

# AfroPanamanian Newsletter



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**August 2012**

**Donation**

## CONSTRUCTION OF THE PANAMA CANAL



Some Gave Their Lives

**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***

*Proud West Indian Descendants*

*Short of two years to it's 100-year celebration, the Panama Canal celebrated on the 15th of August another anniversary serving the world.*

*Considered as one of the wonders of the world this man-made masterpiece wouldn't have been possible if it was not for the people who gave their sweat, blood and lives during construction days, most of them from the Caribbean Isles known as the West Indies.*

*Men and women of different trades left their homeland to seek a new life, came and “put their shoulders to the wheel” working “day in day out” facing all kinds of adversities to fulfill the building of the canal.*

*After the task was completed a great many stayed and made this country their home. Today in some families there is a forth or fifth generation of Panamanians of West Indian origins.*

*Descendants from those heroes and all West Indians on the Isthmus can feel very proud of the great contribution made to the construction of the Panama Canal.*

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

**FEEDBACK** (from July Newsletter)

Hi Pana,

Very good edition. Lots of history and the the best, the article "I am Colón". Yes, I saw what Juan Williams said on TV and it hurt. Instead of damaging and criticizing he could have done something to help young people since he has benefited so much from his education, etc. Well, I'll keep quiet and I wish God will help him. He needs it.

Hugs, peace and blessings and lots of happiness, you're back on the wave again.

Nadya

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Dear Inez,

Mrs Bolt's last desire before departing this world was for coo coo and steamed fish. My cousin and I tried our best to remember how our parents cooked it. Needless to say Aunt delle was not exactly pleased with our cooking but was grateful for it. It's good now that I have the recipe. Will try it for myself while here. Keep up the recording of the historical highlights of our culture. Brings me pleasure to read.

Judith

Thanks for the recipes.  Tony R	Excellent issue, Ines!  Best wishes, Ifeoma	Dare to be a Daniel Dare to stand alone Dare to have a purpose firm And dare to make it known.	} Have you heard this song?
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PEACE OF MIND  
*by Earl V. Newland*

*Taken from his book MAKING LIFE'S JOURNEY ONE OF LOVE, PEACE & BROTHERHOOD...*

A billfold of fifties, a shelf stacked with wine;  
A room full of women to choose and decline.  
But still he was worried, he just could not find  
Happiness, Contentment or Peace of Mind.

A car most men envied, a mansion of glass.  
Great men, he know them, they were of his class.  
Pleasures, adventures, were all in his line,  
Still, for this man, there was no Peace of Mind.

A wardrobe of clothing to change ev'ry hour.  
His words were commanding, for he was in power.  
His name and his picture were always headline.  
All these and more yet, but no Peace of Mind.

He appeared very happy, but deep in his heart,  
He was a sick man, slowly falling apart.  
He pondered and pondered, "How can I find  
One ounce of Happiness and some Peace of Mind?"

'Though full of riches, he just couldn't sleep,  
Besieged by his misery, he often would weep.  
He asked God to help him, to help him to find  
Happiness, Contentment and Peace of Mind.

He prayed on arising and during the day,  
And on retiring, he would kneel down and pray;  
He begged God to show him light so to find  
The Road to Salvation and Peace of Mind .

Now he's a new man with God at his side,  
For with the Almighty, he strives to abide.  
If you too are worried, seek God to find  
Happiness, Contentment and Peace of Mind.

## THE UNTOLD STORY

## PENSION ON THE CANAL ZONE

After the Canal was inaugurated in 1914 and running in high gear, the U.S. (gold) employees began to agitate for an act that would cover all of them, since only employees in the classified service of the Government were eligible to be pensioned by the Federal Retirement Act of May 22, 1920.

Naturally, if some of the U.S. workers were not included, much less would the local rate (silver) employees be eligible.

## WILLIAM PRESTON STOUTE:

a Barbadian educator who arrived in Panama in 1910, was employed as a teacher in the Canal Zone School System, reaching the post of Principal of several of these schools.

The critical social injustices of poor salaries, living and working conditions in the Canal Zone prompted both Stoute and **Samuel Innis**, another eloquent teacher to become labor leaders to approach the Canal Zone authorities on the subject. Seeing that the talks were getting nowhere, in 1920 they called 17,000 employees to a strike that lasted one week. **Both were banned from the Canal Zone.**

This action caused Stoute's Panamanian citizenship, which he had acquired, to be revoked and himself deported from Panama in 1921.

Stoute went to Cuba where he spent his exile and last days.

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## Braffit &amp; Cockburn

Barbadians were pitted against Jamaicans. This phenomenon was fomented by the U.S. citizens bossing the Canal Zone during the construction of the Panama Canal. Bagie & Jamakie.

Brathwaithe (pronounced Braffit) would throw slurs at Cockburn (pronounced Coburn) and vice versa, at work, at play (draughts, cricket, dominoes) etc. How did these surnames originate? **Confirmed**, they came from the Slave-masters.

## DISABILITY RELIEF

*Taken from the booklet by George Westerman: The West Indian Worker on the Canal Zone (p. 19, August, 1951)*

In January 1929, a Committee on Superannuated West Indian Employees was appointed to make recommendations looking to the amelioration of their condition until the passing of a pension law.

The recommendations of this committee were for (a) retention in service at reduced rates of pay, to be known as "Superannuation Rates" , for those who could do some work although no longer able-bodied;

(b) care at the Corozal Poor Farm of those unable to work, who may desire to be cared there; and

(c) repatriation, where (a) and (b) failed.

However, repatriation was not favored, since it was held that these employees were always employed at a standard of wages that did not permit saving, and that it would be unfair to them and their native communities to return them there as paupers.

It was not until July 8, 1937, that legislative action on this matter was effected. Then Public Law 101 coveting the Disability Relief Act was signed and put into force on July 1, 1938...

For an employee to have received disability allowance he had to be found physically unfit by a special medical board, and in the last stage of want and financial destitution. Before the final papers were drawn up on his case a scrutinizing official was dispatched to inspect his personal belongings. The prescribed "visit by an inspector at an applicant's" home to see and question him and members of his family, involved many humiliations and indignities.

If, at the time of the referred to visit the employee were found to own any "luxury" items such as a radio, a refrigerator, a typewriter, or some good chairs instead of boxes, he was penalized and even though he had been working for forty years, his allowance would be reduced to \$17.50 a month. (This was done in the '40's)

August 2012

## Newland's Desire for Justice and Peace

*Excerpted from the adapted version of Charles L. Barton's biography of Earl Vincent Newland*

Born on March 24, 1924, the next to the last of nine children of Stephen and Adina Newland, he grew up in Silver City, former Canal Zone.

His education included schools in the Canal Zone, Colon City, correspondence courses from the American School in Chicago, Ill., and, after employment, courses offered by the U.S. Army in Panama. He also did extensive reading at the available libraries, on subjects such as the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and reading the gospels several times, which have influenced his goal of uniting all the people and having peace in the whole world.

Beside being a defendant of co-workers, when local employees had no insurance coverage and earned meager wages, Newland made monetary collections to help defray funeral expenses when co-workers or their family members died. He has always been concerned with putting the deceased away with dignity.

Earl was a very instrumental part of the committee which represented the Panama Canal Disability Relief pensioners when plans were being made to discontinue medical care for them at the U.S Govt.-run Gorgas Hospital transferring that care to a hospital in the Republic.

He grew up a “*dead pattern*” of his father. The alliance between home and formal education made Earl the person he has always been, actively participating in Civic, community and church work: gardening, running errands, visiting the sick, infirm, destitute and senior citizens. Affiliated with St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Panama City since 1959, he made valuable contributions as a member of the Young Adults, church school teacher, steward and organizer of youth activities including the Boy Scout movement of the church ... he also helped to organize games with the young people at the St. Christopher's Church Gymnasium in Parque Lefevre.

He has been writing for over 35 years, bringing to light convincing articles and poems about the economic dilemmas, social oversights and injustices inflicted upon our people since WW II, and, highlighting the outstanding contributions made by unsung Blacks to the overall growth of the Republic of Panama; this he did in the **Panama Tribune, The Star and Herald, The Panama American and the Sunday Republic**, “*last but not least*”, in his book of poems: MAKING LIFE'S JOURNEY ONE OF LOVE, PEACE & BROTHERHOOD... published in the year 2006.

## Ping & Pong are Back?

*By Ines V. Sealy*

Would you believe it? Ping and Pong are back. It was nice to “**buck into**” Ping on a Metro bus, in those seats facing each other, set aside for senior citizens and women that are “**in the way**”. A good place for an interview? As good as any: no loud music, no horn blowing, air conditioned, you name it.

Herbert Maloney, better known as Ping is alive and well, a little shaky but rolling with the tide of ailments that come with age.

Born in Panama, the child of a Panamanian mother and a Barbadian father, he attended the Adventist school in Cabo Verde, where lots of West Indian descendents went until they were teenagers. He then went on to the National Institute and Eusebio A. Morales High Schools, Escuela Nacional de Teatro in Paitilla where he graduated as an actor. He also attended the USA Airforce Academy in Albrook, graduating as an aircraft mechanic.

Ah! You thought he was clowning around and didn't know what he was doing... Well, He was a part of the University of Panama's Department of Artistic Expressions under Prof. Aurea Torrijos “La Baby”.

He has performed in plays directed by Carlos Russell, Raul Leis (R.I.P.), Bruce Quinn, Danny Calden, Carlos Bromley at the Ascanio Arosemena Auditorium, the National Theater and others, beside that, together with Anselmo Cooper “Ping” made and directed *El fuego hizo menos daño*.

He says “if I had my life to live it over again, I wouldn't change a day of it”. Now isn't that nice, it means that he enjoyed and is satisfied with all the comedy, drama and art that he did, which included performances at the Jamaican Society Hall, French Hall, Arena Colon, Esquire, Rio Theater, Boite Royalito, Johnny B, Elks Hall, sharing the stage with the likes of Toribio Samuels, Dickie Burns (R.I.P.) & The Dynamic Exciters, Kabir, The Fabulous Festivals, the Gay Crooners, Carlos Jordan, Samuel Archer, Daniel Bulgin & The Soul Fantastics, Lord Panama, Carlos Allen, Joe Clarke & The Silvertones.

So, where is Pong? We'll tell you that soon.

[Soul Apollo w/ Fredrick Clarke-Chombo Pa' La Tienda](#)

## 907 UNION



by Earl V. Newland

907 Union, a SYMBOL of RIGHT  
A Local of Workers determined to fight  
To break down the barrier and pull down the wall  
And gain Workman's Justice and Freedom for all.

Its aim is to seek out and eradicate  
Management's injustice which on doubt sows hate,  
To exert all its power to bring harmony,  
Close working relation, and true unity.

To seek Moral Justice and Freedom throughout,  
To free every worker from fear and from doubt,  
Regardless of color, origin or creed,  
907 Union will defend workers' need.

To make every worker a part of the team,  
Who must be respected with utmost esteem,  
The man in the office or who digs the earth,  
Is to this Union, a man of great worth.

To establish a program that will extend  
Throughout our country, all men to defend,  
To show those in power that all men are free  
And they are entitled to full liberty.

It is able and ready to represent  
All claims of the workers with all of its strength,  
With all its resources, its power, its might  
For us, it's like a fortress, a towering light.

It was founded by workers bound by one aim,  
Just treatment and payment for all men they claim,  
We pray the Almighty will strengthen its might  
To seek for all people their Freedom and Right.

August 2012

## Ancestry

by Ines V. Sealy

Searching for your ancestors can be thrilling, rewarding, frustrating and conclusive.

In a quest to find ones ancestors, one can start discovering, through names, dates and memoirs where ones roots are. Little tidbits of information that at one time seemed insignificant, may now be the pillar on which to begin or center the search. The old people have a wealth of information that can be used in the search. But, maybe they are not old enough to relate to the age in which the researcher is delving.

Internet is a wonderful tool; but the internet is only as good as the information that is fed into the database or as good as the search engine being used. You definitely can't find what is not there. It might be there, but one must know where to look. Find the sources. Then again, some sources don't concentrate on the country or area the researcher is seeking.

Research is not something that can be done in one sitting. It requires patience, perseverance, curiosity and persistence. One's ears must be **“cocked”** to hear any snippet that can lead to a finding. The investigation may reach a plateau and stay there for a good while, then start to rise again in findings by some phrase or happening that relates to the past.

Conclusions can be reached that can either end or enhance the search. So much can be found and so much can be ignored.

There are many Panamanians of Barbadian descent who are eager to find their roots. On August 22, 2012 they received a visit from the MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE, the Hon. Senator Maxine P. O. McClean B. Sc. (Hons.), M.B.A., M.A. and ancestry was brought to the forefront when she was presented to two of her relatives living in Panama.

Herself and other officials in Barbados were very helpful to the Panamanian contingent that visited the Island for the II Diaspora Conference:- “Linking Generations – Embracing Our Youth”, held from August 7-10, 2012 at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre in Bridgetown, Barbados. That is a very appropriate title, since that is exactly what ancestry will do.

Finding our ancestors will link us with our current relatives who are their descendants. The 13 of us who attended the conference were wined and dined in great fashion. We were able to reconnect with Alison Saunders, who had come to Panama to prepare a movie, which appears as a documentary on YouTube (Panama Fever), attend the Prime Minister's Garden Party, participate in Cropover (which is supposed to be their Harvest, but is more like their Carnival): A time to make merry, a whole road is closed off and covered on each side with kiosks and small tents selling anything you can think of, especially food, drinks and trinkets. Even plants were on sale.



Alison Saunders

To me, the special feature was the Cou Cou House (that's how they spell it) where only coo coo is served all day, with fish, with saltfish; as one batch is finished, another is prepared and the people are waiting in line. The cornmeal they use for the coo coo is a grind between our cornmeal and “crema de maiz”, it cooks faster. Along the road in the downtown market area there are all these sacks of okra, I wanted to bring one home.

Then there is the all day parade featuring the bands (comparsas) presented in the Stadium and then on the Streets (rain or shine). It is very colorful. This is something they are preparing for from several months in advance. Other concerts and contests are held to select the monarchs of music, etc. To understand Cropover you have to go to Barbados. There are articles on the internet, but no definite date is given, we were lucky to be there on the precise dates of the merrymaking.

I was housed away from the Dover Beach Hotel at which the other 12 were staying. The highlight of staying at Adulo Apts. were two “June Plumb or Golden Apple” trees fully loaded with fruit and a young man next door selling water coconuts. Can you imagine a breakfast of ripe June plumb and coconut water? That is eating healthy.

I rode the Blue line, Yellow line and White line buses. Just like in Panama get the bus early to be on time.

August 2012

## The Importance of Electricity

by Ines V. Sealy

Can we live without electricity?

Some reasons why electricity is so important to Panama.

The greatest need for electricity in Panama is the operation of the Panama Canal which this year is completing 98 years of operation. The whole operation needs electricity and water, therefore, the Canal Administration continues to produce electricity and use the water frugally.

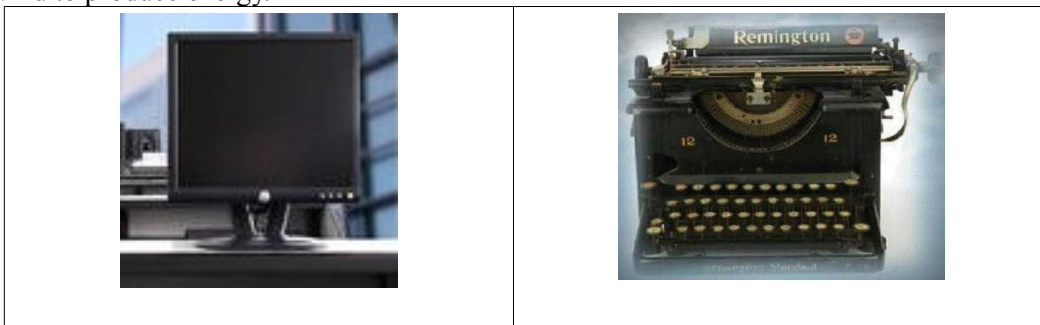
The rest of the Republic depends on the Government for the electrification of the country. During the Revolutionary Government of Omar Torrijos, the infrastructure to transport electricity from the Capital to the interior and vice versa was laid, inciting many towns to electrify, causing commercial and touristic businesses to initiate and expand. Since then the electricity and telephone systems has been privatized into mixed companies, with the company owning 49% of the shares, the Government 49% and the employees 2%. Producing electricity by damming some of our rivers has become a popular investment and is causing protests because of the inconveniences generated: floods, riverbeds dried out, rivers being diverted, lack of water for the flocks, the plantations, construction, etc.

Government, industry and commerce need electricity: “for instance”, “in times gone by”, chickens were grown naturally, now, to massify their production they are housed in electrically warmed “coops”. The eggs are hatched electrically. After the chickens, cows, goats, sheep, pigs and other edible animals are killed, storage refrigeration is needed, both in their deposits and at the distribution point, supermarket, home or restaurant.

Apparently, Panama is growing so fast that the production of electricity is insufficient to supply the needs of the country. Across the bridge, complaints of frequent power outages are the talk of the day. It seems that here in the Capital, this will soon be the talk of the day too.

Panama is advanced in many things with regards to the other Latin American countries. We have a booming construction industry, advanced telephony: 4 or 5 cellular companies, satellite dishes, cable, HD, the construction now, of a subway system, but our Government is bent on producing electricity from the rivers. No consideration is being given to wind power or solar power production of this needed energy.

The sun in Panama shines most of the day. It is being enjoyed by all those who, having the wherewithal, can travel to this country to “soak it up”. Producing solar energy and finding ways to store it for continued use, could be a solution to the problem, also, there is the wind, some areas are high enough to have a constant supply of wind to produce energy.



Together with the telephony and electricity we then have Internet. Although we could go back to the typewriter to produce the AfroPanamanian Newsletter, we found it cost efficient and convenient to present it in digital format which depends on the electricity and Internet. A power outage this month, knocking out the modem and network card of my computer, has delayed the production of the Newsletter. Getting the computer back in business is taking the time to get the company to send a technician after my personal technician has corrected the flaws in the computer. Will I be recompensed? That's the next fight with the electrical company.