

AfroPanamanian Newsletter



English opens doors. Read the Newsletter

www.afropanameniannewsletter.mex.tl.

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Donation

Black Heritage Month

<http://www.koreus.com/video/perpetuum-jazzile-africa.html>



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.
“For Black history to be done right, we must do it ourselves.” Edward Gaskin

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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

*We salute all workers on May 1st,
International Labor Day!*

Although it originated in the USA it is not celebrated on this date in that country but has become an international celebration because of the social and economical achievement of the labor movement since 1886.

It all started on May 1st with a 3day strike in Chicago, Illinois, USA that not only involved workers but immigrants and others. Police claimed that they intervened because of an incident, opened fired, killed four strikers and a police.

A rally was called for the next day at Haymarket Square police moved in to disperse the event and again opened fire against the crowd. A dozen people died.

Defendants were called anarchist, a sensational show trial was held in which eight were tried and led to the eventual public hanging of four, causing outrage around the globe. This is known as the Haymarket incident

Thanks to those martyrs we have an eight hour labor day.

*We also salute nurses
on May 12th,
International Nurses Day*



FEEDBACK (from our April issue)

To the Afro Panamanian Newsletter

Excellent Newsletter. I enjoy reading it. Great information. Congratulation to the staff. **Martha**

Find *Presencia Panameña* (the only Panamanian Newspaper in the USA) at WWW.ELSOLDATA.COM/PRESENCIA

The word "cemetery" comes from the Greek *koimetirion* which means: dormitory. (very appropriate, a dormitory for the dead).

---On the SAAMAP AFRO ANTILLEAN FAIR FOOD VENDORS---

I attended the Fair as I do every year and this year as in the past I was there for the two days. I enjoy the Fair and invite friends and family to attend.

This year it was great. As we now know, due to uncontrollable circumstances, the Afro Antillean Fair location was changed to the ATLAPA Convention Center. And the move, I believe, was a big plus for SAAMAP, the organizers. With the change of location and more ample space, the attendance multiplied. Great!!! Hope that next year, it will be there again.

Although the new traffic Law to solve traffic jams caused by minor accidents was delayed, it is now in force and here is a website at which you can download the information to keep copies in your car: **"Always be ready"** <http://www.sura.com.pa/Biblioteca/Decreto958/Procedimiento%20a%20seguir.pdf> (URL contributed by Cecil Reynolds)

http://www.tvn-2.com/noticias/archivo/Formato_Unico_definitivo_2011.pdf (form)

In the International Year of the Afro-descendant: One Love (Around the World) (contributed by L. Eccleston)

http://www.playingforchange.com/popvideo.php?poster=/poly/content/14/16h6i63x1.jpg&number=3&videoid=788930d853d87e71bc7184bc49836a1b&youtube=http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xjPODksI08&facebook=&vimeo=http://vimeo.com/4533013&myspace=http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&Videoid=51803787&title=One_Love

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xjPODksI08&facebook=&vimeo=http://vimeo.com/4533013&myspace=http://vids.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=vids.individual&Videoid=51803787&title=One_Love

OLDEN DAYS SAYINGS

I'm going to use some of the olden days sayings to analyse the transportation situation in our country at present.

"They start before they ready". The present government is trying to cover lots of ground in a short period of time. It is true that we are seeing progress in the Province of Panama, but the interior is not getting as much. They will say **"nothing tried, nothing done"**, and that we should **"endure the discomfort to enjoy the comfort,"** but, how comes we buy the busses first and fix the roads after? How comes the busses arrive and then the routes are set? And the busses are here and not enough chauffeurs to drive them? Do we have enough mechanics to maintain them? So where is the business that will be selling the tickets? And the bus stops on the North or South Corridor? **"They put the cart before the horse"**.

Don't talk about the Metro system (underground and aerial). Holes being dug here and there, a machine that is going to burrow 25 feet below the surface, closed off streets, causing more street jams, areas being affected, walls being torn down, besides an extension of the coastal belt without consulting the UNESCO, etc. **"we will see the outcome"**

Preparation, perception, and **"slow but sure"**, is what they should use. **"Haste makes waste"** should be learnt from the example of the approach to the Centenary bridge which collapsed recently. The *Mireya* administration hurried to complete the bridge, without an approach. So as to put the bridge to use, the approach had to be built. Apparently it was hurried down causing this outcome.

THE UNTOLD STORY

Our ancestors instituted races: dogs (held where Plaza Conconrdia is), horses, they began the Race Track. This page is a joint effort of Cecil Reynolds, Felix Richards, Ines Sealy and others.

ORIGINS OF THE RACE TRACK

Profesor *Ernesto Enrique Argote* states that in the years 1912-1913 there was informal horse racing in *Guabito*, Province of *Bocas del Toro*. The project was known as “Blair Park” in honor of Mr. Henry Blair, manager of the United Fruit Company, who contributed to its construction. Jamaican immigrants Mr. J. J. Harrison Sr. And members of the Surgeon family, enthusiasts, were its co-organizers.

The streets of Colon also staged horse races in 1912. Up to 7 horses competed at a time. The majority of the jockeys came incognito from Kingston, Jamaica, arriving first by United Fruit boats to *Bocas* later being transferred to Colon.

“The Star & Herald gives us the first formal confirmation of the existence of racing activity in 1880 and it began as a hobby in what is now known as *Tumba Muerto*. The Juan Franco Race Track was formally inaugurated, in 1922, in what is today *Urbanizacion Obarrio*. It was later transferred to the Juan Diaz area in the ‘60s. ... and named after the ex-President who was killed at the Race Track

The names of many West Indians must be mentioned when talking about races: Henry “Takeaway” White (who started the veterinary practice in Panama), Edbert Edward Gittens, Llewelyn Welsh, Gaspar Omphroy, John (Arthur Doyle) Williams, Gerald Silvera and others.” ***(Taken from the Thesis of Leroy Husband)*** The West Indians were the ones who made the saddles, the whips from leather, and the shoes for the horses.

Via Brazil, which now consists of four lanes, was once a track called Towie Bend, populated by Afro descendants related to the care of horses and their families.

John Dykes

John Dykes was a Barbadian jockey at Juan Franco race track who when he was going to ride a horse, the track became jampacked with Barbadians, both shouting and betting, because whichever horse he was riding would win.

Even the White men who worked and lived on the Canal zone came to the race track when John Dykes was riding.

But John Dykes got smart once and there was a horse called a mule (because it could not run, worth the fodder it ate) since it could not win a race. Dykes decided to paint a horse that was a winner and enter it in a race under the name of the “mule”.

None of the bettors paid the horse any attention, since they knew it would not win. Only some White men were betting heavily on this “mule”.

The race began, and to everyone’s surprise the “mule” under John Dykes’ whip was the winner. Everything was going well in the winner’s circle until it started to rain. Lo! And behold, the color of the horse began to change. The rain was washing the paint off the horse.

By this time, John Dykes and his White men friends had long collected and gone over to the Canal Zone (the Zone had its own law).

Dykes was barred from the race track.

This came on the e-mail. We thought it spread-worthy since it contains some values that the whole world could use.

HONOR IS STILL IMPORTANT

With their country in the midst of a colossal disaster –**The Japanese citizens can teach plenty of lessons to the world.**

Ten things to learn from Japan where honor is still important

1. THE CALM

Not a single visual of chest-beating or wild grief. **Sorrow itself has been elevated.**

2. THE DIGNITY

Disciplined queues for water and groceries. Not a rough word or a crude gesture. Their patience is admirable and praiseworthy.

3. THE ABILITY

The incredible architects, for instance. **Buildings swayed but didn't fall.**

4. THE GRACE (Selflessness)

People bought only what they needed for the present, so everybody could get something.

5. THE ORDER

No looting in shops. No honking and no overtaking on the roads. Just understanding.

6. THE SACRIFICE

Fifty workers stayed back to pump sea water in the N-reactors. How will they ever be repaid? *Will they survive? In what condition?*

7. THE TENDERNESS (& HONESTY)

Restaurants cut prices. An unguarded ATM is left alone. The strong cared for the weak.

8. THE TRAINING

The old and the children, everyone knew exactly what to do. And they did just that.

9. THE MEDIA

They showed magnificent restraint in the bulletins. **No silly reporters. Only calm reportage.** Most of all – NO POLITICIANS TRYING TO GET CHEAP MILEAGE. (politicians from other countries- are you listening?)

10. THE CONSCIENCE

When the power went off in a store, people put things back on the shelves and left quietly.

Edith Cavell

When a profession is more than a job

Sandra Patterson

British born nurse and humanitarian also an influential pioneer of modern nursing in Belgium, Edith Cavell is celebrated for saving the lives of casualties from all sides without distinction and in helping some 200 Allied soldiers escape from German-occupied Belgium during World War I, for which she was arrested. She was court-martialled and found guilty of treason. Sentenced to death and shot by firing squad. She received worldwide sympathetic press coverage.

International Nurses Day

Sandra Patterson

Florence Nightingale was a celebrated English nurse and writer, who believed that God had called her to be a nurse. She came to prominence for her pioneering work in nursing during the Crimean War where she tended to wounded soldiers. She was dubbed "The Lady with the Lamp" after her habit of making rounds at night.

Nightingale laid the foundation of professional nursing with the establishment, in 1860, of her nursing school at St Thomas' Hospital in London the first secular nursing school in the world, now part of King's College London. The Nightingale Pledge taken by new nurses was named in her honour, and the annual International Nurses Day is celebrated around the world on her birthday, May 12th.

Florence Nightingale was born into a rich, upper-class, well-connected British family at the Villa Colombaia near the Porta Romana at Belosguardo in Florence, Italy, and was named after the city of her birth.

The Sidney Young Bust

Paraphrasing Anthony McLean with regards to the Sydney Young Park on *Via España*, between 13 and 14th streets which is supposed to be the only park in the City of Panama specifically honouring an outstanding West Indian from our Black Community; we are questioning - where will the Sidney Young bust be erected now?



This park came about through lobbying by Councilmen: Leroy Husband and Patricio Sterling in 1966 and monetary contributions by the Black community. It had to be rescued from becoming a swimming pool in 1988 by “Comité Pro-Rescate del Parque Sidney Young” when the then Representative of *Rio Abajo*, *Juan Alcazar*, irreverently had a crew begin digging while we were sitting before him trying to solve the swimming pool problem. Again by *Fundación Bayano*, after it had been turned into a Farmer’s Market.

The park has now been converted into an outdoor “Food Court” by the actual Representative, who promises to build a high rise building at the 3rd Age Center. Does he know that a river coming from *Panama Viejo*, passing 14 St. *Rio* runs under that area?

Do we have to pull together the “Comité Pro-Rescate del Parque Sidney Young” again?

Some of our members have passed on, but those of us that are left (Leroy Husband, Hugo Wood, Juan Fagette, Ines Sealy, Leroy Rogers, Dr. Eugenio Newman, Graciela Dixon, Sonia Brown), incorporating others, can “pick up the cross” and carry the protest forward.

THE 50'S & 60'S

Grouping together is very important in the Black community in Panama. We group up in church organizations, lodges, clubs (bingo, pokeno, domino, susu, crochet, embroidery, sewing, singing, swimming, athletics, sports), "you name it".

Club McAllister

By Fernando A Goldson

Late 1953 a group of young men got together and formed a social club by the name of "*Los Condes del Oriente*". Its members were: Luis (Flaco Bala) Henriquez, Junior Edgehill, Leroy Ford, Leroy Gittens (R.I.P.), Roy Hendricks, Clarence (Wimba) Hill (R.I.P.), Cecilio (Belleza) Payne, Conrado Porte Thomas (R.I.P.), Vicente Watson (R.I.P.), Walter Watson (R.I.P.), and Junior White.

One year later, the name of the club was changed to Club Social McAllister. Junior White and Junior Edgehill were not a part of the new club.

Club Social McAllister was somewhat a household name very soon, with its popular dances at the Elks Club upstairs the *Encanto* Theater in *Calidonia* (which is now the 99 store across from the Machetazo).

In 1955, Alonso Wilson (who is very ill at the moment in the States), a Panamanian songwriter, well known in those days for the songs he wrote for social clubs and calypsos, wrote the club song "McAllister", which became a big hit, not to be confused with the Club Social McHarlem.

In today's language, the rating of Club Social McAllister and its individual members, went "off the chart".

At the end of the decade, the club dismantled. Some of the members started migrating to the USA.

Night of Fun

From the 40's to the 60's young afrodescendants were involved in groups mentioned above. These groups produced events mainly to raise funds.

One of these events was the famous Night-o-Fun, held under the cellar of homes in Rio Abajo, Parque Lefevre, Juan Diaz and extended to San Miguel, Marañon, the Canal Zone local rate communities, and Colon. These nocturnal safe entertainment events kept our young people busy, either preparing or enjoying them: getting Love (Hayott) to play his "juke box" with the latest music for dancing (Rock 'n Roll, Bop,), getting the ingredients for the food to be sold, the drinks (Kool Aid, maybe with Fruit Cocktail in the bottom). There were no chairs, no tables. A paper bag or colored paper around the light bulb or a blue or red bulb.

Although the term "dance on one tile" was used, it didn't really represent what was going on, since some of the floors under the cellar were dirt, therefore there were no tiles, but, the music and the type of dance step, gave the impression of not doing much movement: cheek to cheek, belly to belly, thighs to thighs, then you "Rock and roll". In those days the girls wore wide petticoats, crinoline, can can, so that the boys really didn't get very close to our intimate parts, besides there was the stance to be used if you didn't want to "rub and scrub" or "shine the buckle"

There were favourite partners to do the "bop", in which each couple showed its prowess, with the girl hopping around the boy's shoulder, waist or between his legs, couples doing the slow dance, etc.

These events began at 7:00 p.m. and lasted till about 2:00 a.m.

JUAN FRANCO RACE TRACK

(The area from *Via Brasil* to the Mini Max Restaurant going all the way back to the Alamo Hotel, which is now called *Obarrio*, was known as the *Juan Franco* Race Track. On the corner of the parking area of the *Arrocha* drugstore was the *Don Samy* “greasy bag” 24 hr. restaurant)



THE POWER OF THE PRESS

A preacher wanted to raise money for his church, and being told that there was a fortune in horse racing, he decided to purchase one and enter him in a race. However, at the local auction, the going price for horses were so steep that he ended up buying a donkey instead.

He figured that since he had it, he might as well go ahead and enter it in the races. To his surprise, the donkey came in third. The next day the racing sheets carried this headline:

PREACHER'S ASS SHOWS

The preacher was so pleased with the donkey that he entered it again, and it won, the paper said:

PREACHER'S ASS OUT IN FRONT

The Bishop was so upset with this kind of publicity that he ordered the preacher not to enter the donkey in another race, the paper said:

BISHOP SCRATCHES PREACHER'S ASS

This was just too much for the Bishop and he ordered the preacher to get rid of the animal. The preacher decided to give it to a nun in a nearby Convent. The headline the next day read:

NUN HAS BEST ASS IN TOWN

The Bishop fainted. He informed the nun that she would have to dispose of the donkey and she finally found a farmer who was willing to buy it for \$10.00. The paper read:

NUN PEDDLES ASS FOR TEN BUCKS

They buried the Bishop the next day.