

# AfroPanamanian Newsletter



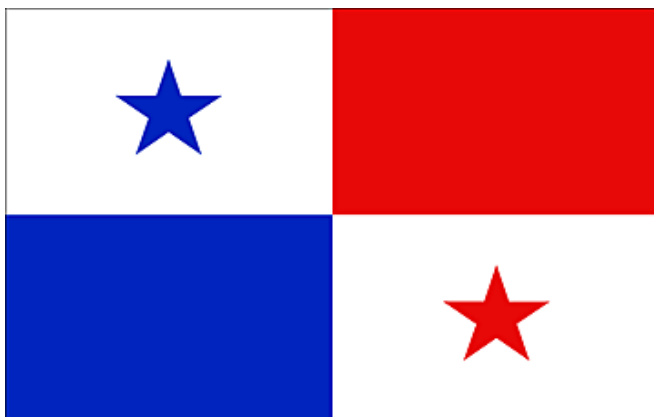
*English opens doors. Read the Newsletter.*

No.10 Vol. I

November 2010

Donation

## VIVA PANAMA



### Controversy

### Anecdotes

### Poetry

**LOS AMIGOS :**  
**Por la superación de la Etnia Negra**

**A group of friends, in Panama, 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**

**PANAMA  
CELEBRATES 107 YEARS**

*The greatest influx of immigrants from the Caribbean islands to Panama started almost at the same time of its separation from Colombia in 1903 and the signing of the treaty that gave way to the construction of the Panama Canal. But West Indians have been in this country since the 1850's with the construction of the railway; yet we are short of information over those that stayed at the end of the project.*

*That means that during Panama's various unions and intended separations from Colombia, people from the islands were here. The question is, did they have any direct or indirect participation in those acts?*

*At 107 years, with its entire inhabitants, Panama has advanced a long way and is surely going towards a First world nation. West Indians have been and are present, every second, hour, day, week, month, and year helping in one way or another, with others, to build up this country.*

*Without neglecting our heritage; the culture our ancestors handed down to us, West Indian descendants will always be a part of this country, integrated to and in each activity that makes it habitable. VIVA PANAMA!!*

*November is Panama's Independence month. We hope you enjoy this youtube celebration in the States forwarded by John E. Edwards: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFaRT0edIIY>*

**FEEDBACK (from our October issue)**

*We are getting lots of oral feedback on the Newsletter. We thank everyone who feels that what we are doing is worthwhile.*

---Ines,

I commend you and your staff for the wonderful work you are doing in efforts to keep our culture alive. Keep up the good work.

I have been saving them as I receive and during available times I read them.

Excellent Reading. Sure brings back a lot of memories. I do not think I have yet read anyone describing the Mango walks in Balboa. I can still see those "Green Hornets" chasing me... *Eunice*

-0-

---Ines, thanks for this informative letter. I remember a lot of this (not saying that I'm old) LOL but girl, everything is so true. Thanks again. *Miriam.*

-0-

-----Congratulation sister Ines and to the Panama Newsletter staff for another revealing and informative info on our Heritage and Culture of the good days of old. We must keep this informative Newsletter alive for the future generation for the posterity of our Roots! (and the lost generations) I will be sending you a few articles in the near future. *CG*

-0-

---THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DUMPLING AND BAKES

But it is time to put the records straight.

I agree, I have been telling people that Andres "Dumpling" Vega coined dumpling using it wrongly. He identify our "bakes" as dumpling.

As you said, "dumplin" is in the soup, but "bakes" is baked in oven or frying pan.

Lets retake our history by setting the record straight and encourage our people to "say it as is" and not follow others for the sole purpose of Rating and Fame. *McLean*

-0-

-----*Carlos Russell* congratulated Fernando on the Newsletter.

-0-

---Sonia provides us with an electronic platform to continue capturing , documenting and sharing wisdom and insights from going down this memory lane (or find/create one to your liking that can be shared widely with all of us). I hope we can continue this. *-ricardo/butch millet* **Thank you for sharing, Sonia**

**EDITH CAVELL BARBADIAN SOCIETY**

*Excerpted from www.history.com*

*Why would Barbadians in Panama name their society Edith Cavell?*

She was brought up to believe In: prayer, self-denial and duty to others. Could that be the reason? One Allied journalist wrote: "What Jeanne d'Arc has been for centuries to France," "that will Edith Cavell become to the future generations of Britons."

**Who was Edith Cavell?**

Edith Cavell was, and still is, a hero to many people. She saved lives and sacrificed her life for others. ([www.walesOnline.co.uk](http://www.walesOnline.co.uk))

The 49-year-old British nurse Edith Cavell was executed on October 12, 1915 by a German firing squad in Brussels, Belgium accused of "underground activity". Cavell's execution led to a rise in anti-German feeling in the United States as well as in Britain, where she was idealized as a heroic martyr.

**What did she do for Barbados?**

## OLDEN DAYS SAYINGS:

### “**Hunt and Peck**”

*By Ines V. Sealy*

Typewriting was an important part of education in days gone by so as to obtain a job. Secretaries, typists, receptionists, bookkeepers, court assistants, etc needed to be able to **type touch system** to acquire speed in preparing documents to be mailed (through the Post Office), transferred from one office to another.

Lately, with the advent of the personal computer, **touch system** is not important anymore. Our young people are using the computer, and the **hunt and peck system** is prevalent.

Anyone 40 years and older can remember the problems we had at school to type 40 words per minute, **without errors**, on the manual typewriter to be able to pass from one grade to another.

Don't talk about the shorthand, we mentioned **Pittman** shorthand before, but there was also the easier **Gregg** shorthand for which we had to take 80 words per minute.

Will typewriting classes like the ones held in La Boca Clubhouse by Mrs. Walker or in Gamboa Clubhouse by Mr. Gladstone Grant ever be held again? Are there many typewriters left? Even the electric ones?

### Read, read, read

*By Ines V. Sealy*

The attitude we see in young people “**nowadays**” is “**live fast and die young**”. What can parents do to offset this feeling in their children? How can we compete with peer pressure without keeping them locked up in our homes? What training do we need as parents? What atmosphere should we offer at home? How can we give them a more positive outlook on life?

One advice could be “**whatever is done in the dark must come to light**” or if you “**go for jelly you (might) get jam**”. Listen, pay attention, learn, because if “**hard ears won't hear, hard ears will feel**”. “**Take talking to**”, “**respect your elders**”, learn from their experience, “**not everything that glitters is gold**”, “**look (good) before you leap**” into situations that might be harmful, at present, or “**in the long run**”. No “**giving a 6 for a 9**”. Be honest, avoid lies, “**it takes 99 lies to cover one**”.

When we are young we think we know everything. But, there is a lot to learn out there. Open your minds to knowledge, it is the only thing no one can take from you. What you have in your brain is yours. You can chose to apply it or just conceal it to yourself. At some time in your **long** life this knowledge will “**come in handy**”. Education does not have to be acquired at a school, books exist so that anyone can be educated just by reading. Read for knowledge, entertainment, research, curiosity, therapy, etc. Books are not like the TV or the radio where you have to be there at a certain time to get the information. You can leave a book and come back to it at any time, the information is still there. Read, read, read.

**Possibility for teachers - for the education system:** There used to be **comic books**. Reading comic books was one way to begin reading as young people. There were comic books in English and Spanish. The way our young people are so much against reading, maybe comic books should be reinstated but as textbooks. I went from reading comic books to pocketbooks. I became such an avid reader that I felt, if I could read a pocketbook in one or two sittings and knowing I would have to read chapters in Post grad, I enrolled in Nova University.

### By Carlos Garnett

Some of the sayings I heard our parents use were such as; 1. “**if you don't hear you will feel.**” meaning, if you do not obey their commands you will be beaten. 2. “**you made your bed, you lie in it.**” meaning, that if you got yourself in trouble, you would have to suffer the consequences. 3. “**You better watch yourself or you are going Fenne.**” If you don't behave yourself you are going to suffer and/or get your behind whipped. 4. “**If I am too fresh come salt me.**”, meaning, if my mouth or behavior is not to your liking then come and make me behave or shut me up. 5. “**That woman love ah say say-**”, meaning, that woman love to gossip

# THE UNTOLD STORY

## LODGES

*By Ines V. Sealy*

There were lodges and societies for men, for women and mixed. They also had juveniles. These lodges and societies were the first “insurance companies” for Blacks in Panama: through them one received sick benefits and an amount for burial upon death. Naturally they entailed hierarchy, having such titles as Grand Ruler, Past master, and so forth. They amassed a large amount of money.

The Jamaican Society built a house and hall in Mariano Arosemena Street, in the city. Sojourner’s had their hall and a few apartments in P street San Miguel, The Barbadian Society (which held meetings down in Marañon) built a house in 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Rio Abajo (which was later sold), the Shepherds built one in 8<sup>th</sup> Street Rio Abajo (where they have their hall and keep their meetings). The Sojourners built one on Via España between 99<sup>th</sup> Street and Dos Palmeras. That one must have brought them lots of money, since it has umpteen apartments, and several locales. The French have their building and hall in O Street

Some of the money the lodges amassed was lost in banks both in Panama and in the West Indies.

Have you ever seen the Shepherds’ Christmas Morning 6:00 a.m. parades? Lately other lodges are marching also.

## CREDIT UNIONS

*By Ines V. Sealy*

In 1947 in Ancon 15 Panama Canal employees put their heads together, and with the assistance of Local 713 Labor union which loaned them \$25.00, plus a letter from the Panama Canal Executive Secretary, Mr. Dunsmoor and other documents, together with 15 signatures began the Credit Unions on the Canal Zone to help low-income employees, on the “Silver Role” residing in the Silver City, Gatun, Gamboa, Paraiso, Red Tank, and La Boca townsites, ban together to help themselves.

Cristobal Credit Union was legalized in 1948. Its first member & President being Foster Nelson McBean Bournes

Regulations called for an initial deposit of \$0.25 to join, with shares going at \$5.00 per member.

Salaries at that time were about \$42.50 per month. By today’s standards that wouldn’t go very far, but at that time a can of milk cost 0.04 and bread was 0.08. An Artcraft shirt cost 1.10 and an Arrow shirt cost 2.50 at the Commissary.

The Credit Union is only as good as the members it serves.

## SING WHILE YOU DRIVE

*Anonymous*

At 45 miles per hour, sing – “Highways are Happy Ways”.

At 55 miles, sing – “I’m But a Stranger Here, Heaven is my Home”.

At 65 miles, sing – “Nearer, My God, to Thee!”

At 75 miles, sing – “When the Roll is Called Up Yonder, I’ll Be There”.

At 85 miles, sing – “Lord, I’m Coming Home”.

*In traffic these days, we can barely drive at 20 miles per hour. What would we sing?*

## PANAMA STRAW HAT

*In the News on Thursday, September 23, 2010, the Panamanian Minister of Commerce stated that there is going to be a new law to prohibit handicraft pertaining to Panama made abroad being sold in Panama.*

*Panama Straw hats are made in Ecuador. Will they still be sold in Panama?*

*These hats became famous with the name Panama although they have never been made in Panama. Many olden days pictures show men in Panama “dressed to kill” in Panama Straw hats. **They are even used as part of the National dress.***



*Excerpted from Wikipedia:*

The Panama Straw hat “is a traditional brimmed [hat](#) of Ecuadorian origin that is made from the plaited leaves of the toquilla straw plant (*Carludovica palmata*). [Straw hats](#) woven in [Ecuador](#), like many other 19th and early 20th century South American goods, were shipped first to the Isthmus of Panama before sailing for their destinations in Asia, the rest of the Americas and Europe. For some products, the name of their point of international sale rather than their place of domestic origin stuck, hence “Panama hats.”<sup>[1]</sup> The [49ers](#) picked up these hats in [Panama](#), and when [President Theodore Roosevelt](#) visited the Panama Canal construction, he wore such a hat, which increased its popularity. They're also known as a [Jipijapa](#), named for a town in Ecuador, one of the centers of the hat trade. The [Oxford English Dictionary](#) cites a use of the term as early as 1834.<sup>[2]</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [The Panama Hat Trail](#), by [Tom Miller](#), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> [Oxford English Dictionary](#)

### 3<sup>rd</sup> OF NOVEMBER

*Excerpted from the poem by Carlos Russell*

Five a.m. in the morning  
 The rooster in Dudu’s yard cracked the dawn.  
 We, young ones, awake  
 The sound of the *Dianas* and drums  
   beating in our breasts..  
 White gabardine suits  
   bought at B’tesh or *El Corte Ingles*  
   pressed, laying on the racks.  
 Mother pressed my shirt.  
 Smithy shined my shoes.  
 Quickly the car runs  
   from Rio Abajo to the Institute.  
 Tall lanky me  
   with Rogers, Berto and a host of others  
*Loco Zerr* leads the pack.  
 “*No es lo mismo ser loco que loco Zerr.*”  
 Alonso’s composition Woody Wood Pecker  
   fills the air.  
 Proud us give the German Kick.  
 Crowds fill the streets.  
 Excitement!

Here comes the *Artes*.  
 The Institute has just gone by  
 Black cat twirling baton  
 The people’s people  
   in mortal combat with the “birds”  
   of the *nido de aguilas*  
 Santa Ana,  
 Catedral  
*Bovedas*.  
 The IPA girls gambol on the street  
*Liceistas* swish and sway  
 Smiling along the way.  
 Sweat.  
 Tears.  
 Home to Rio or to Pueblo  
 Rain and more rain  
 Bullfights in the empty lot  
 Leaning on a weakened fence  
 Rain and more rain  
 White suits brown with mud  
 Black shoes have lost their glow...

## BARBADOS

After the first English settlement at Holetown in 1627, **Barbados** remained a British colony until achieving full independence from Britain on **November 30th 1966**. That first independence ceremony was accompanied by the raising of the [Barbados National Flag](#), and playing of the [National Anthem](#) for the first time. It maintains ties to the Britain monarch represented in Barbados by the Governor General. It is a member of the Commonwealth.

November 30th is celebrated as Independence Day and is a [national holiday](#) in Barbados. Independence celebrations run throughout November and include sports competitions, fairs, community events, and religious services.

**After slavery was abolished in 1834, many of the new citizens of Barbados took advantage of the superb [education](#) available on the island... [www.barbados.org](http://www.barbados.org)**

### **Excellence in Barbados Starts with Discipline**

*Excerpts from this article By Nikole Hannah-Jones,  
a reporter for The US newspaper The Oregonian.*

*(November 1, 2009) - ST. THOMAS PARISH, BARBADOS –*

### ***Congratulations to Barbados***



Barbados graduates 98 percent of its high school students; 53 percent go on to college. This 90 percent-Black nation has the second-highest literacy rate in the world. With 99.7 percent of its population literate, it falls one-tenth of a point behind the three nations tied for first in the world: Cuba, Estonia and Poland ...

The key to Barbados' success is four-fold—high expectations for all students, strict discipline, substantial education spending and a culture that embraces education as a form of nationalism.

“I cannot perceive of meeting someone in my society who can’t read,” says Dr. James Carmichael, a former secondary school teacher and computer scientist. “Education is part of the national conscious[ness].” Expectations for achievement are perhaps most illustrated by a nation’s willingness to spend money on it. Barbados funnels nearly a fifth of its national budget into education, and spends 6.9 percent of its entire gross national product on education, according to the CIA World Factbook, making it 24th in the world.

Parents say: “You can’t get through life without an education”.

Students here attend school for free from pre-kindergarten to university. The government also provides free breakfast and lunch to all students. But Barbados goes further in on key area: health care. Barbadians of all ages have universal free access to health care. If a child is sick, he or she can go to a neighborhood clinic near school for treatment. The schools have a referral system built in for children who need glasses or dental care. “Students don’t have to stay home if they’re sick in Barbados,” says Dr. Dan C. Carter, a former official in the education ministry. “This means they can be in the classroom learning.”

All of these factors help place Barbados first among developing nations on the United Nations’ Human Development Index, an indicator of not just a nation’s wealth, but its quality of life.

Teachers in Barbados are held in esteem and relationships between teachers and students are nurturing but formal. Disrespectful behavior isn’t tolerated, and teachers use several forms of discipline, including **in-school suspension** and even taking students to visit detention and drug rehab centers. But the ultimate tool in their disciplinary arsenal — one that is increasingly controversial worldwide — remains **corporal punishment**. Barbadians young and old recount the fear of floggings — a seldom-used but effective threat. “**I had a caning once in primary school,**” says Rudder, of the education ministry. “**Never again. It was a deterrent for me.**”



**I don't care what they call me as long as they mention my name.** --George M. Cobham



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

**Kwanzaa** is an African American and Pan-African holiday which celebrates family, community and culture. *(taken from the official Kwanzaa site)*

The first-fruits celebrations are recorded in African history as far back as ancient Egypt and Nubia and appear in ancient and modern times in other classical African civilizations such as Ashantiland and Yorubaland. These celebrations are also found in ancient and modern times among societies as large as empires (the Zulu or kingdoms (Swaziland) or smaller societies and groups like the Matabele, Thonga and Lovedu, all of south eastern Africa. Kwanzaa builds on the five fundamental activities of Continental African "first fruit" celebrations: ingathering; reverence; commemoration; re commitment; and celebration. Kwanzaa, then, is:

- a time of ingathering of the people to reaffirm the bonds between them;
- a time of special reverence for the creator and creation in thanks and respect for the blessings, bountifulness and beauty of creation;
- a time for commemoration of the past in pursuit of its lessons and in honor of its models of human excellence, our ancestors;
- a time of re commitment to our highest cultural ideals in our ongoing effort to always bring forth the best of African cultural thought and practice; and
- a time for celebration of the Good, the good of life and of existence itself, the good of family, community and culture, the good of the awesome and the ordinary, in a word the good of the divine, natural and social.

**ENGLISH SERVICES ARE BEING HELD AT 6:00 P.M.**

**ON SUNDAYS**

**AT HOSSANNA BY PASTOR ROBERT ROBINSON.**