths had the chance to highlight their works. Some of the youths included Chaniece Allen, Liann Aris Henry, Terrence Bobb, Kayla Connelly, Giovanni Emanuel, Tiffany Herod and Volencia LaRose.

In the general readings Pandit Ramlall's life story was highlighted, Florence Yukon read a short story from the "Gift" and Fenton Sands' Reflections on Guyana was presented by Jahmal Sands. This was followed by Gaiutra Bahadur who read from her book "Coolie Woman." During question time she explained why she chose that title.

According to Ms. Bahadur "it seemed like the perfect title for the book. The original meaning of the work

"coolie" involves the carrying of load, of baggage. The indentured woman had so many expectations, she had to preserve her culture and family expectations and the title seemed perfect to capture them."

Adjusting to life in the metropolis has always been a problem for migrants. Lear Matthews read from his book on "Caribbean Immigrants and Transnational Identities" and he explained that the elderly and health care is an area that needs research. Another interesting area that was mentioned is the role of the hometown associations in developing specific communities in the Caribbean.

Dr. Matthews concluded that people do not have to abandon their culture, religious practices, language, values and identities in order to achieve economic progress.

One observer was of the opinion that more has to be done to gainfully occupy the seniors in the community while another said that senior centers in New York are better than in London because the atmosphere in New York is more accommodating.



Abiola Abrams presented a most interesting piece from her book “The Sacred Bombshell Handbook of Love.” Her family comes from Buxton in Guyana. Abiola wants to document the archive of memories that Guyanese have and to preserve it for the future. Her father had written a book “Metegee” in which the culture of Guyana was highlighted and Abiola is walking in that tradition. She writes for publications such as “Essence” and she is a life coach for personal development.

The selected poems of John Morris were read by Dennis France. He recited a poem about an event they had as a teenager when they went to a Fete.

The poem “four bicycles and one light” was hilarious and reflected life at the time. The gas lamp mesmerized mosquitoes and flying ants and the “sagga boy drinking bush rum from a tin-in-cup” was quite amusing.

Pat Jordon-Langford read from a “Work in Progress” about a young lady that discovers her roots and ended up at Harvard University after struggling against great odds.

The next presentation was made by Kennard Ramphal, Dwarka Ramphal and Barbara Verasami, members of the same family.

They gave a background of their book ‘Imprints in Life’s Journey’ and showed that despite sharing the same upbringing and roots there is a ‘diversity of approaches to life.’ Dr. Kennard Ramphal attributed this to the diaspora. According to Barbara Verasami the stories range from the comic to the sublime ‘from



personal stories of disaster and triumph to heights of success.’

Romesh Singh read from Frank Birbalsingh’s book ‘Indo- American Test Cricketers and their Quest for Identity.’ The purpose was to show that Indo-Caribbean Test cricketers have played a pivotal role in the game and they have helped to solidify Caribbean identity. Indo-Caribbean Test cricketers from Ramadhin to Chanderpaul show that cricket truly transcends ethnicity.

Who can forget the exploits of Kanhai, Solomon, Kallicharran, Baichan, Sew Shivnarine, Inshan Ali and of course Chanderpaul? The ‘tiger’ could well become the highest run-scorer in Tests for the West Indies. Those ‘two pals of mine, Ramadhin and Valentine’ are part of the folklore of West Indian cricket and share the roots of displacement from India and Africa.

The selected poems of Yvonne Sam spoke about the difficulties of being an immigrant in the metropolis. She said that America is ‘not the place it is made out to be, so before death and icy hands on me lay there is something I must say, keep the money and just let me pass, I am going to Guyana, a citizen first class!’ She also read from her poem ‘Imagine’ in which she called on all to live and work together.

There were also presentations from Charles Liverpool who read his poem ‘Peeled Oranges’, and Ingrid Griffith from her play ‘Demerara Gold’ Roy Brummell ‘Halfway Tree’ and Ron Lammy from a work in progress.

The Literary Hang was a wonderful celebration of Guyanese writers. The organizers should be proud of meeting that high standards.

AMERINDIAN HERITAGE MONTH

an annual observance held every September in Guyana in honor of Guyana's indigenous peoples.

The Amerindians living in the interior are split into 7 tribes: Akawaio, Arekuna, Barima River Caribe, Macusi, Patamona, Waiwai, and Wapisiana.

The Barima River Caribe, Akawaio, Arekuna and Patamona tribes live in the river valleys of west Guyana.

Two Amerindian groups live in the savannah region of Rupununi: the Macusi in the northern half and the Wapisiana in the south.

The Waiwai live in the southernmost point near where the Essequibo river rises. All the Amerindian tribes of the Interior speak using language derived from the Caribe group., except the Wapisiana who speak an Arawak tongue.



Waraus:

Believed by many scholars to be the oldest known inhabitants of Guyana, this tribe is known archaeologically from the shell mounds of the North West and Pomeroun, some dating back to 7,000 years ago.

Living in the low-lying coastlands between the Barima and the Pomeroun Rivers and their tributaries, these people were called the 'water people' because they built their houses on stilts over or close to the water.

Being inhabitants of the swampy district, the Waraus are excellent fishermen and boat builders; they are also inventors of the dugout canoe, which was the earliest sea worthy vessel some 5000 years ago.

To them, the palm tree is considered the tree of life, providing them with flour, juice, fruit and branches for thatching and hammock-making.

The Waraus, who believe that their ancestors live in the sky land, are unique in that they are the only representatives of the Warauan linguistic group in South America and Venezuela and, as a result their language is known as an 'isolate'.

Wapishanas:

The Wapishanas are recent migrants to Guyana, who are known to have arrived early in the 18th Century from the Rio Negro area in Brazil.

Located in the Rupununi, they are described as the most reliable and industrious of all the Guyana tribes. Described as more agriculturists than hunters and fishers, they were once noted for being the major traders and canoe makers of the region. They also excel in the making of cotton hammocks, a skill they are supposed to have learned from the Makusi.

The Wapishana

piaman (shaman) is called *marimau* and he has power over evil spirits, sickness and disease, the tribe's religious beliefs are centered on the spirits they call 'Durimas'.

Arawaks (Lokono)

The Arawaks, who were pioneer horticulturists, settled at Hosororo creek on the Aruka River around 3,500 years ago.

They also occupied the Corentyne River around 2000 years ago, leaving their unique type of rock engraving, Timehri. Because of the rich supply of protein found along the coastal swamps, they moved hundreds of tons of earth with wooden shovels, to build habitation

mounds and raised fields for farming, on the hilltops they planted manioc, which they baked into bread on ceramic griddles.

The Arawaks hunted a lot during the rainy season when animals migrated from the lowlands in search of high grounds. Among the game commonly hunted were the deer, labba, tapir, peccary or wild hog, agouti, birds, turtles and parrots.

Caribs (Karinya)

One of the better-known tribes, the people settled in villages near streams, rivers or creeks, the earliest of these inhabited the upper Pomeroun River about 3000 years ago.

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This tribe was unique in their mastery of painted ceramics and their pottery is distributed as far as the mouth of the Amazon.

The Caribs are the people who gave the Caribbean area its name and the word 'Carib' is used to refer to many Amerindian groups scattered throughout the Caribbean islands and South American mainland, north of the Amazon.

Their language can be classified together as the Cariban language family, though certain traits of their material culture seem to suggest an association with Colombia.

In Guyana, Carib groups are found in the Essequibo Lake District, in the Pomeroon and North-West Districts, along the Cuyuni, Barama and Barima Rivers and on the Demerara and Mahaicony Rivers.

Patamona

Referred to by the Makushi as 'Ingarikok, (people of the cool wet place) the Patamonas living in Guyana are mainly located in the North Pakaraimas.

They are known archaeologically from pottery collections in the Yawong valley and the upper Siparuni River. The Patamona nation is the one to which the mystical figure 'Old Kaie' belonged. Old Kaie is the Amerindian Chief in the legend which explains how the magnificent Kaieteur Falls got its name.

The Makusi

This nation was described as one of the most beautiful ones in Guyana; they were uniquely skilled in the preparation of the deadly 'curare' poison. They live in the Northern Rupununi Savannahs,

and were especially noted for their love of order.

Arekunas

This nation is archaeologically unknown in Guyana. They once occupied the upper and central Kamarang River at least 1839 and are currently concentrated at Paruima.

Their outstanding contribution to Guyanese culture is the blow-pipe, described as the most 'mysterious and awe inspiring weapon in the world'.

They were a powerful tribe who were the growers and suppliers of cotton to the other tribes, especially with the Makusi.

Wai Wais

They seemed to have moved into Guyana from Brazil during the early 19th century and occupied the Upper Essequibo River. They are one of the few nations that still use their traditional dress of loincloths and aprons or 'Keweyeu'.

The Wai Wais were skilled weavers and bead workers and the traditional Wai Wai architecture, exemplified in the Umana Yana, is considered by many Guyanese as the embodiment of Amerindian architecture.

'A glorious sight to behold, a Wai Wai man decked out in full sartorial regalia, he imposes an impression of fowl and flight, and distances himself from the dowdy attire of women, for the Wai Wai men rule the universe, and women contain men.' (George Mentore 1993).

Akawaios

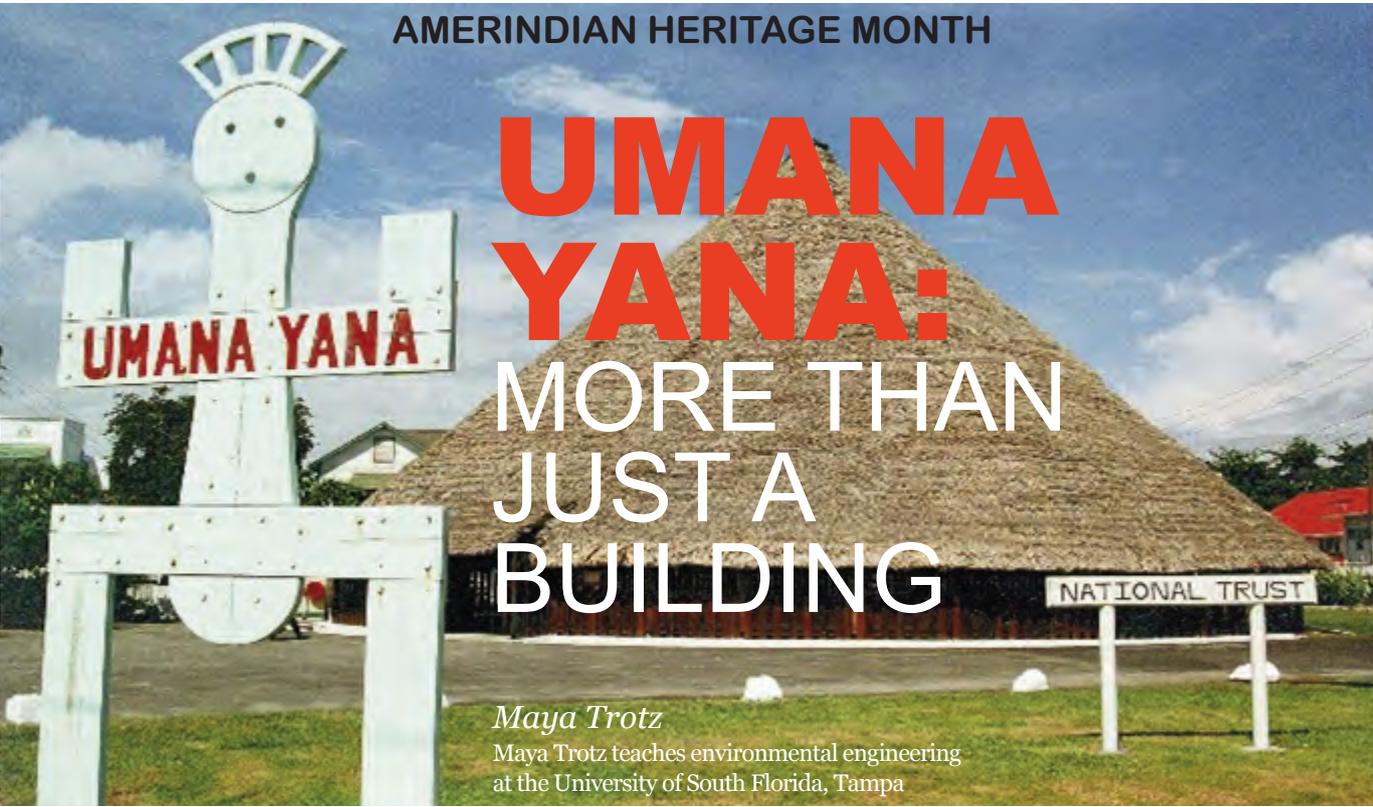
The peddlers and news carriers along the coast, this nation was warlike and aggressive and was also noted for their blowpipes. They are thought to be the linguistic descendants of the Karinya and line today mainly in the Upper Mazaruni area, Barama, Upper Pomeroon, Demerara, Wenamu and Upper Cuyuni Rivers.

The Akawaios pioneered the occupation of the hinterland forests around the beginning of the Christian era around 80 B.C.

Once an Akawaio is a friend he remains that way, but once an enemy he is an enemy for life. They were so dreaded that the other nations left them alone and they became very independent.

No matter the nation of Amerindians, they are all renowned for their pride and sensitivity, hospitality, courage, intrepid spirit, dexterity and tracking ability. These proud nations loved liberty and had no desire for material prosperity.





UMANA YANA: MORE THAN JUST A BUILDING

Maya Trotz

Maya Trotz teaches environmental engineering at the University of South Florida, Tampa

In Environmental Engineering we usually say that there are 5 pillars of sustainability for projects: Environment, economic, socio-cultural respect, political cohesion, and community participation. The Umana Yana, one of Guyana's nine national monuments, was constructed in 1972 by approximately sixty members of the Wai Wai community. According to the website of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport "a circular area of the lawn, about 26.8 metres in diameter was cleared of grass and excavated, the soil leveled and compacted to a smooth hard finish by the Wai Wai who stomped the ground, feet unshod, moving rhythmically forward, backward and round and round as in a sort of tribal dance. Sand was then placed over the area and a concrete foundation slab; complete with holes for the insertion of the poles was laid to protect the structure from dampness, given the nature of the shallow water table of the coastal soils."

Under the leadership of Wai Wai Chief Elka, this construction was completed in 80 days in time for a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned nations. According to the Ministry's website, without an adequate space to host to the meeting, the planning committee chose an Amerindian benab given limited funds and time for construction. Formed after the Asia-Africa Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) established criteria for membership to countries that maintained their independence and resisted pressure from the major powers. With 120 member countries and 17 observer countries, including China, NAM's focus has changed

from its early preoccupations with the cold war and colonialism, to addressing socio-economic challenges facing member states' and resistance of western hegemony. Founding member countries like Yugoslavia don't exist anymore as one entity, breaking up more than two decades before the Umana Yana fire on September 9th of this year.

Social media posts by Guyanese demonstrated a general sentiment of sadness as pictures of the fire emerged. As forestry expert Racquel Thomas-Caesar noted, the "Umana Yana belonged to all of us. I went to so many activities there, recently a jazz concert. A friend got married there years ago. I have attended fashion shows, horticultural shows, lectures, exhibitions and Amerindian heritage events there." Social media posts also registered a sense of distrust that the fire was set on purpose to provide space for private interests. And sadly, this is the Guyana of today.

The fire at the Umana Yana brings up many topics that can be used to discuss and understand this topic of sustainability. This "meeting place of people" was erected in time to host a meeting of foreigners, brought an indigenous group from deep within Guyana to the coast to erect a structure used by them, and then 2 years later was the chosen site for the installation of an African Liberation monument in the front of the compound. If one went back in time, how would this space be discussed through a sustainability lens? Global to local connections?

Umana Yana

I have had the privilege of visiting Masekanari, the current village in the Konashen district where the Wai Wai live in southern Guyana, and where their benab sits in front of a forest so vast. One of the few remaining tropical forests still standing in the world, these are places struggling to resist pressures from all forms of mining and destruction. The benab in town that was gifted by the Wai Wai over forty years ago sat in the midst of tall wooden and concrete structures, just minutes away from where Georgetown's raw sewage gets discharged into the Demerara river, and a stone's throw away from the controversial Marriott hotel under construction. For Guyanese living on the coast, most of whom have never had the opportunity to travel into the interior parts of their country, this was one of the only spaces that represented the construction methods of the Wai Wai. I limit it to construction methods here (and Wai Wai as I also do not know whether it represents the construction methods of the eight other indigenous groups, like the Arawak, Akawaio, Arecuna, Macusi, Warrau, Wapisiana, Patamona and Carib), as perhaps we need to ask ourselves if we have ever really drawn on this incredible opportunity to reckon with the indigenous philosophies, the ways of being that were woven into the thatched roof of the Umana Yana. Did we fully understand what it meant to have "meeting places of people" that are truly places for people, from all walks of life, to meet and do more than meet, to build consensus, learn from each other, imagine, create and be creative? What would those look like? What lessons have we learned from the Umana Yana that can be used to create a Guyanese appropriate space to do all of these things? Or a series of spaces all over the country?

When I first heard of the fire I immediately thought of anecdotal stories I had been told of the difficult living conditions that many of the Amerindians who helped with repairing the roof sometime prior to 2006 endured while in Georgetown. What an irony! Then I saw pictures of the fire at the Umana Yana. And loads of engineering questions ran through my mind. It was just a few days ago that I was discussing this building in the context of Caribbean spaces for creativity with a friend. In Trinidad and Tobago, a National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) stands as a beacon of Caribbean performance space. Copied directly from

Sydney, built by Chinese workers with a ceiling that has caused its recent closure due to dropping parts, and air conditioned to the max. One would hope that up and coming students look critically at the world around them and not only imagine the world they want, but also figure out what works and is relevant in a given context, and how to make it happen.

I currently teach a course on sustainability development engineering this semester and we have partnered with a local Florida community made up of diverse partners, some of whom are English language learners. My students will develop and apply sustainability matrices to the various projects they work on for the community's farm. For each of the five pillars of sustainability a series of questions will be used to score the various phases of their project: needs assessment, conceptual design and feasibility study, design and action planning, implementation, operation and maintenance. While their projects may not reach the implementation phase, a major lesson taken away from the course will hopefully be the importance of community engagement/stakeholder participation and knowledge sharing. The last time I was in the Umana Yana it was for the 2013 national competition of the Sagikor Visionaries Challenge, a sustainability challenge that has since expanded to schools in Tampa Bay, Florida. Teams of secondary students from across Guyana shared their project ideas with the public on how to improve their schools and/or communities. It was an emotional and overwhelming moment to see students arriving in minibuses early on a Saturday morning with peers, family, and exhibits to participate in a competition that asked them to address sustainability, science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The use of that space by Sagikor and the Ministry of Education seems even more significant now that I am reflecting on sustainability and the Umana Yana as that day was truly a meeting place filled with Guyanese of all ages, from all parts of the country, with all sorts of creative ideas and discussion. And just a few weeks ago, the Janus Cultural Policy Initiative hosted their important Conversations on Citizenship in this meeting place that for now is no more, bringing Guyanese together to talk about their hopes for themselves, each other and the country, and to begin to address difficult issues like race.

DR. LEAR MATTHEWS

A CLARION CALL FOR CONTINUITY AMONG DIASPORA ASSOCIATIONS

Despite the surge in popularity of Caribbean Diaspora Associations and the reminiscent jollification they entertain at fund raising events/reunions, there appears to be a serious problem of recruiting new members. This situation, which warrants a timely assessment, has emerged with regards to rank and file membership, as well as leadership/executive positions.

This writer and other former and current members of one such organization have lamented over this issue. Particular difficulty is encountered in efforts to increase financial membership, and engaging more recent immigrants/graduates. The problem has become endemic to various non-profit transnational organizations. Such an observation led to research on the topic, within the context of the unprecedented increase of HTAs - Hometown Associations (e.g. High School Alumni, village, cultural, professional, charity, religious, political groups) among Guyanese immigrants in North America.

These Associations, a collective prototype in the Caribbean immigrant experience, have become an integral part of a transnational lifestyle, a vibrant subculture, a network that seeks to sustain a country-of-origin connection and identity, and a prominent contributor to infrastructural development in the homeland. Commonalities among them are both encouraging and disconcerting.

Members tend to be a core group committed to maintaining ties with the home country. At the helm are dedicated volunteers, despite personal and occupational commitments. However, the findings have caused some anxiety. Executive membership generally represents a particular era, potentially limiting inclusiveness and longevity of service. Elected officers tend to rotate within the same positions for many terms. This trend highlights a curious paradox. On the one hand, some argue that it is difficult to recruit new members, partly because of the poor attendance at Annual General Meetings, where office elections are held. On the other hand, some executive members are resistant to what they view as handing over the reins to inexperienced recruits, who may not be as committed. Nevertheless, many office-bearers complain that “dey weary” and would like to retire. The burden of responsibility



Pic by Dhanpaul Narine

becomes increasingly challenging for seniors, creating an onerous dilemma.

There is ample, though fluctuating support of fund raising events by friends and well-wishers, and no shortage of unfulfilled promises to become “involved.” It has been reported that some groups have become so complacent that executive meetings morph into informal “gyaff” or routine planning for a specific event with no substantive discussion or plans for the future sustenance of the organization. Attempts to form a Consortium of Associations with shared goals have failed, although there is generally mutual support of their respective public events. Invariably, differences in leadership style, ideology and attempts to personalize or territorialize organizational positions have caused conflict and divisions. As a result, the mission is at risk of being compromised.

A CALL TO ACTION

Motivated by similar cultural bonds and interests as the established HTAs, groups of younger immigrants have been creating their own informal collectives. While some view this as an opportunity for collaboration and continuity, others express concern about competition, misrepresentation and duplicity.

A Call to Action:

An effective strategy ought to be developed to ensure the survival of these organizations.

Supporting fund raising events is important, but not sufficient for realizing sustainable goals. The transnational relationship should not be characterized by total dependency on HTAs for resources and sustenance.

Likewise, there must be confidence and mutual respect between HTAs and home-based officials in their respective ability to execute plans. Both entities must be clear about their role and responsibilities. It is essential to have dependable, committed counterparts in the home country to expedite projects. They should be purposeful in accomplishing tasks and timely in communicating regarding their needs, in order to achieve a common objective.

Augmenting a transitional process through training and modeling for generational continuity is urgent. This also avoids operational stagnation in times of personnel gaps/crises. Procedures should be instituted for orientation and participation of newly arrived immigrants/graduates, in which information about the organizations is disseminated.

There must be a strengthening of commitment and resolve to build stronger cohesion, reaching out to potential members through skillfully designed recruitment welcoming new energy and leadership

Owing to the voluntary nature of these associations, incentives to join must be carefully assessed. In the case of Alumni Chapters, encouraging recent graduates to maintain connection with their alma mater is essential. Creating or expanding an “associate member” category is also helpful.

A comprehensive program should be established by HTAs whereby strategic, planned procedures are adopted. This would guarantee chartered processes for these organizations’ successes while avoiding past mistakes, resulting in their evolution into progressive entities. Collaboration between emerging and established groups is a vital force by which to execute the common goal of mutual support within the Diaspora.

Furthermore, utilizing new technologies to effectively navigate the changing socio-cultural environment would help to overcome barriers and function at a high level of efficiency. This is likely to attract the younger generation, one key to organizational and cultural continuity, which can be further promoted by sponsoring scholarships and regularly displaying their talents at various HTA events.

Holding events which benefit the community of residence (i.e. the host society) is economically and politically astute. This helps with branding, visibility and corporate sponsorship. The organizations must also exhibit transparency through regular progress/financial reports (using the Internet), which precludes the perception of clandestine motives and benefits. Members must be aware that although not always in a formal capacity, they “represent” the organization at every forum attended, and “perception” of the public often matters.

Customs (duty-free) exemptions must be handled expeditiously, since the authenticity of some HTA’s requests has been questioned in the home country. Acquiring and maintaining “non-profit status” in the host society is also significant. Reportedly, some New York- based Guyanese Associations have been less than vigilant regarding the currency of their “501 c 3” State Certification, which resulted in the loss of operating rights. This has disrupted years of hard work, which must not be in vain – their purpose is too important.

In conclusion, as purveyors of cultural traditional values and development in the Diaspora, we must accept the challenge to prevent the dissolution of HTAs and think of contingencies. We need foot soldiers to perpetuate a culture of collaboration, heritage and progress. Hopefully, the above-mentioned concerns and possible solutions will stimulate discussion and positive change. Failure to respond imminently would be to the chagrin of the founders of these valued associations, and ultimately the present and future benefactors at home and abroad. This vital “Bridgin” mechanism must not be depleted.

ADDRESS

DR. VIBERT C. CAMBRIDGE

THE INAUGURAL CONVOCATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF CREATIVE ARTS

... IT IS THE CREATIVE ARTS THAT CAN HEAL, BUILD TRUST AND NATIONAL COHESIVENESS

Hon. Samuel Hinds, Prime Minister of Guyana; Hon. Dr. Frank Anthony, Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sport; Dr. James Rose, Director of Culture; faculty of the Institute of Creative Arts; distinguished guests, parents, spouses ladies, gentlemen, graduands it is a special honor to be here this afternoon to participate in this the inaugural convocation of the Institute of Creative Arts. This is a major step in the long march to make education and training in the creative arts accessible to Guyanese.

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen please join me in extending congratulations to the graduands and wish them success in the future. Theirs should be an exciting and transforming future.

Graduands, let us spend a moment reflecting on where we are and where you can take us.

Where we are

All societies develop rituals as rites of passage. These rituals welcome, celebrate, motivate, empower, and transfer leadership. Rituals are important for continuity. With this inaugural convocation we are creating a new ritual in Guyana's academic landscape. The program for this moment reveals that in addition to celebrating your success and your potential...it is also a moment to identify and celebrate the shoulders upon which we stand today. The recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Awards today represent a solid tradition of Guyanese who have over the post-World War II era pushed the boundaries in Guyanese cultural life.

The Lifetime Achievement Awardees

In today's ceremony, we recognize and celebrate Megan Duke, Vivienne Daniel, Gem Madhoo-Nascimento, and Dr. Doris Rogers for their unselfish and transformative contributions to the creative arts in Guyana. These awardees have demonstrated innovation, a willingness to share, passion for teaching, commitment to service, and entrepreneurialism—important attributes that you



must emulate as you start to take the reins of leadership in Guyana's creative community.



Today's ceremony also features examples of Guyanese creativity that have stood the test of time. Consider "Dear Demerara." This work was composed by Clement Nichols 91 years ago. Clement Nichols was a member of the British Guiana Militia Band, and "Dear Demerara" was one of the compositions he created for the band's participation in the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley, England in 1923. It was a hit then and deserves its perennial place in the Guyanese repertoire.

The contribution of the BG Militia Band and its successor, the Guyana Police Force Band, to Guyanese cultural life, especially its musical life, is immeasurable. Rudolph Dunbar and Rannie "Sweet Lips" Hart are two of the band's alumni who went on to bring great pride to Guyana and make substantial contributions to music in Europe during the 20th century.

Dunbar is said to have made the clarinet a solo concert instrument because of his versatility. He achieved this in Paris. As a conductor, he conducted some of Europe's major symphony orchestras.

It was Rannie "Sweet Lips" Hart, from Hopetown, West Coast Berbice, who gave Lord Kitchener his break in London. Hart was one of those Guyanese musicians who contributed to the transformation of British popular music in the post-World War II era.

Like Hawley Bryant's "Song of Guyana's Children" and Cossou's "My Native Land;" Valerie Rodway's "Oh Beautiful Guyana" is a special type of song—one that strengthens the bonds of nationhood when sung together. A closer look at the music for this convocation reveals some of the genres (classical, jazz, and pop) in which Guyanese have demonstrated excellence

both as composers and performers.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is an impressive class. The members of this class come from virtually every one of Guyana's 10 regions. This class is also international. One of the outstanding graduating students is from Martinique. They are all intellectually inquisitive. This inquisitiveness is evident in the delightful exhibition of the graduating class from the E.R. Burrowes School of Art. One of the minors in the Burrowes curriculum is Manual Graphics. This specialization responds to Guyana's electricity challenges and pays homage to a traditional poster aesthetic, the posters we see attached to lamp posts invariably announcing a dance and indicating that admission is "regular" or "easy." As Ivor Thom, the Director of the E.R. Burrowes School of Art noted---this is our responsibility to be custodians of home-grown aesthetic traditions.

Almost seventy percent of the graduants are female. Some of the graduants have also established their presence in their field even before this convocation. Tennicia DeFreitas' "I don't want to be born" attracted almost 45,000 hits on YouTube.

Graduands, this moment of graduation (the receipt of "kagaj") must not mean the end of your relationships with your school and the Institute of Creative Arts. It must mark a new moment of your engagement with creativity and arts education and training in Guyana. Like those on whose shoulders you now stand and whose achievements you are encouraged to emulate, I ask: What will you do for the future of education in the creative arts in Guyana?

DR. VIBERT C. CAMBRIDGE

ADDRESS TO THE INAUGURAL CONVOCATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF CREATIVE ARTS

I suggest that you commit yourself to making the Institute of Creative Arts achieve its vision, mission, and objectives. The institute has a crucial role to play in many spheres of Guyanese life: “advancing the human condition,” improving human relations, creating new knowledge, contributing to economic development, and enhancing the creation of a “vibrant cultural and recreational environment.”

You should pay attention and exert influence on the development of a relevant curriculum—one that emphasizes innovation, interdisciplinarity, and excellence so that Guyana can earn a distinguished place among the arts education and training institutions of the world.

My colleagues at Ohio University, my alma mater, are now adopting an expanded definition of what it means to emphasize innovation in the curriculum. It is no longer just about business development. Innovation includes contributing to social and public policy and “making places and communities successful and competitive.”

With globalization, the pace of global change, the new technologies, the emerging media, and the complexity of contemporary problems, the curriculum must also encourage and support innovations in teaching and learning. Curricula committed to innovation demand organizations that are nimble, proactive, transparent, have absorptive capacity, as well as an institutional culture of collaboration with domestic and international partners. As alumni, you must ensure that those attributes characterize the performance of the Institute of Creative Arts.

The Institute of Creative Arts is a work in progress. The National School of Creative Writing is anticipated in 2015 and in 2016—the 50th anniversary of the nation’s independence—the School of Media Arts will be launched.

Partnerships and engaging the diaspora

It has been refreshing to note that three of the four Lifetime Achievement Awardees are also recipients of awards from the Guyana Cultural Association of New York—the organizers of the annual Guyana Folk Festival in Brooklyn. Now in its 14th year, the Folk Festival season is the manifestation of a commitment to celebrating Guyanese heritage and promoting Guyanese creativity. The organization is committed to supporting creative arts education and looks forward to developing structured relationships with the Institute of Creative Arts. We envision a time when the GCA/ICA partnership will encourage Guyanese artists in the diaspora to have systematic linkages with the institute. We also hope that the diaspora can become part of the learning experience, providing opportunities for showcasing Guyana’s emerging talent. I know that the Guyanese diaspora in the United States—New York, Atlanta, and Florida—will be happy to welcome performances, exhibitions, and other cultural products from Guyana.

We at GCA believe that it is the creative arts that can heal, build trust and national cohesiveness. In the spirit of the theme—“We bridge”—our symposium this year is titled “Working on Identity: Diaspora and the Creative Arts.”

This year the symposium will be held here in Guyana on November 1. The goal is to contribute to the creation of a sustainable system for enriching Guyana’s creative arts education curriculum. Your voices are important in this conversation. We hope you will join the discussion.



Closing

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, two years ago, the Honorable Minister of Culture, Youth, and Sport convened a working group whose vision has led to this moment of achievement. This group included: Cecil Bovell, Al Creighton, Vivienne Daniel, Linda Griffith, Georgia Harry, Yvette Hazel, Alim Hosein, Jynell Osborne, Dr. Vindyha Persaud, Dr. Seeta Shah Roat, Dr. James Rose. Please extend congratulations to the members of that team—some of whom are here tonight.

Graduands, you represent continuity in Guyana's ongoing effort to make education and training in the creative arts accessible. Where we are today can be traced to efforts that started with the inaugural National History and Culture Week in 1958. It is directly related to decisions taken after Carifesta 72 with the creation of the initial Institute of Creative Arts--ICA 1.0. Today we have ICA 2.0!

History may view this as a "moment of transcendence" when nation trumped partisan politics.

We look forward to your leading the way towards excellence in the creative arts.

Can you do it? Yes, you can!

Thank you and best wishes for the future.

St. Gabriel's celebrates International Day 2014 GCA VP AVE BREWSTER-HAYNES RECEIVES SERVICE AWARD

Edgar Henry

On Sunday September 28, 2014, St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church, located at 331 Hawthorne Street in Brooklyn, celebrated their Annual International Day. Over fifteen (15) different countries were represented and attended an outreach, worship and education service under the theme "Embracing Our Community – Living with God in the Neighborhood". The preacher, Rev. Canon Angela Ifill delivered a stirring message to the capacity packed edifice, appealing to the adults in the congrega-

tion. After the service the congregants partook of some lavish culinary delicacies from different countries in the undercroft of the church.

It is a well known fact that St Gabriel's Episcopal Church provides accommodation for both liturgical and community activities. Also they work closely with the Community Boards and community-based organizations to develop needed programs for our senior citi-



Pic by Dianne Chevallier

tion to embrace the youth, encouraging them to take their respective positions in the church and society with dignity pride and ambition.

This multicultural celebratory service also recognized stalwarts, who have contributed immeasurably to the life, fellowship and service of this community. Among those who received the Bishop's Medal for Distinguished Service in the Diocese of Long Island, was Guyana Cultural Association of New York's Vice President Ave Brewster Haynes. We at GCA would like to congratulate Ave on her receiving this prestigious Award which she truly deserves.

Before the service, some participants from different countries were dressed in their native garb and with their respective national flags, traversed the bordering streets around the perimeter of St. Gabriel's church to

zens and young people. This facility certainly has a stabilizing effect, recognizing its religious as well as civic responsibilities to the community.

Congratulations to the Rector, the Very Reverend Eddie Alleyne, and those responsible for the foresight in planning and executing such a wonderful and important celebration of the International day 2014. It was undoubtedly a tremendous success. May Almighty God continue to prosper the mission and ministry of St. Gabriel's Episcopal Church.

Other members (in pix) receiving this award were Ms. Estella Phillip, Ms. Paula Douglas, Mr. Raymond Maynard and Shirley Sealey.)

**ANOTHER GREAT DAY TO
CELEBRATE THE BLESSINGS OF
THE GOOD LORD.**

*Dear Supporters of the
Guyana Diocesan Association*



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