

# AfroPanamanian Newsletter



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**No.6 Vol. III**

**July 2012**

**Donation**



<http://www.jis.gov.jm/ja50/v/>

Jamaica  
celebrates  
50 years of independence  
August 6  
2012

## 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 issued in 1951 as a 10 cent postage stamp, used for years. Permission for its continuous use was given by his grandnephew, Cecil Reynolds.

***Editorial***

God  
grant me the serenity  
to accept  
the things I cannot change;  
Courage  
to change  
the things I can  
and  
Wisdom  
to know  
the difference.

***-Kindness is the language the blind can see and the deaf can hear.***

July 2012

**FEEDBACK** (from June Newsletter)

Dear Ms. Sealy,

Thanks so much again for the newsletter. Even I remember the details about washing and hanging clothes on the clothes line in my home state of Florida—not too different from the way you all did things down in Panama. In addition, I'm learning to walk that mile. Good luck on a new Constitution for Panama. Looks like Black History Month was a HUGE success in Panama!

Sincerely,

Doc Robinson

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Jump for **Jamaica's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary** <http://www.youtube.com/embed/BXZRmTQ5rpM>

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WEBSITES ABOUT MARCUS GARVEY and Panama (Contributed by Sergio Green)

[http://virtual.yosemite.cc.ca.us/smithaj/marcus\\_garvey%20Black%20Nationalism.htm](http://virtual.yosemite.cc.ca.us/smithaj/marcus_garvey%20Black%20Nationalism.htm)

<http://www.international.ucla.edu/africa/mgpp/sample07.asp>

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/filmmore/ps\\_go.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/filmmore/ps_go.html)

<http://www.wbgarvey.com/>

<http://www.marcusmosiahgarvey.org/section1.php>

<http://www.marcusmosiahgarvey.org/section3.php>

[http://www.portlimon.com/garvey\\_limon.html](http://www.portlimon.com/garvey_limon.html)

<http://www.afroconciencia.com/2011/03/quien-fue-marcus-garvey.html>

[http://www.caribenet.info/pensare\\_05\\_ross\\_flotanegra.asp?l=](http://www.caribenet.info/pensare_05_ross_flotanegra.asp?l=)

<http://clio.academiahistoria.org.do/trabajos/clio168/tema12-hgm-jlg.pdf>

<http://ksafa.net/KSAFA/garvey%20feat.htm>

[http://www.experiencefestival.com/marcus\\_garvey\\_-\\_charged\\_with\\_mail\\_fraud](http://www.experiencefestival.com/marcus_garvey_-_charged_with_mail_fraud)

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*There has been an e-mail going around of an interview on Fox TV by a Panamanian who brought his son to Panama and upon return to the States, made negative comments about Colon.*

*Seeing that he has bettered himself and has been able to give his children a better life than he feels he would have been able to, in Colon, shouldn't he do something to help make for a better life in the city of his birth, as these people are doing?*

*People like Rose Cromwell (US citizen born in the US), Norma Lewis, Melida Harris, Sandra Sergeant, Dr. Roland Edwards and **Jorge Brathwaithe**, who writes:*

Fellow citizens and friends,

1. We recognize that the City of Colon, with its “roaches” is not now, the “gold coast” we knew.
2. We recognize that those that are most affected by the present conditions in the City of Colon are the children.
3. We recognize that together we can make a difference in the lives of these Colon children.
4. The PANAM Network Foundation continues at the forefront, with programs in Colon supporting children who show the desire to succeed academically but have a large amount of limitations.

*They can be reached at these websites:* [rosecromwell@gmail.com](mailto:rosecromwell@gmail.com), [nlewiscarnavales@yahoo.com](mailto:nlewiscarnavales@yahoo.com), [www.nic-eth.com](http://www.nic-eth.com), [ssergent1@live.com](mailto:ssergent1@live.com), [reeroland@yahoo.com](mailto:reeroland@yahoo.com), [www.panamnetwork.com](http://www.panamnetwork.com) (*see more on page 6*)

## THE UNTOLD STORY



### Excerpts from George Westerman's booklet THE WEST INDIAN WORKER ON THE CANAL ZONE.

...The history of the West Indies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is the story of a phenomenal rise in economic prosperity accompanied by very wide powers of self-government for European settlers, followed in the nineteenth century by a steep economic decline which resulted, in nearly all the Dependencies, in the loss of self-government and the substitution of direct political control... *Therefore their nationals were ripe for contracting to the Canal Zone.*

### BULK OF LABORERS

The labor question was always one of the most difficult involved in the canal construction. After experiments with various nationalities did not prove encouraging, Theodore P. Shonts, Chairman of the Isthmian Canal Commission, declared: "The Commission has been forced to the conclusion, which was reached by its predecessors in the field, that all things considered, the West Indian Negro is the most desirable of all classes of laborers that can be secured in sufficient numbers..." (Forbes Lindsay – Panama and the Canal to Date –p.146 Boston, 1910). The census of 1912 noted the presence of workers from 40 nationalities... all of whom the West Indian worker survived.

The peak-year of employment on the Canal Zone was reached in 1913 at which time there were 44,711 of these immigrants employed on the silver rolls of the Panama Canal and Panama Railroad, the greater number residing on the Canal Zone. ...By working on through the various epidemic that occurred, taking the places of those who fell before them, the 31,000 laborers brought to the Isthmus by the Isthmian Canal Commission from various West Indian Islands, braved the hardships and dangers to which they were constantly exposed.



### INJURIES & DEATH

... The bulk of the building work on the Canal has been done by West Indian carpenters, masons, and painters, under the direction of American foremen. The drilling in the cut and the firing of locomotives were all done by West Indians. Particularly in the trades mentioned the men developed steadiness, and toward the end of the construction period the West Indian remained on the job as steadily as the Spaniard, or even the American...(Major R. E. Wood, USA (ret.) The Panama Canal, Vol.I San Francisco, Neal Pub. Co.)

What the rigors of nature had spared West Indian workers the hazardous strain of the construction of the Panama Canal demanded from him. Particularly during the construction period of 1904 through 1914, hundreds of West Indians died violent deaths or sustained permanent physical or mental injuries, by premature or delayed explosions of dynamite, asphyxiation in pits, falling from high places, train wrecks, landslides and falling rocks in the Canal cut, and other hazards of their work.

On one occasion, an explosion resulted in the death of 26 workers, 19 of whom were West Indians, while 40 or more of them were injured. Such accidents were rather frequent with the West Indian paying the largest roll in lives and injuries; at all times heading the casualty lists.

### “St. Christopher's Church Started in a Canteen”

*(taken from the booklet presented at a Prayer breakfast celebrating its 73<sup>rd</sup> anniversary, edited and expanded by Ines V. Sealy)*

*All the old people tell us “St. Christopher's Church Started in a Canteen”*

St. Christopher's Parish came to be as the result of the missionary spirit of members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, the “Mother Church” of many missions established outside of the Canal Zone in Panama City, in the early 1930's, the Rev. Arthur Nightingale, Archdeacon of the Diocese of Panama, held worship services in two homes in the neighborhood of Rio Abajo. One location was the home of Edward and Clarice Phillips, grandparents of Violet Waithe La Motte. Mr. Samuel Holder and other members of St. Paul's conducted a thorough canvas of the neighborhood to determine the need of an Episcopal presence in the area. The response was positive, and space was rented in the basement of Building 1090 on *Rio Abajo* road (facing which presently houses “Kelvin's”). The space formerly housed the neighborhood *cantina*, but with the addition of an organ from St. Paul's and some pews from St. Luke's Cathedral, an attractive house of worship was created. On July 23, 1939, The Right Reverend Harry Beal, second bishop of Panama, dedicated St. Christopher's Mission, named after a North African Martyr of the Early fourth century. Services were held at this location of nearly Seven years.

In those first years, the Rev. Clarence Cragwell, a deacon from St. Paul's, with the assistance of Mr. Samuel Holder and Mrs. Louise Thompson, under the supervision of Archdeacon Nightingale, conducted the Daily Offices and Church School classes. Archdeacon Nightingale celebrated Holy Eucharist on the third Sunday of each month and Evensong on Thursday evenings. On occasion, Bishop Beale would visit and celebrate Holy Eucharist or lead Evensong, in 1940, a newly-ordained deacon, Rev. Lemuel Shirley, was assigned to St. Christopher's Mission. Six months later he was ordained to the priesthood and became Priest-in-charge on April 23, 1942.

John Blackman became a Lay Reader and Church-school Superintendent, and a choir was organized by Mrs. Beatrice Heslop (organist) with the aid of Miss Emily Butcher. Vestments for Father Shirley were sewn by Eloise Wynter (Small) and Beatrice Heslop.

The church continued to grow and the desire for their own house of worship became a very serious concern for the congregation. Funds were raised among the congregation, and were solicited from fraternal organizations and other interested individuals in the community. Fund-raising activities such as garden parties, fashion shows, queen contest, and pot-luck dinners were conducted by the women of the mission. Soon an attractive piece of land on a hill on Calle 10, Parque Lefevre was purchased. Bishop Beal made appeals to the United States, and the Women's Auxiliary (now known as the Episcopal Church Women) provided a grant of \$15,000.00 for a church, parish hall, and rectory. However, the world was at war and construction was not possible at that time. Bishop Beal and Mr. Frank Dopp were working on drawings of the proposed buildings, but Bishop Beal's sudden death brought everything to a standstill.

The arrival of the Right Reverend Heber Gooden, third bishop of Panama, put things back into motion. Bishop Gooden appealed to the National Council of the Episcopal Church and a grant for an additional \$11,000.00. On April 26, 1946, St. Christopher's Church was consecrated by Bishop Gooden, and Mr. Cecil Lloyd Carter delivered the message that day. Some years later, a remodeling of the facility was done with the help of Mr. Eduardo Willock, which brought the building to its present standards.

The story of St. Christopher's Parish is one of a Christian community in the Anglican tradition. It is the story of people who are faithful to the traditions of their ancestors yet working to understand and express an Anglican faith which is Panamanian in context. It is the story of a Christian community which has moved from being a chaplaincy to Panamanians of West Indian heritage to developing a sense of mission to the multicultural nation that Panama has become.

(To be continued)

(Contributed by Grace Clarke)

July 2012

The reaction of a **new Colonense generation** in response to the recent FOX TV's presentation of Juan Williams return with his son and their unflattering depiction in this (North)American media of the city of his birth. Mauro Martinez and Yvette Modestin are activists, born and raised in Colon.

## I am Colon !!

*This statement is a response to the negative and unjust representation of Colon by Juan and Raphael Williams.*

**By Mauro Martinez and Yvette Modestin**

Every country has two sides, every community has two sides. Our Colon is no different but one thing that those who were born and raised in the "Gold Coast" know is that Colon is something you carry deep within.

The people of Colon have been knocked down, rejected, ignored throughout the years but have managed to walk with their head up high and exhibit and unshakeable pride.

Poverty-yes, unemployment-yes, lack of resources-yes, lack of policies that can improve the living conditions of the people-yes, educational concerns-yes, crime-yes, and racial issues-yes. We know all of this but unless you have lived it with us, through the good and the bad, then you are in no position to speak about our reality. Every country has a "ghetto", to label an entire Province as such is an insult to our rich history, a legacy built on strength and most important to the people.

These streets nurtured great leaders, thinkers, teachers, athletes, Judges, Ministers, fire fighters, poets, writers, doctors and nurses. These streets sing we are resilient. That is our Colon, the place with two sides. You may leave Colon physically but it never leaves you mentally. A person who left as a child and never looked back cannot see the Colon through eyes of truth. Panama was not under a dictatorship 60 years ago. Colon's rise and many may say its demise has many layers but you will need a historical context that includes colonialism, denial of the government, and the end of a segregated era.

Our Colon is a place that fills your cup. It is one of the few places that you can swim in the Atlantic Ocean, *Rio Chagres* and the Gatun Lake in one day. If you are a real *Colonense*, you carry it close and when you make it to the mountain top you will say, *Gracias mi Colon*.

My brother in the struggle for a successful, prosperous Colon, Mauro Martinez moves with the same energy. He lives the struggle daily and highlights our failures and our progress.

To talk about Colon, to be real and not make any mistakes, you need to live here or be a frequent visitor. We are more than barred windows and cockroaches. I would be lying if I said it is all pretty and looks good. In some areas it is awful yet it is slowly changing. It is a matter of time before things begin to improve and things begin returning to our Colon.



Mauro



Yvette

There is so much to see in other areas of Colon such as *Portobelo, San Lorenzo, Nombre de Dios and Isla Grande*. People come from all over to swim in these relaxing waters. We have a long history of slave resistance in our Afro-Colonial community or as we refer to them, "*Congos*". Our food is exquisite and our dance creates movement.

I want to highlight a few good things that are happening in Colon. Colon is surrounded by water. We currently have 4 private ports that offer jobs to more than 3,500 Colon Natives. These ports, MANZANILLO INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL, COLON CONTAINER TERMINAL, COLON 2000 HOME PORT and CRISTOBAL PANAMA PORTS speak to the progress of the city. In two years we will have another Port in *Isla Margarita*. Another highlight is the Colon Free Zone that has increased in size and the volume of cargo handled on a daily basis. This also brings jobs to the people. With all the highway development you can commute from Colon to Panama in 35 minutes. Our Universities and Colleges are preparing our students to take on jobs that will come with the expansion of the Panama Canal and Ports.

All of this is wonderful but our greatest asset is the people of Colon. They are slowly awakening from a slave mentality and looking forward to change and demanding equality. I agree that the City does not look good but we are moving towards more organized community groups that will promote ideas and work closely with the government in creating good projects that will benefit us all.

We are Colon. This Colon is strong, loving and caring. It stands on the shoulders of those who shaped this beautiful city and left us with a legacy to continue to fight for what we deserve, for what we know and what we love. It is in that spirit that we feel the need to make this statement and not leave it up to Juan and Raphael Williams to speak for us.

Contributed by Sergio Green: *(in response to a feedback from the article on Coo Coo printed in the April Newsletter)*

A Barbadian friend says:

I saw that someone in the Afro Panamanian newsletter was asking for a recipe for the sauce/gravy that goes with **coo-coo**. I had this recipe that I shared some-time ago with a colleague who was born in Japan.

Coo-coo for 2 people: 10 or more **okras** cut crosswise into little circles

4 cups of cold water Another 2 cups of water	1 cup or a bit less of cornmeal $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
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Put the okras in 4 cups of cold water. Once the water has boiled continue boiling for about 5 minutes

Then pour the hot okra/water mixture in a heat proof container

Put the cornmeal/salt in the empty pot, add about the 2 cups of cold water, put on the stove and stir rapidly with a wooden spoon (or if you want to be authentic a coo-coo stick, but trust me a wooden spoon works just as well), using a strainer or sieve spoon some of the okras into the cornmeal mixture and continue stirring quickly and thoroughly (this is the most difficult part), continue adding okras and stirring until all have been added to the cornmeal. If necessary add some of the remaining okra liquid and continue stirring. When finished the coo-coo should be mellow but solid (not a liquid). Put a little butter in a cereal bowl. Spoon a serving of the coo-coo into the cereal bowl and shake and turn until you have a nice round ball. Put a plate over the cereal bowl and decant the coo-coo onto the plate. Using a table spoon, make a little depression into the top of the coo-coo.

### **Cucumber/Avocado Salad** to serve with coo-coo

This is also typically served with a cucumber and avocado salad. Simply grate or chop finely some cucumbers, add a little salt, lime juice and Scotch Bonnet peppers if you dare. Peel and slice a ripe avocado and add to the cucumbers. Stir very gently and serve.

### **Fish sauce** to serve with coo-coo

Coo-coo is nice served with any kind of steamed or gently boiled fish. In Barbados flying fish or dolphin/mahi-mahi is a favorite, but fresh or canned salmon and salted codfish are also favorites. But you can also use canned or fresh salmon, even canned tuna or mackerel if you are on a tight budget. There are a different set of recipes if serving coo-coo with pork chops or liver but we won't go there today.

### **Fresh fish**

If using fresh fish clean the fish with water to which a little lime juice and salt has been added. Pat dry with paper towels. Season the fish with commercially available Caribbean seasoning (generally sold in jars) put into a medium sized pot, slice tomatoes, sweet peppers, and onions on top, maybe one of each. Dilute about a tablespoonful of wet mustard in a cup of water, add a little ketchup and a half teaspoon of curry if you like, and a little black or white pepper, add a slice or two of Scotch Bonnet peppers if you dare, and a tablespoonful of butter. Cook on a low heat for about 20 minutes to half an hour. (continues)

## Canned fish

A similar method can be used for canned fish, but just make the sauce and add the fish during the last 5 minutes.

## Salted cod fish

If using dried salted cod boil the cod only in plain water for about 20 minutes until it is cooked. Cool. Remove bones and skin and break into small pieces. Then add to the sauce which has already been cooked and cook for about 5 minutes more.

Spoon the sauce and fish over the plates of coo-coo, being sure to spoon some into the little depression which you made in the ball of coo-coo. Since this is working class food you can serve the salad on the side of the same plate. But if you want to be fancy you can use a separate salad plate.

The term coo-coo and the method of cooking, and the use of okras is from the West African Twi/Ghanian tradition, and came with the enslaved people to the New World. Corn is a New World crop so this is a creolized dish. All over West Africa people still eat foo-foo, the dish which gave birth to coo-coo. Guinea corn is used to make foo-foo.

Happy eating. If you don't get it right at first try and try again. It is a quick dish, but difficult to prepare and it takes some practice to get it right. In old Barbadian tradition a woman was un-marriageable if she could not cook coo-coo properly, but I think that husbands nowadays are happy to eat fast food. My generation may be the last that can cook coo-coo or will eat it.



## OLDEN DAYS SAYINGS

“papp”= porridge

“Long time no see”, “God bless me eyesight” = *This person is happy to see someone*

“Night run till day catch it”= *this refers to the moon being out early in the morning when the sun is already shining*

“Put that in your pipe and smoke it”= *this is the plain truth*

“Keep the ghost out of your pocket”, = *to make sure that you have a coin or two, especially when you are going out, maybe with a girl or to a party.*

“Everyday bucket go a well, one day the bottom drop out”= *a person may get tired of being used and retaliate.*

“You have to tell 99 lies to cover one” = *liars forget what they said at first and continue to lie to cover up, eventually tripping themselves up.*

“Straight from the horses mouth”, = *gotten from the primary source*