

AfroPanamanian Newsletter



English opens doors. Read the Newsletter.

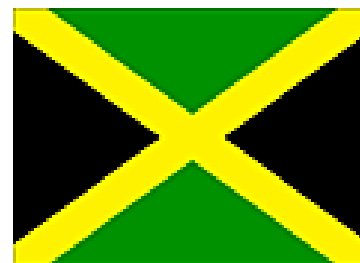
No.7 Vol. I

August 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

August 15th

Two events, each in their own time, which changed the course of things in the world, took place in Panama on the 15th of August.

The first occurred in 1519 when Pedrarias founded a city on the Pacific coast of the then discovered new continent. On this date, Panama the oldest city on mainland America celebrates its 491st birthday.

The other event happened in 1914, ninety six years ago when the Panama Canal was opened to serve the world.

In the long run, the founding of Panama City lead to the construction of the Panama Canal, in which a good many of our ancestors gave sweat and blood to build and of whom, today, we are very proud.

THE JAMAICAN SOCIETY HALL (excerpted from the "Thanksgiving & Musical Program" dated Sunday Oct. 16. 1932)

The Jamaican Society Hall was located off Mariano Arosemena in "R" Street. Its construction was started in July 1928, and in 1929 a Stone-laying ceremony was held at which four corner stones were laid:

- 1 by H.B.M. Master Mayor Braithwaite-Wallis; **British Ambassador**
- 1 by Col. H. Burgess, **Governor of the Canal Zone**
- 1 by the then **Presidential candidate of Panama**, Harmodio Arias, and,
- 1 by Thomas Gabriel Duque, **Lottery Manager**

It burned down and was rebuilt in 1930. *The whole building was torn down in 2006, but it should have been conserved as patrimony.*

(brochure donated by Dr. Hedley Lennan)

FEEDBACK (from our July issue)

August

Dear Ines: Thank YOU for sharing this newsletter; made me smile a lot remembering conversations with my grandmother and her friends, your MOM and a lot of others in the neighborhood, the Church, Betel Mission Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and I could go on and on. May WE always Honor, Respect and Love all those who gave birth to us, raised us, groomed us, mentored us and laid the grown work that many are reaping today. 'MAY THEIR SOULS REST IN PEACE' those whom have gone on to BETTER GLORY.

Love, Blessings Always

Ceci

Thank you Ines. I was so concerned about you and was about to get in touch with friends in England about your situation. Some people are really wicked to do what they did.

Blessings.

Luis Veagra

Hi Ines, The newsletter looks good. I love that you include the old time sayings!

We can include a link to it on our website, if you'd like. Let me know.

Warmly,

Ifeoma

Thank you Ifeoma. That would be nice, but we don't have it included in a website. If there is any other way, let me know.

Hi Ines,

If you have a brief description of the newsletter (mission, content, etc.) we can include that under "partner and respondent publications" and encourage people to contact you to sign up for the mailing list. Would that be helpful? Feel free to let me know your thoughts either way.

Take care,

Ifeoma

This is a very good initiative. Serving useful purposes and well done. I will share with others.

Waldaba

Excellent edition. It contains valuable cultural and historical information. Keep up the good work.

Melva

Dear Ines,
Congratulations to you, Sandra Patterson, Roberto Alleyne, Fernando Goldson and Anthony Cox for this great initiative with the Afro Panamanian Newsletter. It's neat and unique!

Keep up the good work,

Carm

Sandra, the article regarding the Junta Femenina was very interesting. It was very pleasing to remember those wonderful events. Congratulations to you and Ines

Gloria

Love your new letter and it does bring great memories. For your information, when I saw the name Junta Femenina

You know I was the queen in 1964. I really enjoy it (The Debutantes Ball) I some time wonder what happen and where is everybody? that took place in these events

You should have an event that will bring people together again

Silvia

Sandra says: **Silvia was queen in 1966**

Sandy,

You are to be commended for this excellent production. I especially enjoyed the section on the availability of scholarships for students.

Continue the good work.

Kudos to you and the members of your Board!

Dr Nadya E.Parker

Ines, I find all of these bits of information awfully interesting, much of it brings back so many memories of sayings/slangs and many of the foods we once ate in abundance. Today, I still eat many of these foods, not as often or as much as we once did in our early beginnings, but occasionally. The streets and landmarks really hit home, but thank God for much progress, although many of our people have not managed to keep up for one reason or another, thank you for sharing.

George

Tell us about your experiences, both living in the Canal Zone and Panama City. Many of our ancestors had leased land in the Canal Zone. Tell us about them.

Mt. Hope Cemetery, a memory to the Builders by Anthony McLean H.
(written in 2007)
(end of article)

A couple of days ago I finally decided to visit my grandfather's grave.

Born on Crooked-L Island, Bahamas in 1889, he died in Colon on December 15, 1964. He was a great person; my hero. I later found out that he was recognized for valor during a shipping fire at the Cristobal dock in 1920, my double hero. I went to the spot where I thought he was buried but it could not be found. Then I walked over to the administration office expecting to hear the clerk say that his remains were removed and cast away, to my surprise that was not the case. There I learned many interesting things. She told me that he is buried in the **West Indian section** and nobody can be removed from there. She even walked to the site with me and showed me the exact spot. So we slowly and silently walked back to the office, I sat down and she showed me the data of his burial, and a long list as far back as 1950 of the people buried there.

Panama took full ownership as a result of the Panama Canal Treaty of 1977.

Ancestral Grounds

Then turning, (she) showed me other burial sections and said *"ustedes los descendientes antillanos porque no arreglan su sitio como los demás. Allá, los chinos, los americanos y los otros extranjeros tienen arreglado el sitio de entierro de sus antepasados pero ustedes no hacen nada."* I was shocked; I stood in awe as she spoke. I did not have the least idea of what she was talking about. She explained that, complying with international agreements they cannot remove any person buried in their **ancestral grounds**. That ancestral ground is for the Canal Builders and they must be honored eternally. Our problem she said is that we are not taking care of our ancestral ground and it's in a very poor shape. She urged me to do something and to ask others to at least clean-up the graves.

I'll be working on my grandfathers resting spot very soon and I hope that others will follow suit.

CIA abuse in Panama

By Ines V. Sealy

In the year 1983, after many of our Black young men had finished the Apprenticeship Program in the Canal Zone and were finally making a good salary, comparative to what the White guys were making, the CIA was brought down to Panama by the Canal Zone Government setting some of these guys up and causing them to lose their jobs and what had been accumulated towards their retirement.

Maybe there was petty thievery going on: some pens, pencils, maybe photocopies, little things. Of course, drops in a bucket, will eventually fill the bucket, which would mean that the petty thievery could amount to a sum of money in the long run, but what they did to set up our young men was quite unjust.

Mostly in the Electrical Division of the Panama Canal Company and the Maintenance and Supply Divisions of the U.S. Army in Corozal these honest guys were accused. They were fired for having an extra roll of cable in the truck (no one knew who put it there), leaving the motorpool with a motor (on an open bed truck), offering drugs to a CIA agent (no witness to the sale, no evidence of the drug).

These actions changed the lives of those guys. Most of them survived because they had other skills and a determination to live and to have their reputation restored. To this day some are still complaining to the Government of the United States of America, trying to get some redress. The cases were so mixed up.

We feel that this could be a consequence of the 1977 Treaty. The Canal Zone Government wanted to get rid of some of its employees. What was the objective of bringing the CIA to the Canal Zone? Was there a threat to the Canal? Was this a beginning toward "Just Cause"? These and many other questions are in the air.

ODDS & ENDS

Did Coca Cola begin in Panama?

By Ines V. Sealy

Being on vacation in Georgia, I had the opportunity to visit the Coca Cola Headquarters. I was mainly interested to see the international video, filming of which I had participated. Pleasantly, the beginning of the video shows Panamanian *diablitos sucios and polleras*. **Could it be that Coca Cola really began its expansion in Panama?**

Excerpted from "World Wide Bottles" by Grace Lawrence and Gretchen Teal

*In January 1912 five young men from the U.S. pooled all their savings to buy the Paraiso Springs Carbonating Works from W. N. Seitz. The plant consisted of a small hand powered plant located at Paraiso Springs in a two story wooden building. They paid \$6,000 for their new business and then acquired the rights to Coca Cola and Hires Root Beer and started operations. In January of 1914 they were notified by the Panama Canal that they would have to move from the Canal Zone, which they did in March of 1914. The Coca Cola Company still exists in Panama today."

How easy it was to start a business in Panama in the 1900's. To do that these days, requires an arm and a leg.

"A Lonely Shadow"

By Antonio Cox

27-7-2002

Sad is a shadow, walking down A dark street
looking for a body to talk with
All you can hear is the wind blowing
dry leaves in the quiet of night,
still looking for someone to
walk along in this journey.
Out of an alley came a body,
looking for a shadow,
along they went;
Two total strangers hand in hand
to never depart from each other.

Request for feedback assistance:

Somebody field don't get no bat
And ah lay wait in the back
Somebody field don't get no bat
An' ah bust one head with a rock (pronounced rack)

Who knows the rest of this calypso, or, the reason for the jingle.



OPPORTUNITIES: (forwarded by Antony Brown) (continued)

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS: Though there are a number of companies and organizations donating money for scholarships to African Americans, a great deal of the money is being returned because of a lack of interest or awareness. Money shouldn't be returned to donating companies because we fail to apply for it.

Please pass this information on to family members, nieces, nephews, friends with children etc. We must get the word out that money is available.

If you are a college student or getting ready to become one, you probably already know how useful additional money can be.

(If clicking on the link doesn't work, then type in the Web site address manually or copy and paste.)

36) Federal Scholarships & Aid Gateways 25 Scholarship Gateways from Black Excel <http://www.blackexcel.org/25scholarships.htm>

37) Scholarship & Financial Aid Help <http://www.blackexcel.org/fin-sch.htm>

38) Scholarship Links (Ed Finance Group) http://www.efg.net/link_scholarship.htm

39) FAFSA On The Web (Your Key Aid Form & Info) <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

40) Aid & Resources For Reentry Students <http://www.back2college.com/>

41) Scholarships and Fellowships <http://www.osc.cuny.edu/sep/links.html>

42) Scholarships for Study in Paralegal Studies <http://www.paralegals.org/Choice/2000west.htm>

43) HBCU Packard Sit Abroad Scholarships (for study around the world) http://www.sit.edu/studyabroad/packard_nomination.html

44) Scholarship and Fellowship Opportunities <http://ccmi.uchicago.edu/schl1.html>

45) INROADS internships <http://www.inroads.org/>

46) ACT-SO bEURE Olympics of the Mind 'A Scholarships' <http://www.naacp.org/work/actso/act-so.shtml>

47) Black Alliance for Educational Options Scholarships' <http://www.baeo.org/options/privatelyfinanced.jsp>

48) ScienceNet Scholarship Listing' <http://www.sciencenet.emory.edu/undergrad/scholarships.html>

49) Graduate Fellowships For Minorities Nationwide' <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Student/GRFN/list.phtml?category=MINORITIES>

50) RHODES SCHOLARSHIPS AT OXFORD' <http://www.rhodesscholar.org/info.html>

51) The Roothbert Scholarship Fund' <http://www.roothbertfund.org/schol>

AT THE US EMBASSY

College Horizons

A local program supplying special academic attention and mentors to **low-income high school students** with good academic indexes to help them increase their points in the tests toward university admissions, either in Panama or the United States. **English Level required: intermediate.**

Opportunity Grants

Helps **talented students** who cannot pay the preliminary costs of tests, applications, travel and initial costs toward study in U.S. universities, so that they maybe competitive to opt for a scholarship. **English Level required: advanced.**

Faculty Enhancement Seminar

An Eight-week program for **University teachers** who at least have a bachelors, and who have not travelled frequently to the U. S. **English Level required: advanced.**

We in Panama feel that the requirements are too rigid. It is hard to get in. If one has the age, he/she may not have the educational requirement. With the educational background, the age or some other requirement, is a limitation.

We may not be able to meet the requirements, but, as a proud community, our people will continue to struggle to reach the desired heights.

Did you hear about the two frogs who fell into a pail of milk?

They were swimming around in the milk trying to get out of the pail. One got tired and decided to give up. He sank and was drowned. The other kept on swimming until a wad of butter formed. He climbed on the butter and jumped out of the pail. Our people will continue to struggle.

OLDEN DAYS SAYINGS:

“See to buy, ask to borrow”

By Antonio Cox 1-8-10

Old folks always believed in saving at home, not in a bank. They saved in KLIM cans and in shoe boxes. Women did the saving, even in “**susu**”. If you ask a young person that is working, nowadays, if he/she has a bank account, they will tell you “no”, but they will show you 5 credit cards, they’ll tell you “that is money”.

Children learn from their parents, “**monkey see, monkey do**”. We live in a society that consumes everything, even what we don’t need.

Take a simple example: if you go to buy an article and you are short of a penny, you will not get it. **If you don’t have that penny, you can’t complete a dollar.** We must learn to “**teach our dollars to have more cents**”.

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by Ines V. Sealy

“**An idle mind is the devil’s workshop**”; I feel that this sentence fits my case very well. Some useless, lazy vagrant, having no shame, chose to use my name to request donations, instead of working for a living. The Bible says: “**By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread**”. This dirty, lowdown person, trying to outsmart others, has made it a business to hack other persons e-mail, telling lies and requesting money. Friends, acquaintances and others, please, “**be on your p’s and q’s**”. Be very careful which e-mails you open, even if they are coming from someone you know. People like those, they should “**lock up (in a dungeon) and throw away the key**”, the thing is, *are they ever caught?*

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“**An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth**” and “**one for one**” is causing lots of death in this world. In the news everyday there are deaths because of “**taking revenge**”. Young people, middle age people, and old people are being killed because of “**taking revenge**”. Sometimes it is one for many. What can we do to stop the killing? When will the revenge stop? We may know how things get started, but we never know how they will end. This is a call to stop the killing. Stop the revenge. Some say “**revenge is sweet**” but then, “**what sweet yuh mouth bun yuh tail**”.

“**Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord**”. Leave it to Him. Protect yourself against “**retribution**”.

GAMES WEST INDIAN CHILDREN PLAYED

DRUNKEN SAILOR

by Ines V. Sealy

(game played by me in Parque Lefevre, with my friends, Norma Ramsey, Myrna Crouch R.I.P. (and others)

DRUNKEN SAILOR, PANAMA SAILOR,
DRUNKEN SAILOR, PANAMA SAILOR.

This game we invented based on the sailors who, when they came off the ships passing through the Canal during war time in the 1940's would get drunk in the bars in the 5th of May plaza area (Happyland, Kelly's Ritz, etc.) then they would hug each other and weave their way back to the ships.

We in turn, wrapped our arms around each other's shoulder and weaved from one side of the road to the other, which, at that time was a narrow dirt road with many potholes and very little traffic. One on the end would either drop or be dropped by a pothole, causing the game to start over changing positions.



(IMAGE TAKEN FROM

PICKS

The boys played picks. Picks consisted of obtaining a broom stick from which a piece about 2 ½ inches was cut. A point was sharpened from this piece. The longer piece was used to hit the point of this short piece and bat it away. The winner, was who could bat the farthest.

Slingshot was an intricate piece of weapon made by the boys, which had to have the right yoke of the specific tree, the right piece of bicycle tube and the special tongue of the lace-up shoe. There had to be an expedition into the woods to find the yoke, then a trip to the tire repair shops and a nice old leather shoe for that tongue to make the sling. These were used for bird-hunting.