

AfroPanamanian Newsletter



English opens doors. Read the Newsletter.

No.9 Vol. I

October 2010

Donation



Controversy

Anecdotes

Poetry

LOS AMIGOS :

Por la superación de la Etnia Negra

A group of friends decided to join forces to work on the rescue of values, customs and cultural traditions bequeathed to us through our ancestors. These have been displaced by others, thus losing a large part of our Black Heritage. We are evaluating all these forgotten traditions and values and highlighting figures as examples for future generations.



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**The editor is not responsible for the
opinions expressed by our collaborators**

Cover Page: The stamp which appears on the cover was proposed to the Canal Zone Government by Mr. George W. Westerman (r.i.p.) accepted and used as a 10 cent postage stamp for years. Permission for its continuous use was given by his grandnephew, Cecil Reynolds.

EDITORIAL

Pink and Blue month

October is Breast Cancer Prevention Month and pink is the color to identify that cause. An early detection has proven to be a great ally in curing this type of cancer.

During this month many non profit organizations support the cause by having fund-raising activities to contribute toward the different cancer detection and treatment programs at the National Cancer Institute.

Women have been openly fighting cancer for a very long time; however men are known to be reluctant to have a prostate gland exam due to foolish concepts. This attitude has a high number of males suffering from that form of cancer. This year light blue has been added to the campaign to stimulate and encourage men to undergo the exam.

When cancer strikes, the blow, not only affects the victim, the family circle is also affected by the diagnosis. The complexity of the treatment often implies mild to severe side effects and frequent hospitalization and coping is not always easy.

Cancer does not discriminate against sex, age or race. Neither does it care about creed or social status. Though science and technology have advanced worldwide, the battle to find a cure for the different types of cancer is a day-to-day struggle at a very high economical cost. If you acquire and wear the pink or blue articles that are being sold locally you will be helping to promote a cure for cancer.

Play safe, an early detection may save your life.

FEEDBACK (from our September issue)

October

We are getting lots of oral feedback on the Newsletter. We thank everyone who feels that what we are doing is worthwhile. We are also happy to see that the Newsletter is being read and is promoting exchange in the English language.

*What we would be elated about is the assignment to students of homework based on the Newsletter. **That** would make the whole effort more worthwhile. Would encourage us to work harder to provide useful, historical and ancestral data.*

My dear sister Sonia Brown, thanks for sending and **sharing** the AfroPanamanian Newsletter with me. I must admit I was totally surprised and elated at the same time, for I was under the impression that I was the only one that was and is defending our heritage and culture here in Panama. This News letter is well needed here. Especially for those that have lost our heritage because of parents that refused and or negated to teach and pass on our heritage to their children. Not speaking or allowing their children to speak English. My youngest daughter is 6 years old and she goes to a Bilingual school and speaks both languages perfectly. I insist that she speaks English so she can have a better future here or wherever she goes!

I was educated at the Paraiso High School on the defunct Canal Zone. We had a slew of West Indian teachers from all over the West Indies. Such as Mr. Alfred Cragwell, Mr. Waldaba Stewart, Mr. [Charles] Barton, Mr. Kinnimouth, Mr. and Mrs. Ellis, Mrs. Campbell, Mr. McFarquar, Mr. Fawcett, Mr. Walters. Mr. Douglas, Mr. Watson, Mr. Maurice Heywood, Mrs. Elsie Graham [*Hayot*] and many many more. In those days our parents spoke English to their children. They could speak the native language, Spanish also, but only did so when it was necessary. I even had some Spanish friends in Paraiso that could only speak English. These educators came from Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados, Cuba, St. Kitts, etc. Black folks of WI descent spoke and wrote in English.

I was blessed to have migrated to the USA in 1962. Like many of us in those days, our parents sent us to [*North*] America, for there we [*had*] more and better opportunities to be successful. **There were no jobs available for the Black man in this country. The opportunities that we created for ourselves involved sports, music, dancing, shinning shoes, tailors, selling newspapers, selling Chance etc.**

When I return[*ed*] to live in the country of my birth, in 2003, I was terribly surprised to see that 2 generations had lost their culture and heritage and could not speak English. All of this was going on while the Rabbi Blancos and middle class Spanish folks were sending their children to America [*and England*] to learn to speak English. I heard all kind of stories and reasons as to why they had stopped speaking English to their children.

I know a very large WI family that can speak English very well. I have been to many gatherings and parties where even though they can all speak English, all they spoke was Spanish... Even before I moved back home, I used to come to Panama and frequented the SAMAAP Feria every Carnival and I was astonished that although it was supposed to be a WI event the entire program was in Spanish and I always wondered why and made comments about it. I remember once a few years ago, as I was entering the Feria, I asked one of the guys at the entrance ... why they were not speaking in English and lo and behold, he told me that this was the new West Indian, I almost passed out! How can you disconnect from your WI heritage and culture?

CG

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Hello Inez Sealy, [*I spell it Ines*]

(I believe I got it right!) I received a copy of your Newsletter and was pleased to read its content, philosophy, and purpose. Thank you & staff for the encouraging position and the effort you put into the preservation of language and culture as we understand it.

I'm not sure where you are located; but I make a similar effort here in Houston, writing "editorials" covering Afro-Panamanians and other groups having African lineage in Latin America.

If you're up to it; maybe we can seek out areas for mutual collaboration. Keep up the good work!

Terrence

OLDEN DAYS SAYINGS:

October

Feedback from Glenroy. Very interesting, good job. In a group, someone makes the statement **“You want a borrow, see me tomorrow”**, so the person comes the next day, or in the future, to take him up on his promise. To the person’s chagrin, he answers **“My heart is willing but my pocket is narrow”**. *It surely rhymes. What is for sure is that the person “got blank”.* Our old folks version is **“the heart is willing but the pocket is weak”**.

When someone does something he/she doesn’t want to be known, but leaves evidence, it is said **“yuh can tief but yuh can’t hide”**.

You playing **“mama bad bad”**, **“Ah going wring yuh neck”**. If you won’t behave like a decent **“girl child”** and stop that **“monkey business”** bringing home all those **“dog ears”** in your **“copybooks”**, I might have to buy you a **“slate”** that you can only **“mash-up”**. Stop the crying or **“ah goin’ give you something to cry for”**. Sometimes I feel like I could **“kill you dead”**. -- I saw you yesterday **“walking between the drops”** when the rain was drizzling... your **“tough luck”** if you **“catch a cold”** and have a fever. It will make yuh feel like yuh ‘going’ **“burn in hell”**

OPPORTUNITIES *(in this case to contribute to a good cause):*

[PANAM NETWORK TO PARTNER WITH THE GOVERNOR OF COLON AND CLERGY TO ENHANCE MUSIC APPRECIATION AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE CITY OF COLON, PANAMA](#)

By Jorge Brathwaite

1. On August 25, 2010 **PANAM Network** (www.panamnetwork.com) was recognized during the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the *Escuela Republica Oriental del Uruguay* for the efforts by **PANAM Network** on behalf of the school children in the City. Mr. Jorge Brathwaite, President of **PANAM Network** is a 1958 graduate of the school.
2. In recognition of the achievements of the school over these 100 years, **PANAM Network** extended economic assistance grants to six school children of Escuela Uruguay who have demonstrated academic excellence despite being from economically challenged family units...
3. The children receiving grants from **PANAM Network** were:

First grade	Mileyka Arelis Santizo Hall	4.7
Second Grade	Sammyreth Samma Bosquez	4.6
Third Grade	Christian Reinal Nunes Alveo	4.76
Fourth Grade	Yahbimelek Aneris Estupiñán	4.7
Fifth Grade	Yarneli Maylin Lopez Jimy	4.1
Sixth Grade	Jalem Jamal Ramkin	4.6

Maximum Grade point average is (5)



Colon’s Governor Pedro Rios and Father Alcibiades Guerra believe that music education can lead to success in school, expanded intelligence and ultimately success in life. They are pleased with their partnership with **PANAM Network** to foster music appreciation in the City of Colon.

The Panamanian American Academic Network is an IRS recognized 501 (c-3) Charity and donations are tax deductible.

Contributions can be made on line at the web site or by mail: PO BOX 268121, Weston FL> 33326

Photography, Painting & Physical Exercise

By Ines V. Sealy

Around the time of the II World War, in the area of 5th of May Plaza there were Cabarets where soldiers and sailors landed when ships were in port: Happyland, Kelly’s Ritz, etc.

Above Happyland, on the first floor, was Bennett Photo Studio. With his accordion camera and hand-held lamp, Mr. Bennett captured the faces of these people, which he exhibited in the showcase downstairs to attract customers.

His son, Norman, known as Norman “*Artistico*” Bennett, entered the business, but he went a little further. He mounted his own studio on the 3rd floor of the Premier building, adding mural paintings by his painter-friend Cecil Murrell “*Morro*” as background to the clients for his studio photos: The Balboa Statue, the latest model automobile, etc. Every one of his pictures had the prettiest eyes. He began “**touch up**” in this country.

Other photographers included Foto Wallace, who specialized in yearbook photos and Foto Sealy, specializing in studio photos, especially “**Sunday best**”.

“*Morro*” became a painter after a bout of sickness, that left him very weak. To restore his body, he began to practice weightlifting, for which he won many prizes, after developing powerful muscles. And in his spare time he studied drawing and painting. He later went on to obtain a sign-painting job with the US Armed Forces in Panama. Other outstanding painters were the Dunn Bros., Lloyd Bartley, Hector Sinclair and *Malanga*. They all participated in the construction of Carnival floats and costumes, including insects and animals.

In weightlifting and martial arts, I would say that the boys participated in that to impress the girls with their muscles and physical appearance. Some were able to profit from this by learning and teaching Jiu-jitsu, Judo, karate and aikido. Worthy of mention are: Ricardo “Ricky” Wilson (R.I.P.), Ricardo “Ricky” Staple, and **Arturo Worrell**, who opened the first school of Karate-do in the City of Panama.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

By Antonio Cox

8-5-2010

Back in the days, as a kid growing up in Rio Abajo, now called “River Down” by today’s youth, it was nothing but fun: boys and girls played the same games: *lata*, *la tiene*, *componte*, and many more. When you grew up and remembered those days, you would want to be a kid again, when a group of boys would raid someone’s cane field, or would go to the 12 Street river, or would follow the trail to *Raiz* river in the back of Clifford Bolt Street (then known as 1 1/2 Street), exposed to snake or insect bites, going through the wrong trail and getting lost, that was the fun part of the whole adventure.

I remember rolling a big truck tire with a kid inside the tire, I never knew how it felt “crazy?”.

Playing marbles or *platillo*, playing Newflu, making a *teo* from the *platillos* (several corks inside). Having a top with a long nail to catch in the air with the string. I never wanted to grow up. **Those were the days.**

CARRYING THE BANNER

By Antonio Cox

8-7-2010

Most Blacks from West Indian background still have that scare syndrome in their genes, that was instilled in them by the ex President A Harry Ass. When you try to talk politics to them, they talk about something else, they say they don’t want to go that way. We have no one to represent us in the Assembly, they do what they want with our people, and all we say is “yes”, like back in the days when England told the Islanders what and when to do things. We are going back to those in modern times. If the youth don’t see someone carrying the banner, they will not follow. The youths are out there waiting. If they don’t see some “role models” as activists, they are going to sit and wait forever. We are not teaching them what they want to learn. We have the tools, what we don’t have is the time to reach out to them. You will be surprised to see how the youths will embrace you, and ask “**What took you so long?**”

MANCHESTER SOCIAL CLUB

Researched by Fernando Goldson

Since being a member of a social club was one heck of a presentation card in the 40's and 50's, and hormones in teenagers are very active causing them to be rearing to go, a group of teenagers got together in 1953 and started a social club by the name of Manchester with Ms. Esmilde McAllister as their advisor, who, many years later became a member of the club along with Rogelio Manning, Edgar (Husky) Woodruff (R.I.P.), Ronnie Franklin, Christopher (Papi Solomon) Johnson, Francisco (Corandi) De Souza, Roberto (Baco) Barton (R.I.P.), Leroy (Fat Man) Palmer, Janet Sealey and Roy Holness(R.I.P.).

The club started gaining popularity with "Infantil" dances upstairs the *Encanto* Movie House, at that time called the Elks Hall on *Avenida Central Calidonia*, and at the Mechanics Hall on *Avenida Nacional*, San Miguel.

A few years down the road, they went on to bigger and better affairs, such as: the Big Easter Dance and Floor Shows at the famous *Viña del Mar* in San Francisco, featuring local stars, like the Gay Crooners, Victoria Campbell, Black Majesty, Carlos Garnett, Ralph Weeks and Sir Jablonski to mention a few.

Those patrons who attended the Easter Dance were given a courtesy ticket to attend the annual Picnic at *Jardin Luisa* in Juan Diaz. That was one way of showing appreciation.

Another annual major event was their Halloween Dance and Queen Contest. Many scholarships were given away from the proceeds of these activities.

Ronnie, Husky, Corandi, Baco and Rogelio migrated to the U.S.A. in the early 1960's and George W. Fisher (R.I.P.), Theo Peterkin and Jose Brereton (Joe Gavini) joined the club.

National Cancer Institute
(Instituto Oncológico Nacional)
70 years serving the community

Lic. Sandra Patterson

The National Cancer Institute is the health center dedicated to treating all cancer victims in Panama. It is a government institution that also receives support from many non-profit organizations. Located since 1999 at the former Gorgas Hospital in Ancon it celebrated its 70th anniversary last September. For many years the work done at this center did not receive acknowledgement until the 80's when cancer treatment around the world took an upward lift.

It is a specialized hospital that only takes care of cancer patients. To be admitted the patient has to be diagnosed by a private surgeon or a medical doctor and referred with all his/her exams (slides) to prove. There is no private attendance at this hospital

The hospital is equipped with the latest equipment and technology to reconfirm diagnosis and prescribe patient treatment. Personnel are constantly receiving updated training.

It also has other conveniences for patients, such as: a beauty parlor, the facility to acquire wigs for those whose hair has fallen off during treatment and reconstruction surgery if necessary.

Sandra says: A friend sent me this and I think it's good to share

Two wolves

One evening a Cherokee elder told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said "My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all. One is Evil. *It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.* The other is Good. *It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith*".

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather "Which wolf win?"

The Cherokee elder replied, "the one you feed"

WEST INDIAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A group of well-to-do West Indians or their descendants with a vision, prepared themselves, saved, won or inherited money and invested in some type of business in Panama. Many had their own bus: Griffith, Brown, Olton, Pete, etc.

Carlos Smith (Alberto & Tony's father) had the Tropical bar on the corner of 5th Street Rio, the Jordans did barbering at La Boca Town, the Douglass's controlled the newspaper routes, Kelvin is still on the corner of 16th Street, Rio.

In the area of Calidonia, Guachapali (Marañon), Ancon Ave. & Calle Estudiante: Dr. Fairweather, Mr. Dixon the shoemaker, Fashy the tailor, Sealy tire shop, Caton used parts, Stone's book store, Omphroy's (bicycles & cars), Lambert Printers, Ford printing shop, Chino Williams shoe shop, Marquis jewelry & clock repair, Wilson Laundry, Milly's millinery, coachies, taxi drivers, and the master of all tailors, Stafford Cole, still on Ancon Ave.

Many of our Black men were in the drug store business: Roy McGrinson in Marañon, John (Jack) Easy Patterson in Chorrillo, Dennis Hall and Norman C. Brown in Colon... Harold Mitchell owned Farmacia La Merced in P Street Calidonia.

Apprenticeship in battery repairs and armature winding was done at Ashton's Repair shop.

In the bread business: Christina bread, Blencowe, Walter Frederick (R.I.P) making *michitas* on 5th St. Parque corner.

There were candy makers, coconut cake vendors, street-side food vendors:

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DUMPLING AND BAKES

Our West Indian ancestors used flour and cornmeal a lot. They baked: breads, cakes, pones, biscuits; they fried: fritters, bakes, patties, and others.

They also used yucca and coconut: **pone, bammy, farina, ducunu, coo coo.**

Some of these pastries (gringo word) (in the 60's and 70's we called them flowah) are boiled and some are baked or fried.

Dumplings are flour, corn or yucca mixtures dropped in soup or boiled with ground food as a meal.

Bakes are flour mixtures baked or fried, eaten to replace bread in a meal. In our West Indian communities it became a habit to sell bakes stuffed with diced light called "one on one" in the area of Colon.

Bakes were also sold alone, but the latins don't relate with the word "**bakes**" and call them dumplings. Our people, so as to make their sales and not quarrel with them, let them call the bakes dumplings.

But it is time to put the records straight.

Congratulations!

Costa Rican Editor/General Coordinator of the *Limon Roots Magazine*, Mr. Ramiro Crawford, is being honoured with the **SUNSHINE** “The Friend of the Arts” Award for his contribution to Caribbean & Central American journalism.

The **SUNSHINE** Awards, offered annually in New York, was founded in 1989 to recognize and pay tribute to the creators, performers and promoters of art, dance, music and poetry of the various Caribbean Islands. Over the years the Program has expanded to include Central America, South America and Africa.

The ceremony will be held this month.

**Celebrate Kwanzaa with us
Sunday Dec. 26, 2010 2-6 p.m.
Rio Abajo Methodist Church hall**



**ENGLISH SERVICES ARE BEING HELD AT 6:00 P.M.
ON SUNDAYS
AT HOSSANNA BY PASTOR ROBERT ROBINSON.**

*Taxis on Central Ave in the 1930's
(note: they travel European style. Traffic flowed this way up to the '40s)*

