

Caribbean Today

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New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has granted pardons to several Caribbean nationals convicted of minor drug and other offenses. The governor's act reduced their chance of possible deportation under Donald Trump administration's policy on immigrants, page 2.



Jamaica recently became the first senior Caribbean women's team to qualify for soccer's World Cup. It was a great accomplishment. But that doesn't

mean the playing field is level for women playing sports in the region, according to one researcher, page 9.

RAY OF HOPE

~ Thousands of Caribbean nationals, forced into limbo by an immigration crackdown in the United States, were shown a glimmer of hope late last month as a senior lawmaker hinted at possible shifts in American policy that could benefit them, page 5.



CURTAIN RAISER

~ Haitian American actor Carvens Lissaint, right, has risen from homelessness and hardships to land a leading role in the Broadway blockbuster musical "Hamilton". But experiences tell him to take nothing for granted, page 13.

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FORGIVENESS: New York governor pardons 13 Caribbean nationals



NEW YORK – New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has granted pardons to several Caribbean nationals, including five Jamaicans, convicted of minor drug and other offenses.

The governor's act reduced their chance of possible deportation under Donald Trump administration's policy on immigrants.

Cuomo explained that he granted clemency to 29 immigrants "who have demonstrated substantial evidence of rehabilitation and a commitment to community crime reduction."

"While President Trump shuts down the federal government over his obsession with keeping immigrants out, New York stands strong in our support for immigrant communities," said Cuomo, adding "these actions will help keep immigrant families together and take a critical step toward

a more just, more fair and more compassionate New York."

Five Jamaicans, a Trinidadian, one Haitian and six nationals from the Dominican Republic were among those granted pardons.

REHABILITATION

The governor said the pardons are in recognition of the immigrants' "rehabilitative efforts and to remove the barriers that their criminal records present to their immigration status."

"Some are facing deportation, while others wish to be able to participate in their communities as citizens of the country they call home. In each case, a pardon will make immigration-related relief possible, if not automatic," he said.

Cuomo said Jamaican Olive Ferguson, 75, was convicted of attempted criminal sale of a controlled substance in 1991 and that "she has been crime-free ever since." He said Ferguson is "an active member of her church. She has remained crime-free for 27 years. A pardon will minimize her risk of deportation."

Jamaican Rohan Hylton, 47, was convicted of a similar offense in 1992, as well as

years."

Cuomo said another Jamaican, Kerrone Kay-Marie



Cuomo has offered second chances.

criminal possession of marijuana in 2001 and 2003.

ESCAPE

Cuomo said Hylton came to the U.S. over 30 years ago with his family "to escape political persecution."

"As a father and dedicated family man, he now lives and works in Queens. A pardon will allow him to apply for discretionary relief from his deportation order. He has not been convicted of any misdemeanors or felonies for 12

full-time at a nursing home. She has remained crime-free for five years."

Jamaican Jeremy Grant, 58, was also convicted of drug related charges in 2005 "when an individual in a group he was a member of sold drugs to an undercover cop and the entire group was convicted in Manhattan," the New York governor said. He said Grant "has been in prolonged removal proceedings since 2006" and "has remained crime-free for 13 years."

REMOVE BARRIERS

"A pardon would remove the barriers to apply for a green card (permanent residence) renewal, and prevent him from being deported and losing his access to necessary medical treatment," Cuomo said.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

U.S. supports Guyana after clash with Venezuelan navy

GEORGETOWN, Guyana – The United States says Guyana has the sovereign right to explore and exploit resources in its exclusive economic zone after Georgetown accused Venezuela of sending warships to "intercept" a ship exploring for oil on behalf of U.S.-based oil giant Exxon Mobil Corp in Guyanese waters recently.

Guyana has already indicated that it intends to take the incident before the United Nations and Washington is urging Venezuela to respect international law and the rights of its neighbor.

"We are monitoring reports that the Venezuelan Navy may have interfered with vessels operating on behalf of ExxonMobil," Robert Palladino, deputy spokesperson for the U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, tweeted late last month.

"We underscore that Guyana has the sovereign right to explore and exploit resources in its territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone," he added.

NO CONFIDENCE

On Dec. 23, Venezuela said it wanted to re-establish direct dialogue with Guyana as the two countries continue to deal with their long standing border dispute that flared up after Guyana announced the discovery of oil that could make the Caribbean community (CARICOM) country one of the largest producers in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Norwegian company Petroleum Geo-Services (PGS)



Palladino

owned Ramform Tethys vessel was conducting seismic survey work on behalf of Exxon when it stopped exploration and turned east after being approached by the Venezuelan navy.

A spokeswoman for Exxon said the U.S. oil firm's seismic explorations in the western portion of Guyana's Stabroek Block "have been paused until they can be safely continued," and that the vessel was operating in Guyana's exclusive economic zone.

But in a statement on Dec. 23, Venezuela's foreign ministry said its navy, during a routine patrol, had encountered two boats hired by Exxon in an area under "undoubtedly Venezuelan sovereignty" and "proceeded to apply the appropriate international protocols." It said the boats' captains told the navy they had permission from the Guyana government to explore in the area and that the boats turned around after being told Guyana did not have jurisdiction in that area.

- Edited from CMC.

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The City of Miramar proclaims November 28, 2018 as Edmund N. Ansin Day.

From left to right: Commissioner Winston F. Barnes, Commissioner Maxwell B. Chambers, Commissioner Darline B. Riggs, Mayor Wayne M. Messam, Mr. Edmund N. Ansin and City Manager Vernon E. Hargray.

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Congressional black caucus condemns Trump's attack on Caribbean immigrants

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) has renewed its criticism of the administration of President Donald Trump following its latest attack on low-income immigrants of color, including Caribbean immigrants.

In a letter to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the CBC wrote that a proposal to restrict permanent residency or "green cards" for immigrants who are likely to use public assistance programs, such as Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicare Part D, is "racially discriminatory and a reverse of what Congress intended."

The CBC noted that the justification for the proposal is "inaccurate and incomplete."

The Dec. 10 letter was signed by CBC Chairman Cedric L. Richmond, a Democrat from Louisiana, and Congresswoman Yvette



Clarke signed off on the letter.

D. Clarke, a Democrat from New York, who also serves as the CBC Immigration Task Force chair. Clarke, who represents the 9th Congressional District in Brooklyn, is the daughter of Jamaican immigrants.

FOLLOW-UP

The CBC's letter is a follow-up to one dispatched to U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen in September.

"We are writing as members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) to express our strong opposition to your agency's proposed rule concerning public charge determinations," it noted. "The proposed rule would cause major harm to immigrants, their families, state and local governments, health care providers and numerous other parties throughout the nation."

"Black immigrants, who comprise only 8.7 percent of all non-citizens, but are more likely to be impacted by the proposed rule, would be disproportionately injured. We, therefore, urge you to immediately withdraw this proposed rule in its entirety."

In a recent town hall meeting in Brooklyn, Clarke heightened her warning to Caribbean and other immigrants about the Trump administration's proposed

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

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FORGIVENESS: New York governor pardons Caribbean nationals

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

The governor said Grant's compatriot Trevor Elliot, 67, was convicted of drugs in the early 1990s and has worked at a non-profit that provides social services for the youth and as an elder care provider.

"A pardon would allow Mr. Elliot to apply for citizenship," said Cuomo. "He has maintained a crime-free lifestyle for 10 years."

Trinidadian Anthony Khan, 66, was convicted of a drug offense in 1980 when he accompanied an acquaintance to sell a controlled substance and was arrested as part of a sting operation in the Bronx. Cuomo said Khan, who migrated to the U.S. in 1971, is "an active churchgoer and a husband and father, who has worked with the Taxi and Limousine Commission for 35 years." He has remained crime-free for 37 years, the

governor said.

Haitian Reginald Castel, 45, was convicted of assault in 1999 and Cuomo said Castel, who came to the U.S. at age eight, is married with four children and was deported without notice in Sept. 2017.

RE-ENTRY

"A pardon will allow Mr. Castel to apply for re-entry to the United States and re-unite with his family," said Cuomo. "He has remained crime free for 19 years."

Alisa Wellek, executive director of New York's Immigrant Defense Project, said that in pardoning immigrant New Yorkers who face deportation, despite years of contributing to the community, Cuomo "has used a powerful tool to restore dignity to people for whom punishment will otherwise never end, simply because they were not born here."

"We look forward to con-

tinuing to work with the governor's office and our Immigrant Clemency Project to provide immigrant New Yorkers with a fighting chance to remain with their families in the face of Trump's hateful agenda," she said.

Last year, Cuomo announced a lawsuit challenging the Trump administration's policy of forced family separation on the U.S. southern border.

To protect Caribbean and other immigrants from overly aggressive deportation tactics increasingly utilized by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, the governor also issued executive orders to prohibit ICE arrests in New York state facilities without a warrant.

- Edited from CMC.

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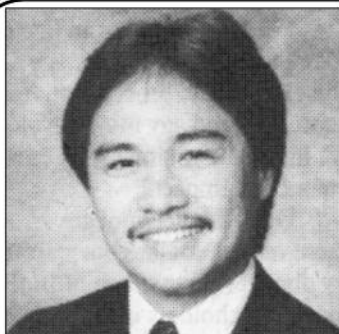
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SECOND CHANCE: New hope for Caribbean immigrants under DACA, TPS

GORDON WILLIAMS

Thousands of Caribbean nationals, forced into immigration limbo in the United States, were given a glimmer of hope late last month as a senior lawmaker hinted at possible shifts in American policy that could benefit them.

Republican Senator Lindsay Graham indicated that a partial government shutdown, which began last month and continued into 2019, could be resolved with possible compromise that includes help for immigrants currently living in the U.S. under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) programs.

However, even if Graham's compromise, which the senator said President Donald Trump called "interesting," does not factor in the resolution of the latest shutdown, that may not end hope for DACA and TPS recipients.

The deal could be used as a possible negotiating tool down the road as Trump, faced with a freshly minted Democrat-dominated U.S. House of Representatives, will need his political opponents' support to pass future legislation.

DACA offers residence primarily to young undocumented immigrants – approximately 800,000 – who were brought to the U.S. as children. Under the program, the recipients are allowed to, among other privileges, work and attend school without fear of being deported.

Under TPS, an estimated 50,000 Haitians have been allowed to live and work in the U.S. after a hurricane ravaged the Caribbean nation a few years ago.

Trump has vowed to dismantle both DACA and TPS,



The fate of DACA and TPS may rest with a political compromise.

but federal courts have – at least temporarily – halted his push against the programs.

BARGAIN

However, following a meeting with Trump on Dec. 30, Graham hinted that the

White House may be willing to protect DACA and TPS recipients if the Democrats agree to allow \$5 billion for border security. Trump insisted on that amount, which would he wants to include money to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The Democrats, led by House Leader Nancy Pelosi, are adamant no funding should be provided for a wall. Trump, in a widely viewed televised

showdown with Democratic leaders last month, vowed to shut down the government if his demand for wall funding was not met. The Democrats refused to budge and the government was partially shut down.

Without the support for Democrat-favored programs such as DACA and TPS, Graham believes it would not be possible for the president to get \$5 billion for border security and break the deadlock, which has forced the closure of many public facilities and cut off pay for thousands of federal employees.

"I don't see Democrats giving us more money, unless they get something," Graham told the media after he met with Trump at the White House.

The senator from South Carolina said he urged Trump to consider what he called his "breakthrough" compromise. Up to press time the president had not publicly confirmed his support for Graham's proposal. Still, the senator remained optimistic, insisting that some Democrats may find the compromise favorable.

"The president didn't commit," Graham explained, "but I think he's very open minded. I know there's some Democrats out there who would be willing to provide money for a wall, border secu-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

Guyana government falls over no confidence vote

GEORGETOWN, Guyana – Guyana is preparing for general elections early this year after a government backbencher last month supported an Opposition motion of no confidence against the David Granger government.

Opposition Leader Bharrat Jagdeo, who had been heckled as he outlined his reasons for the motion in Parliament, has already signaled his intention to work with the coalition A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) government leading up to the polls, that could be held as early as March.

Government backbencher Charandass Persaud voted with the Opposition Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) legislators to win the no-confidence motion in the 65-seat National Assembly after several hours of debate on Dec. 21. Despite repeated urges by fellow parliamentarians to change his vote, Persaud declined.

The APNU won the 2015 general elections by one seat.

'INCOMPETENT'

When the debate started Jagdeo, a former president, described the coalition government as "incompetent and corrupt." He said the government has been a total failure and has not been keeping its promises to the Guyanese people who voted them into office.

"The people out there, they demand that we pursue this and I know there are 33

members who have been growing fat on the perks of office and wish that this motion disappears," he said, adding that the coalition government had mismanaged the resources of Guyana and that is the main reason behind his decision to file the motion against the government.

Jagdeo said the government has failed on its manifesto promises and is harming democracy. He said the Granger-led administration is totally untrustworthy and that it has failed to bring any major investor to Guyana and has only been talking "about oil oil oil."

"We have made the case that this government is totally useless to the people of Guyana. The longer they stay there, the more damaging it will be to our future."

Minister of State Joseph Harmon, who led the response to Jagdeo, defended his government's record, adding "when you speak of harming democracy, you have to look at what the PPP has done."

Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo described the motion as "self-serving," saying the Opposition leader is hoping for a "fluke" in the motion being carried. He said the motion was moved with political viciousness and resulted in the image of the country being reflected as unstable.

- Edited from CMC.



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Caribbean Today

N.Y. Bar to honor Barbadian American jurist

NEW YORK – New York State Bar Association (NYSBA) will honor prominent Barbadian-born jurist Justice Sylvia Hinds-Radix with its 14th Annual Diversity Trailblazer Award.

“Associate Justice Hinds-Radix of the Appellate Division, Second Department, will be honored for her extraordinary efforts to create opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds, mentor other lawyers and promote equality and diversity in the workplace,” the NYSBA noted in a statement late last month, adding that the ceremony will take place on Jan. 14.

It said that the judge has used the words of encouragement by her parents while growing up to guide her career “and she has made it her mission to mentor law students and to foster the leadership development of colleagues at work and those she meets through her bar activities.”

FIRST

NYSBA noted that Justice Hinds-Radix, a Brooklyn resident, was the first administra-



Hinds-Radix

tive judge in Kings County (Brooklyn) Supreme Court of Caribbean descent. During her tenure, NYSBA said she developed a summer internship program for law students at the Supreme Court, which still serves 120 students from diverse backgrounds annually. It said Justice Hinds-Radix is co-chair of the Commercial and Federal Litigation Section's yearly program on career strategies for attorneys of color.

“She regularly meets and speaks with public school students throughout Kings County, and she and her family spend their Saturday mornings tutoring students at the Barbados Ex-Police

Association,” NYSBA added.

LEADER

Justice Hinds-Radix migrated to the U.S. from Barbados while in her teens and earned a juris doctorate (law degree) from Howard University School of Law in Washington, D.C.

She was elected to the Kings County Civil Court in 2001 and to Kings County Supreme Court three years later, where she served until her appointment to the Appellate Division in 2012.

“Justice Hinds-Radix is a leader and a role model with a heartfelt interest in the well-being of others. She truly is a trailblazer,” the NYSBA added.

Justice Hinds-Radix is married to Grenadian-born dentist Dr. Joseph Radix.

In addition to being admitted to practice law in New York, Hinds-Radix is admitted to the U.S. Federal Court: Southern and Eastern Districts of New York.

- Edited from CMC.



Barbados woos second U.S. university

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados – The Barbados government says it is holding talks with Chamberlain University, a United States-based college, in a bid to have it set up a campus here.

Prime Minister Mia Mottley said she is hoping that the discussions with the for-profit healthcare and nursing school that offers bachelor, master and doctoral degree programs in nursing, and a public health master's degree, can soon be “wrapped up.”

Mottley, who last month toured the Villages at Coverley where 1,500 students and staff at the U.S.-based Ross University School of Medicine will reside, did not disclose details of the talks with

Chamberlain University, but said that her administration was using Ross University as a test.

“We haven't spoken about the work we are doing with Chamberlain University, which is a nursing school, and we are looking to see how we can wrap that up as we go along,” said the prime minister.

DRY RUN

“But we want to perfect what we are doing with Ross first, while at the same time having a conversation with the Barbados Community College and Chamberlain,” she added.

“... The government of Barbados is already in the provision of nursing education, but we feel through partnerships we can deliver better and more,

especially given that there is a global shortage of nurses that we experience in today's world,” Mottley said.

Mottley said the arrival of Ross University students would give the island's economy a much-needed boost.

“We're probably starting off the year with the equivalent of 75,000 seven-day tourists,” she explained. “That is what Ross' equivalent is to us.” she said.

Ross University operated in Dominica for 40 years before relocating to Barbados.

- Edited from CMC.



SECOND CHANCE: New hope ...

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

ity if we could deal with the DACA population and TPS people.”

REJECTION

The Democrats, however, were not ready to commit to the proposed compromise either.

“At this point, it's clear the White House doesn't know what they want when it comes to border security,” a spokesperson for Chuck Schumer, who leads the Democrats in the U.S. Senate, told CBS News.

Schumer has said he supports border security which does not include a wall. Pelosi publicly repeated that mantra as well. The Democrats have offered to back \$1.3 billion for border security.

Graham's compromise would include Trump backing the Bridge Act, which Graham co-sponsored. Under that legislation, DACA recipients would receive work permits for three years and TPS recipients would have their legal status extended.



Black caucus condemns Trump's attack on Caribbean immigrants

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

Public Charge rule, saying that it will “deeply affect a large portion of residents” in her district, who are predominantly Caribbean nationals.

RIGHTS

“Now that this rule change seems imminent, it's important that we know our rights, understand how it will affect our community, and share strategies to ensure that our families, congregations and communities are safe,” said Clarke.

She said Public Charge rule has been a statutory ground of inadmissibility for nearly 135 years; and that, generally, if deemed a public

U.S. academic pays tribute to Caribbean American judge

NEW YORK – A Caribbean American academic here has paid tribute to trailblazing Caribbean American former New York Supreme Court justice and legislator William C. Thompson, Sr., who died on Dec. 24 at age 94.

Ron Howell, an associate journalism professor at Brooklyn College, City University of New York, and author, said Thompson, whose late parents migrated from St. Kitts and Nevis, lived the American dream.

“The death of William C. Thompson Sr. was not just the passing of Brooklyn's first black state senator, nor of a powerful attorney who stepped onto the highest rungs of the New York state judicial system, nor of the father of one of the city's most prominent politicians, former city comptroller and current City University chair Bill Thompson,” said Howell, who also traces his roots to St. Kitts and Nevis.

“Judge Thompson's death was the final farewell for a significant chapter in the history of black politics in New York City,” he added, disclosing that Thompson was a protégé of Bertram Baker, Howell's maternal grandfather, who, in 1948, became the first Black elected to political office in Brooklyn's history, representing Bedford-Stuyvesant in New York State Assembly.

RISE

Howell said in the 1950s and 1960s, black attorneys in Brooklyn began seeking powerful jobs as elected officials, as assistant prosecutors and as judges, and that Baker opened those doors of political access.

A World War II veteran who served in the segregated U.S. military of that era, Howell said Thompson “came out of what is properly called the ‘Greatest Generation’.” But he said Thompson's “specialness goes beyond that old uniform.”

Howell said neither Baker nor

Thompson boasted about being part of “the tiny wave of Caribbean immigrants who came to America in the early 20th century, and put a notable mark on New York City political history.”

He said Baker, born in 1898, migrated in 1915 from Nevis, part of the twin-island federation of St. Kitts and Nevis. Howell said Caribbean immigrants back then “knew it was not politically advantageous to call attention to their national roots.

“Some native-born American blacks referred to them as ‘monkey-chasers’ or as ‘black Jews,’” Howell said. “Relatively small in number then, the Caribbean newcomers were ambitious and known for a desire to own property. Most notably, they became pioneers in the attainment of black political power in New York, especially in Harlem and in black Brooklyn.

“I salute William C. Thompson,” he continued. “We will never see the likes of him and his cohort again. But they will live in us.”

- Edited from CMC.



Thompson

charge, one will not be allowed to become a permanent resident in the U.S. But Clarke said the proposed rule by the Trump administration would expand the list of government programs that could be used to block Caribbean and other immigrants from obtaining green cards.

The congresswoman said the rule would require the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to deny immigration benefits to Caribbean nationals who have used or are likely to use the programs in an amount equal to about \$150/month in certain types of benefits.

“Simply put, this proposed rule is yet another attack on poor communities of

color,” declared Clarke at the meeting that was attended by representatives of several immigration advocacy groups, including the New York Immigration Coalition.

Clarke said for several years safety net programs have helped Caribbean and other immigrants across America, particularly the large immigrant population in her district, “who came to the United States with limited resources to pursue the American Dream.

“It is our duty to ensure that this dream is attainable for all, regardless of race, nation of origin, or socioeconomic status.”



'Nothing is impossible' says T&T-born N.Y. Supreme Court judge

NEW YORK – Trinidadian-born New York State Supreme Court Judge Justice Wavny Toussaint is reminding young people "nothing is impossible" as she urges them to pursue their dreams.

"Understand that you have to set your goals and work hard," Justice Toussaint told the **Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC)** in a wide-ranging interview last month, adding "everything is possible; believe everything is possible."

"There are going to be setbacks," added Justice Toussaint, the first Trinidad and Tobago national to be appointed a judge in New York.

"I've had setbacks in my own life. I tell people before I was elected, I ran in 1999. I spent a lot of money; there were many people supporting me. But, despite my failure, I believed I'll be a great judge."

"So, a few years later, I ran again," said Toussaint, who was first elected as a judge in the Civil Court of the City of New York in 2002 and re-elected in 2012.

"I've been told I'm a great judge. Even those, who were sceptical, came to my court room and said what you do in



Toussaint

your court room is exemplary. I give God the glory," added the member of the Christian at the Church of the Nazarene. "And, if we trust him, his plan is revealed."

SERVICE

The Howard University School of Law-trained judge urged the community at large to "remember the court is there to serve the community."

"It's not there for the judges to be proud with the power they have. I encourage members of the community to come in to see what our judges are doing; that's what keep our feet to the fire. When judges are on the ballot, do your research."

"Judges should respect

each individual and be fair. Also remember that compassion is also an essential part of being a judge. The bottom line is: Judges are on the bench to serve the community."

LONG ROAD

Toussaint said she migrated to Brooklyn as a teenager in 1973 from Barataria, a few miles east from Port of Spain, the T&T capital.

After graduating with a bachelor of arts degree in pre-law from City College of New York, she pursued legal studies at Howard University School of Law in Washington, D.C., graduating cum laude with a juris doctor degree. Toussaint was admitted to practice law in New York State, the Southern and Eastern Federal District Courts of New York and the U.S. Supreme Court.

Prior to her election, Toussaint practiced law for 19 years, serving as an assistant corporation counsel for the City of New York, an associate at a private law firm, managed her own practice and served in the New York State Unified Court System as a court attorney/law clerk.

She is currently assigned to Kings County Supreme

Court in Brooklyn, where she presides over civil trials and manages a general civil inventory of about 1,000 matters. She also addresses, among other matters, motor vehicular, New York State Labour Law and medical malpractice cases.

"As a judge, it's fascinating how much information we learn from the medical field," Toussaint explained.

"I request from the members from the community to show up as juror. It's up to the members of the community to evaluate the case. In doing that, we bring credibility."

From 2010 through 2014, she served as an acting Supreme Court justice. At that time, at the height of the mortgage crisis, Toussaint said there were "thousands and thousands of foreclosure proceedings."

"So, I was asked to serve while on Civil Court," she said.

She previously served in New York State Family Court, Kings County, from July 2010 to Dec. 2011, assigned to handle juvenile delinquency proceedings; New York City Civil Court, from Jan. 2008 to July 2010; New York State Family Court from May 2005 to Dec.

2007, assigned to handle custody, visitation, support and family offense proceedings; and New York City Criminal Court, from Jan. 2003 to May 2005.

'VERY HAPPY'

Toussaint said she was "very happy" to attend Howard University, stating that its law school and its professors prepared her "to be the kind of attorney I am today."

"They reminded me to serve the community and to serve others. And that's what I try to do on the bench today – making sure everyone who comes to the court room is treated with dignity and be heard."

"I actually have a reputation in the court of being very well prepared," she added. "I read all the papers for the motion, so I can decide as expeditiously as possible," she said, noting some decisions will "take time before you issue a decision."

In her 15 years as a judge, Toussaint said "there's always a challenge as a black woman sitting on the bench."

"Initially, when I started, I

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

Politics dominate Caribbean

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados – In a year when an Opposition political party used the motion of no confidence to topple a



Mottley

government in a Caribbean country, Mia Amor Mottley relied on the electorate to become the first woman head of government in Barbados, while Gaston Browne and Dr. Keith Mitchell also used the ballot box to consolidate their hold on power in Antigua and Barbuda and Grenada, respectively.

The motion of no confidence appeared to have been the main strategy for Opposition political parties in St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat and Haiti, while in Trinidad and Tobago and Dominica, the Opposition sought to rely on what they termed "failed budgetary policies" in calling for general elections in the hope of replacing the incumbent governments.

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the main Opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) was ending another year without getting a favorable court ruling as it continues to battle the ruling Unity Labor Party (ULP) over the results of the 2015 general elections that it lost by an eight to seven margin.

"It is unconscionable that a matter of this importance that it seems that it is only the petitioners are urging anxiously that the matter be tried," said NDP Leader Dr.



Friday

Godwin Friday.

Three and a half years ago, Bharrat Jagdeo was among candidates of the then ruling People's Progressive Party (PPP) who had hoped to

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

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Politics dominate Caribbean in 2018

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

continue their more than two decades hold on power in Guyana. The PPP lost the presidential and general elections for control of the 65-member National Assembly by one seat. But as 2018 came to a close, Jagdeo hoped to reverse the 2015 results by Mar. 2019, after he successfully tabled a motion of no confidence against the David Granger led A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) coalition government.

"The people out there, they demand that we pursue this," said Jagdeo, "and I know there are 33 members who have been growing fat on the perks of office and wish that this motion disappears."

A stunned Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo said while government would be examining its options, it is clear that general elections would be held in 90 days except if the Parliament decides otherwise by a two-thirds majority. He also urged peace in the country.

LESSON

The leader of the main Opposition St. Lucia Labour Party (SLP), Phillip J. Pierre, who has also filed a motion of no confidence against the Allen Chastanet government, said the Guyana situation held a lesson for regional prime ministers.

"What it shows is that governments – prime ministers – must understand that winning elections does not mean they have the support of the majority of the people," he said.

In St. Kitts and Nevis, it was a different scenario. Prime Minister Dr. Timothy Harris outmaneuvered Opposition Leader Dr. Denzil Douglas in his motion of no confidence, resulting in the latter indicating that a "grave injustice has been committed against the people and their right to hear their representatives debate matters".

In October, Premier Donaldson Romeo staved off an attempt by disgruntled Opposition legislators in Montserrat to bring down his administration when a key government backbencher indi-

cated that he had no intention of supporting a vote of no confidence in Romeo's four-year-old administration.

On May 24, Barbadians dumped their frustration of the Freundel Stuart administration into the ballot box and gave 52-year-old Mottley and her Barbados Labor Party (BLP) total control of the 30-member Parliament. Stuart later announced his retirement from active politics.

Mottley joined a handful of Caribbean women who have led governments in their respective countries, such as Dame Eugenia Charles in Dominica, Janet Jagan in Guyana, Kamla Persad Bissessar in Trinidad and Tobago, and Portia Simpson Miller in Jamaica.

SWEEP

Prime Minister Mitchell he led his New National Party (NNP) in Grenada to a historic clean sweep of 15 seats, the third time he has achieved the feat.

Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Browne called general elections nearly two years ahead of schedule and bettered the 2014 results of 14 to three with a 15 to two margin, again wiping out the main Opposition United Progressive Party.

In September, Haiti unveiled a new government, two months after Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant, who faced a motion of no confidence, resigned following days of deadly violent protests against fuel price rises. But by yearend, President Jovenel Moise and his new Prime Minister Jean-Henry Ceant, were appealing for calm after Opposition parties staged violent street demonstrations calling for their removal after accusing them of not investigating allegations of corruption in the previous government over PetroCaribe, an oil alliance of many Caribbean states with Venezuela.

Belize Prime Minister

Dean Barrow had a change of mind after earlier indicating to members of the ruling United Democratic Party (UDP) that he would step down before the 2020 general elections. Not so, however, in the case of Premier Dr. Orlando Smith in the British Virgin Islands, who in June announced he would not be seeking re-election as leader of his National Democratic Party (NDP).

UNIONS

Trade unions throughout the Caribbean flexed their muscles in 2018 over a host of issues, with teachers, medical practitioners, public servants, law enforcement officials, media workers among those

demanding better working conditions and increased wages.

In T&T and Barbados, government policies led to thousands of workers being sent home as the authorities moved to stop the bleeding occurring at various state agencies.

In Jamaica, the government said it would move to recover the misuse of funds at the state-owned oil company Petrojam, following a damning report by the auditor general, which catalogued a series of lavish parties, unapproved sponsorships and glaring human resources breaches costing millions of dollars.

Meanwhile, the United States oil giant ExxonMobil announced another major discovery offshore Guyana.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The impact of climate change on Caribbean economies was highlighted in 2018 when Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness, chairman of the 15-member CARICOM grouping, addressed an International Monetary Fund (IMF) event in Washington, D.C. that brought together key stakeholders, including senior policymakers, multilateral development partners and the pri-

soft-spoken.

"Having a soft, quiet voice does not mean you cannot meet control. I learned that, when you begin to speak softly, and people have to lower their voice, you have more control. You don't have to be the loudest person in the room, you don't have to have the most electric personality to be able to have control in the court room.



Holness

vate sector to "explore incentives to shift the focus of policies towards building resilience and innovative disaster risk financing policies and instruments that would help in the region."

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is predicting that Caribbean economies will grow 2.1 percent in 2019, even as it acknowledged an international scenario marked by what it describes as "greater uncertainty."

Caribbean governments sought to consolidate their policies with regards to economic growth, staging a special summit in Trinidad and Tobago that examined the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) that allows for the free movement of goods skills, labor and services across the region.

However, the move by the T&T-based Republic Financial Holdings Limited (RFHL) to acquire the operations of Scotiabank in Guyana, St.

Maarten, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the

Grenadines did not sit well with Guyana and Antigua and Barbuda. Browne said his administration would not provide a vesting order to facilitate the sale, while Guyana is worried about future competition in the industry.

CRIME

Crime continued unabated in the Caribbean, with every country reporting some level of discomfort with the situation.

In T&T, the number of people killed in 2018 surpassed 500. In Jamaica, where it is more than 600, the government failed to get Opposition support for an extension of the state of emergency in place since Jan. 2017.

"We don't need a state of emergency to feel safe," said Opposition Leader Dr. Peter



Rowley

Phillips, even as Holness told legislators there had been a 20 percent reduction in murders islandwide, and in some areas like Montego Bay 70 percent, among the positive results.

In 2018, the region bade farewell to several notable people. T&T mourned the passing of pannist Ken "Professor" Philmore and calypsonians Winston Bailey (the Mighty Shadow), Winston Scarborough, (De Original de Fosto), Andrew Marciano (Lord Superior) and Fred Mitchell (Mighty Composer).

In St. Kitts and Nevis, Mickail "Mitch" Liburd, son of the Minister of Public Infrastructure Ian "Patches" Liburd, was killed. In Belize, the body of 74-year-old Richard Foster, a renowned British filmmaker who had earlier been reported missing in August, was found.

Jamaica's former National Security Minister Dwight Nelson died at age 72.

- Edited from CMC.



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'Nothing is impossible' says T&T-born N.Y. Supreme Court judge

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

also looked very young. And so, sitting on the bench, it appeared to me that I was often challenged because of my appearance," she said.

"People assumed I did not know as much as I did. I learned, as I practiced as an attorney, I did not have to educate anyone as to my experience and my knowledge.

And it's the same thing I do on the bench, because, as an attorney, I did my research.

"Because I had a lot of experience (clerked for a judge), I was good at handling cases in the court room; and, because of the depth of my knowledge, some of the attorneys were surprised," she added.

Toussaint said there were also challenges because she's

Fear lying political leaders

The much-anticipated mid-term elections are now over, but what undoubtedly remains is the ever-growing divide in the United States, stoked by racism, xenophobia and nativist politics from the alt-right and its self-confessed nation-alist-in-chief.

After the elections, it will be harder for the Republican Party to distance itself from labels like the anti-immigrant, anti-minority party of alternative facts and hate.

That is what the dangerous infection, Trumpism, and the Republican Party's new leader has brought it to - even though it's been hurtling

along that path for years now.

Sadly, while the leader of the GOP has chosen to run his usual scapegoating-the-immigrants campaign, ramped way up to drive fear into every white Republican that the brown immigrant "thugs" are going to "invade" their dear land, rape their daughters and kill them in their homes while taking away their jobs and laughing all the way to the bank, the reality is that the only people these "base" supporters need to fear is their own lying leaders.

FAT CATS

While many in the GOP's base continue to struggle to make ends meet, holding down minimum wage jobs, being dependent on welfare, social security and Medicare, Medicaid and that very important pre-existing condition clause in the plan they love to hate - "Obamacare" - the leaders who use nativist policies are fat cats, not having to struggle a day in their lives to make ends meet.

While the federal minimum wage is just \$7.25 per hour as it is in 10 other states, including in Texas, members of the U.S. Congress and the senate get paid approximately \$608 per hour, presuming 10-hour workdays.

That is more than many people make per week nationally. The state with the highest minimum wage is California at \$11 per hour while the states

with the lowest minimum wage per hour are Georgia, where the minimum wage is a stunning \$5.50, and Wyoming, where it is a shocking \$5.15.

That means a family with two persons working minimum wage jobs in Georgia and Wyoming will take home just \$398.58 and \$362 after tax per week, respectively. That's \$1,594.3 and \$1,448 per month, respectively.

CONTRAST

Contrast that to the net worth of the hardliners in the GOP, led by El Trumpeto. His current net worth is \$3.1 billion. Hardliners who support an end to birth right citizenship, like Mark Stanford, is worth over \$7 million while

Mitch McConnell's net worth is \$22.5 million.

Paul Ryan's net worth is estimated at \$6 million; Ted Cruz's at \$4.9 million and

Republican Brian Kemp in Georgia over \$5 million.

These elected leaders have no idea what it's like to struggle to pay a bill, live pay check to pay check; have to make a decision on whether its rent or food and can't afford health care, the medication you need or deductibles.

But in order to ensure their "good life" is preserved and not have the so-called "base" focus on the real issues affecting their lives, the best scapegoat is the black and brown immigrant, who like black freed slaves, are painted and vilified as dark-faced criminals, killers, rapists, invaders, job stealers, benefits moochers and people who lead to the darkening of America and the dilution of the GOP's power, while taking away the majority control whites enjoy now.

The reality, however, is the only person the GOP's so-called base needs to fear is its own lying, racist and selfish leaders, bent on keeping the cheese while hoodwinking them into fighting for the crumbs with the perceived black and brown "immigrant invaders".

Felicia J. Persaud is CMO at Hard Beat Communications, Inc. which owns the brands NewsAmericasNow, CaribPRWire and InvestCaribbeanNow.



CORRECTION

Caribbean Today's Publisher Peter Webley was presented with a surprise award by Michelle Cawley Dreseris, not his wife Maureen, during Caribbean Today's 30th anniversary celebration on Dec. 1, 2018. The award recognized Webley for his "devout energy, tireless dedication, and sustained Excellence, marketing and delivering Our Caribbean Dreams". Caribbean Today apologizes for the error.



FELICIA J. PERSAUD

GENDER GOAL: Caribbean women's soccer still seeking respect

KENSINGTON, Maryland – In a time when women are making more impact in almost every field, Trini-dadian Sasha Sutherland has produced a thesis, titled "Normal, natural and proper: Women's football in the Caribbean". She recently discussed her findings about football or soccer with *Caribbean Today's* Gordon Williams. The following interview was edited for space and clarity:

QUESTION: Why that subject (for the thesis)?

ANSWER: I was a footballer (soccer player) myself ... Women's football would be laughed at, so to speak, or not taken as seriously. But men's football was the be all and end all of the sport ... So when it was time to research a topic, I decided to look at women's football and the disparities ... and what are the realities for women, Caribbean women, in football.

Q: If there were three really top issues that you found in your research, what would those be?

A: Women playing football is not a big revolution ... Access is no longer a problem. The main challenge is beyond access - what happens when it's time to get into the boardroom, to put yourself forward for positions of importance. That's where you see the inequities between men and women, where you see the old boys club and the male centered, male identified, male focus around what is football as we know it in the Caribbean. And so, despite a woman's ability, despite her knowledge, it's harder for a woman to move inside the boardroom than it is for a man to do so.

Secondly, the support systems for the development of football is not there. We pay a lot of lip service to women's sports generally, and particularly football, as opposed to men's football ... Across some of the territories, you see an investment, huge investments in men's football, not the same in women's football.

Perhaps the third major challenge would be the lack of policies to support development for men and women - equality in sports ... It's hard to combat inequality when there is no legislation to support.

Q: Do you see it as a definite lack of respect for women's involvement in the sport, all levels?

A: Yes, because when I started the research I realized there were no monographs, there were no articles, there were no documents and evidence of the history of women's football in the Caribbean ... And so we don't have that information, but if we ask about men's football,



Jamaica created history by being the first nation from the Caribbean to qualify for a senior women's soccer World Cup.

in sum, we were able to get that information.

Q: How much does that affect the participation of females in the sport, especially younger girls?

A: Well, the lack of documentary support or history for women's football in the region doesn't necessarily affect the development of the sport, to the extent that (football's world governing body) FIFA invests money in football development. So the money that FIFA gives to the member associations, as long as it is split equitably, it can help to propel women's football development.

... The football associations, they've always supported men's football. It was seen as a male pastime and a male preserve. And so, what (the thesis) does is it informs administrators or it informs researchers on how they can better administer to better support the sport ... better tailor the programs towards women and girls seeking to start.

Q: How do you look at ... women not getting that support, yet managing to succeed anyway?

A: Again, because FIFA is investing money in football, I believe what the women are getting are remnants ... A certain percentage has to go towards football development. But it's no different between football, rugby, you know, any other female sport. I think in the Caribbean, we tend to associate sport with men ...


Q: Is there any other step you plan to take, beyond the research, in terms of impacting the game itself?

A: Yes. So, (the thesis) is an academic exercise, but I also practice. I am also in the field ... I lecture at the University of the West Indies and so my research (links) from my experiences as an athlete, as an administrator, as a student of the university and a football manager ... So now I hope to use that to inform my students who are gonna be future sports administrators ...

I have had a president of a football association tell me that I'm an academic, I'm an intellect and I don't know anything about football. And he even referred to me as my parts, my body parts; that I'm a "p...y" because I said in a meeting that "you don't respect women's football, you're not supporting it. Because at the point where we want to raise the issues you are walking out." That caused a big conundrum.

I've had another football president say that he doesn't think that women should be breast trapping a football (controlling the ball on the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)



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VIEWPOINT



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COLOR CODE: The ups and downs of being black or brown

What is a high brown though? It's the term used to describe someone, usually a woman, who is negro by race, but fair skinned, light complexion, and not darker than a brown paper bag.

In the old days they used to be referred to as mulatto, quadroon or quarteron. In England they were referred to as half-caste. In old Jamaica they were called red Ibo because they resembled the Ibo tribe of Nigeria who were light brown.

Some areas of Jamaica had a high density of brown, mixed race people. This was due to the heavy preponderance of white people who settled in those areas and co-habited with the locals.

ESTEEM

Back in the 1960s in the United States, the phrase used to be, "If you're white you're all right, if you're black step back, but if you're brown stick

around."

High browns are sometimes held in higher esteem than people of different hues. And it's not a race thing either, for men who prefer brown women rarely choose a Caucasian, Chinese, Indian or any other woman.

There's something about the brown skin that attracts him, perhaps in the same way some men prefer fat, slim, tall or short women.

The women all aspire to have beautiful brown babies, so they co-habit with light skinned men to put a little cream in the coffee. Nature has its own agenda though.

One child may be born



TONY ROBINSON



brown, while the other is dark, raising eyebrows and causing problems, as the father may suspect paternity irregularity. Sometimes the mother may even curse the darker child.

DOWNSIDE

But there are downsides to being brown. For one, a high brown dares not criticize or berate anyone for bleach-

ing their skin, for the backlash will be swift and severe.

I have heard tales of girls in high school who endured hell, getting a hard time from their peers simply because of their brown skin. One said she was trying to study and some other girls were making so much noise that she found it impossible. She quietly asked them to tone it down. Their

response was swift and savage: "Is just because you brown and have pretty eye why you talking to us like that, move and go way."

On the streets, high browns are harassed far more than any other women.

Even folk songs have been made about brownings.

"Brown skin gal stay home and mind baby"

"There's a brown girl in the ring, tralalalala."

True, brown skinned people seemed to have gotten a pass in our history. This continued into the modern day workplace where high browns were put on the front page with jobs like receptionists, hotel front desk staff and such.

Brown men don't get the same props as brown women though, except maybe to put a little milk in the coffee.

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CARIB Comments



"terrorism" – Barbadian pop icon Rihanna offers her view on

the recent tear-gassing of migrants at the United States-Mexico border on social media.

"We are not on the street corners asking for handouts. We are looking for partnerships and development" – Sir Hilary Beckles, vice chancellor at the University of the West Indies, discusses getting reparations for slavery from the



United Kingdom.

"I would love to see a Caribbean person in that position. We have had these overseas coaches, but I have not seen the benefit of that as yet. We have spent a fair bit of money on them and we have not seen the progress you would expect" – Former West Indies cricket great



Sir Vivian Richards argues for a Caribbean national to take over as head coach of the region's team following the resignation of Australian Stuart Law.

"You need to show passion in what you're doing. The passion is no longer there. Where is the love of the game gone? We used to love the game that we



play, and then everything else comes with it. Whether it's the opposite now that people are attracted to other things and not prepared to put the work in, I don't know" – former Trinidad and Tobago soccer star Dwight Yorke laments the state of the game in his Caribbean homeland.

- Compiled from various sources.



GENDER GOAL: Caribbean women's soccer still seeking respect

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

breast/chest). And that's what (fueled) a lot of the research.

So we sexualize football lot when it comes to women ... I'm not saying all men think this

way - but my experiences with men in football have not always been the best. There are men who are supporting women's football, and I will never discount that, but there are also men in positions of power who

don't think women deserve the right to be there.

So I'm hoping that with all my interactions with the students that I teach, or indeed the organizations that I am in, to push the envelope.

Q: If there is a scale as to where women's football is now, and where it has to be, with 10 being the best-case scenario ... where do you think the game is now and where do you think it should end up being?

A: I would say, all in all, our progress is probably at a 4.5, if five out of 10. We've been like minus whatever. So there's been a lot of progression.

Again, we have to give thanks to FIFA for injecting money in the game. But at the same time FIFA is also culpable ... still not empowering women enough. You know, there's still more that FIFA can do, in terms of ensuring their policies are executed, ensuring there are checks and balances in-country to ensure that the money that they gave is being spent the way it is intended and not just accepting reports that come from member associa-

tions that may be, to some extent, inaccurate.

And so, now, I think we're at a five because, as I said, access is no longer an issue. We have access to the field ... but the development of football is more than just playing the game. It's making sure you empower women to lead the organizations, to lead their clubs or to be capable managers. And we have some of those. We just haven't invested in them ...

Q: There is a stigma, attached to women's football ... and women's participation in football ... Lesbianism.

A: Right.

Q: Is that something that is keeping young Caribbean female athletes away from the sport?

A: I asked the women what you think are some of the challenges and they said that the challenge is once a woman plays a contact sport - because it's not just football, it's basketball ... We get it in women's cricket as well. And some of the women who play cricket

and football and basketball are lesbians. My question is: So what? How does that impede them playing the sport? ... Yes, there might be an indication that if there's a perception, of perceived lesbianism in the sport, then administrators may be unwilling to push that sport.

Q: You didn't find that in your research?

A: Well, I have found that, but not to a large extent. What I've found is that there is a perception that lesbianism in football leads to negative perceptions about the sport. But I couldn't corroborate that lesbianism in football leads to lack of investment in football ...

Q: If (women's football) is at a four, 4.5 to five on a scale of one to 10, where would you grade the optimism?

A: ... I am still optimistic that we can make progress. And so I will grade, perhaps, my optimism at a seven. Societal optimism, I think I would probably grade six, seven. But there is still so much to be done (to take it) to where it should be.



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FOOD WISH: Caribbean nationals urged to adapt healthy diet in 2019

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) has urged Caribbean nationals to maintain a healthy and balanced diet that will provide many benefits into 2019 and beyond.

“What we eat and drink can affect our body’s ability to fight infections, as well as how likely we are to develop health problems later in life, including obesity, heart disease, diabetes and different types of cancer,” PAHO noted in a statement last month.

“The exact ingredients of a healthy diet will depend on different factors like how old and how active we are, as well as the kinds of foods that are available in the communities where we live,” it added.

But across cultures, PAHO said there are some common food tips for helping to lead healthier, longer lives.

“Our bodies are incredibly complex, and (with the exception of breast milk for babies) no single food contains all the nutrients we need for them to work at their best,” it said. “Our diets must, therefore, contain a wide variety of fresh and nutritious foods to keep us going strong.”

MIX

Concerning a daily diet,



A balanced diet is best.

PAHO has urged Caribbean nationals to aim to eat a mix of staple foods, such as wheat, maize, rice and potatoes, with legumes, fresh fruit and vegetables and foods from animal source.

PAHO also recommends choosing wholegrain foods, like unprocessed maize, millet, oats, wheat and brown rice, stating that they are rich in valuable fiber and can help one feel full for longer.

In addition, PAHO urges lean meats “where possible or trim it of visible fat,” and try steaming or boiling instead of frying foods when cooking.

For snacks, the health organization recommends choosing raw vegetables, unsalted nuts and fresh fruit, rather than foods that are high

in sugars, fats or salt. PAHO said too much salt can raise blood pressure, “which is a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

“Most people around the world eat too much salt. On average, we consume double the WHO (World Health Organization) recommended

limit of five grams (equivalent to a teaspoon) a day.

“Even if we don’t add extra salt in our food, we should be aware that it is commonly put in processed foods or drinks, and often in high amounts,” it added.

RISK

PAHO said too much sugar is not only bad for one’s teeth, “but increases the risk of unhealthy weight gain and obesity, which can lead to serious, chronic health problems.

“As with salt, it’s important to take note of the amount of ‘hidden’ sugars that can be in processed food and drinks,” it noted, stating that, for example, a single can of soda can contain up to 10 teaspoons of added sugar.

Overall, PAHO said drinking too much, or too often, increases immediate risk

of injury, as well as causing longer-term effects, like liver damage, cancer, heart disease and mental illness.

WHO advises that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption, according to PAHO, adding that, for many people, even low levels of alcohol use can still be associated with significant health risks.

PAHO warned against drinking alcohol if pregnant or breastfeeding; driving, operating machinery or undertaking other activities that involve related risks; if one has health problems which may be made worse by alcohol; if one is taking medicines which directly interact with alcohol; or if one has difficulties with controlling one’s drinking.

- Edited from CMC.



Caribbean-U.S. manufacturers form joint venture

A major United States-based company with strong Caribbean ties will form a joint venture with another food manufacturing firm in the U.S.

Grace Foods (USA), Inc. (Grace Foods), a company owned by Jamaica-based GraceKennedy Limited

(GKL), has announced it will acquire a 49 percent equity stake in Majesty Foods LLC (Majesty Foods).

Majesty Foods is a Florida-based manufacturer of patty and empanada products. In the U.S., Grace Foods owns and operates a cold storage and food processing facili-

ty in Florida.

As a part of the agreement, Grace Foods will outsource to Majesty Foods its current factory operations, which include the production of frozen Hispanic and Caribbean products for the retail and food service channels.



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HEALTH



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Hunger, obesity, inequality rise in Caribbean ~ U.N.

SANTIAGO, Chile – A new United Nations report indicates, for the third consecutive year, the number of people chronically hungry has increased in the Caribbean and Latin America, while 250 million – 60 percent of the regional population – is obese or overweight, representing the biggest threat to nutritional health.

Speaking at the recent launch of “The 2018 Panorama of Food and Nutrition Security” report in Santiago, Chile, Julio Berdegue, U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) regional representative, said it was an “appalling” threat to health over-all, affecting women and indigenous groups the most.

“The Panorama”, published annually by FAO, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Program (WFP), explores strategies to halt the health threats posed by hunger and malnutrition in the Caribbean and Latin America.

According to the report, hunger, malnutrition, lack of



Obesity is a growing problem in the Caribbean.

micronutrients and obesity largely affect low-income families, women, indigenous communities, Afro-descendants and rural families.

CAUSES

The report stated that the principal causes of malnutrition among the most vulnerable can be traced to changes the food systems have experienced in the region, from production to consumption. With a greater strain on the demand for nutrient-rich food like milk and meats, the report stated, many resort to less costly options, which are often higher in fat, sugar and salt.

“Obesity is growing uncontrollably,” Berdegue said.

Maria Cristina Perceval, who serves at the director for

UNICEF in the region, said stunting correlates closely to inequality and poverty levels, adding that being chronically overweight “is also increasingly affecting the poorest children.” She underscored that lower income families have unequal access to healthy diets.

The report stated that obesity has become the greatest threat to the Caribbean and Latin America when it comes to nutritional health conditions. Nearly one in four adults are obese and more than seven percent of children below age five are overweight – higher than the global average of 5.6 percent, the report states.

To address the exacerbation of hunger and obesity, a “multisectoral approach is needed,” said Dominican-born PAHO Director Dr. Carissa Etienne, adding that the solution requires addressing social factors, just as well as water quality and access to health services.

- Edited from CMC.



New Broward program helps youngsters with water safety

Teenagers will teach younger children how to swim under SPUD (Students Preventing Unintentional Drowning), a new after-school project created by the Florida Department of Health (DOH) in Broward County.

More than 300 teens at eight high schools have volunteered to act as “water safety ambassadors” during this school year and are learning about drowning prevention.

Drowning is the number one cause of unintentional deaths among children under age five in Broward County. The best protections are for an adult to watch children every minute they are around water and to set up layers of protection, such as pool fences, locking gates, door alarms and rescue tools. Swimming lessons for children and adults help.

“Every drowning is a tragedy that could be prevented,” says Dr. Paula Thaqi, director of DOH Broward. “The SPUD program is an innovative way to educate our teen-agers, as well as the small children and their parents.”

MESSAGE

The teens are spending months creating new safety messages that resonate with kids. In the process, they offered instructions about water safety they can share with their family and friends.

As the school year progresses, SPUD teens will make presentations to younger students. The high schools where SPUD is active are: Piper in Sunrise, Blanche Ely in Pompano Beach, Miramar, Stranahan in Fort Lauderdale, Coconut Creek,



SPUD volunteer Kimaria Clark shows off her shirt.

Coral Glades in Coral Springs, Boyd Anderson in Lauderdale Lakes and Deerfield Beach.

The DOH Broward Drowning Prevention Program focuses on children ages four and under, when kids are believed to be fascinated by water and most at risk for drowning. Risks are elevated in Broward County, with 125,000 backyard pools and miles of waterways.

The main messages to kids, include: Don’t go near the water without an adult; learn to swim; and get help immediately if someone is in trouble around water.

Main messages to adults: Assign an adult water watcher with a cell phone (ideally a strong swimmer) to watch kids whenever they are in or near water. Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation and how to swim. Set up protective barriers around water.

For more information, call 954-467-4700, Ext. 5695 or e-mail cassie.mcGovern@flhealth.gov.

Article and photograph submitted by Bob LaMendola, Florida Department of Health in Broward County.



PAHO urges urgent action in Caribbean malaria fight

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is urging Caribbean countries to take urgent action to stem the increase in malaria cases and free the region of a disease which, during the last century, was the leading cause of death in almost every nation in the world.

“Malaria elimination is now closer than ever,” said Dr. Carissa F. Etienne, the Dominican-born PAHO director. “We cannot rely or relax on the actions already taken.

“Efforts must be stepped-up, where incidences of the disease have increased,” Etienne added.

RISK

“Other countries, however, have recorded an increase in the number of cases of malaria, which puts at risk achievement of the goals to reduce the number of cases, and eliminate the

disease in the region by 2030,” PAHO said.

Since 2015, PAHO said cases of malaria in the Americas, including the Caribbean, have increased by 71 percent. It said 95 percent of the total number of these cases are concentrated in five countries, mainly in specific areas, where efforts against the disease have been weakened.

PAHO said many of those affected are indigenous populations, people living in situations of vulnerability and mobile populations, such as miners and migrants.

PAHO said many countries in the Caribbean are expanding their efforts to control and eliminate malaria, with its support, as well as the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other partners.



Spring Health



The April issue of Caribbean Today will feature a comprehensive examination of how the healthcare industry serves the Caribbean community.

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Haitian American actor shines in monster Broadway hit musical 'Hamilton'

Haitian American actor Carvens Lissaint is stuck with multiple roles these days - some tastier than others.

Born in New York to struggling Haitian immigrants, the once homeless Lissaint is now a Broadway star, playing United States President George Washington in the smash hit musical "Hamilton".

He is also a young black man who must still convince security in his Brooklyn apartment he actually lives there.

According to a recent



Lissaint onstage in 'Hamilton'

story published in the **HuffPost**, Lissaint claims to have been confronted several times by people who cannot fathom his rightful place is in a fancy New York building.

"They just see a black guy wearing Beats headphones, sweats and a hoodie," Lissaint, a 6' 3" 29-year-old told HuffPost. "... I'm like, 'I live here. These are my keys'."

LONG ROAD

Lissaint has risen from riding the subway trains all night to commanding a six-figure salary. Yet it appears he still has a long way to go before the world actually gets that he's a talented man - add spoken word poet to his repertoire - rapidly on the way up. Maybe it's time people stop mistaking him for the delivery boy or possibly women on the streets could stop clutching their purse when he passes too close.

For now, Lissaint is busy convincing audiences to imagine him as president, a black man shaping the history of the U.S. in "Hamilton", one of this generation's most powerful stage events.

"This is a complicated thing to reckon with," HuffPost explained in the story, "the child of Haitians playing a white colonist who owned 123 slaves."

Lissaint has his own take on the irony.

"In a lot of ways, I'm playing this character in

honor of the people who were Washington's slaves, by reclaiming the narrative and letting it be told through this Haitian black man," he told HuffPost. "When people see me play him, it challenges how we think of who has the ability to run this country."

RACISM

Yet, according to the story, Lissaint's beliefs on the current state of affairs in the U.S., especially on the issue of racism, is not stuck in 200-plus years of the country's past, even if he only picked up the "Hamilton" gig - performed eight times a week, including double dates - last year. It takes a stark look at today as well.

According to HuffPost, Lissaint's parents came to the U.S. in 1979 to escape poverty in rural Haiti. His father taught him about race in America.

"I remember watching these cops beat up on Rodney King when I was three years old," Lissaint told HuffPost, recalling the 1991 incident when police brutalized a black man in California. "My dad said in his deep accent, 'This is the way it is. They're coming for us. This is the beginning'."

NO ESCAPE

That lesson, coupled with others, stuck.

Lissaint said he played basketball and attended dance classes growing up. He also sang in the school choir and entered poetry contests. Yet he could not escape discrimination.

"Walking in uptown Manhattan with my high school basketball team, the cops would assume we were a gang going to fight other gang members, and we would get randomly pulled over and thrown on a wall," he told HuffPost.

Lissaint worked as a spoken word artist. In 2007 he won the New York Knicks Poetry Slam. He was 18. Eventually, he secured enough money to watch a Broadway play, "In the Heights" by Lin Manuel, the man who also wrote "Hamilton".

Lissaint was hooked.

"I was a young black kid from upper Manhattan," he told HuffPost. "To see a musical about Washington Heights and see a black dude onstage, that was inspiring."

Lissaint eventually received a scholarship to attend the American

Academy of Dramatic Arts in Manhattan. In 2017 he received a call to appear in "Hamilton" and became a standby for several roles - Washington, Aaron Burr, and the Marquis de Lafayette/Thomas Jefferson. The following year, he went on tour nationally and earned the role last September.

When Lissaint's father came to see him perform for

the first time, it proved an emotional moment.

"My father wept in my arms at the stage door for a good minute and a half," the actor told HuffPost. "... He's ever held me like that in his life."

Today Lissaint has found more love. He is married, successful, having a good time and comfortable where he lives, even with the hiccups.

Still, he knows nothing should be taken for granted.

"As much as I love this, I can't really enjoy it," Lissaint told HuffPost. "I know it's not forever, because 'Hamilton' (is) not forever, and I can only afford to live here because I'm in 'Hamilton'."

- Edited from story published in HuffPost.



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TAKE-OFF: Spirit Airlines increases flights to Jamaica from Detroit, Orlando

Spirit Airlines is expanding its service to Jamaica.

Beginning last month, Spirit started nonstop flights three times weekly between Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW) and Sangster International Airport (MBJ) in Montego Bay.

The airline also announced that it will begin nonstop service from Orlando to both major Jamaican cities. Starting Feb. 28, Spirit will fly between Orlando and Montego Bay. On Mar. 1, Spirit will begin nonstop flights between Orlando and Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston.

In the past year, Spirit has announced an additional four routes to Jamaica, including from Baltimore/Washington, D.C., tripling its Jamaica service in that time.

"Spirit continues to grow in Jamaica because the beautiful island continues to see an amazing demand for visitors



Spirit Airlines

looking to get away to experience the warm beaches, culture and hospitality," Matt Klein, Spirit Airlines' senior vice president and chief commercial office, was quoted as saying in a recent press release.

"The nonstop flights we are adding will only make it easier for our guests to get

away and experience all of what Jamaica has to offer."

"The Jamaica Tourist Board values the partnership with Spirit especially their focus on bringing more visitors to the destination," added Donovan White, Jamaica's director of tourism.



... Launches new Orlando-St. Thomas flights

Spirit Airlines is now offering nonstop flights between Orlando, Florida and St. Thomas in the United States Virgin Islands.

Spirit launched its inaugural flight recently from Orlando and was welcomed in USVI by Governor Kenneth E. Mapp, Lieutenant Governor Obsert E. Potter, members of the Virgin Islands Port Authority and the Department of Tourism.

The airline will operate three flights a week between Orlando and St. Thomas, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays, adding to current daily flights between Fort Lauderdale and St. Thomas.

"Our partnership with Spirit Airlines continues to grow and expand for the benefit of the people of the Virgin Islands and the benefit of Spirit Airlines' employees and shareholders, and we look for-

ward to strengthening our relationship in the future," the governor said.

Stephen Schuler, Spirit's director of communications, said the airline is happy to be working 'with the Virgin Islands tourism team.

"As an airline we love working with really good groups and this is the best in the industry, the best in the world," said Schuler.



Russian waives visa requirements for Jamaicans

KINGSTON, Jamaica – Jamaicans will be allowed to visit Russia for up to three months each year without a visa.

Russians will be allowed the same courtesy in the Caribbean island.

Jamaica's Cabinet recently

gave approval for an amendment to the agreement between its government and the Russian Federation for the waiver of visa requirements for periods not exceeding 90 days per annum.

Information Minister Ruel

Reid said the waiver will allow mutual visits of citizens of Jamaica and the Russian Federation to facilitate tourism and business purposes for periods not exceeding 90 days per annum.



AA introduces cashless transactions in Bahamas

NASSAU, The Bahamas – American Airlines has announced it has gone cashless for passengers traveling to three international airports in The Bahamas.

The airline said passengers using the North Eleuthera (ELH), George Town (GGT) and Marsh Harbour (MHH) international airports will now be required to use a credit or debit card to make any transactions at the airport, including purchasing tickets and paying for checked baggage.

"American has transitioned to a cashless airport environment at many locations around the world, allowing our team members to assist our customers in a faster and more efficient manner," said Caroline Hollingsworth, the airline's country manager for The Bahamas.

"Moving away from cash transactions also reduces the complexity of work for our agents who will no longer have to worry about handling cash, finding exact change or



American Airlines

closing out a cash drawer at the end of the day. This is positive news for our customers and for our team members at the airport."

American currently offers nonstop service to Eleuthera, George Town and Marsh Harbour from its hub at Miami (MIA) and Saturday service to George Town from its hub at Charlotte, North Carolina.

The airline now offers seasonal service to Eleuthera and Marsh Harbour from its hub at Charlotte, North Carolina.

- Edited from CMC.



Sandals to drop Styrofoam from all Caribbean resorts

MONTEGO BAY, Jamaica – Sandals Resorts International (SRI) says it will be eliminating all Styrofoam products from the 19 Sandals and Beaches resorts across the Caribbean, "in a continued effort to protect the environment."

Deputy SRI Chairman Adam Stewart, in a statement issued recently, said environmental sustainability remains a key priority to the company.

"After eliminating plastic straws, stirrers, laundry bags and gift shop bags last year, we're choosing to eliminate Styrofoam from our resorts. We're proud that many of the islands in which we operate are also making this shift to ensure that future generations can enjoy the beauty of the Caribbean," he said.

According to SRI, the Sandals Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Sandals Resorts International, continues to amplify efforts to reduce pollution in the Caribbean and educate communities on the dangers pollution poses to the environment, health and tourism.

FOOTPRINT

"Eliminating Styrofoam is yet another way we're reducing our environmental footprint and improving the health

of our Caribbean communities," said Heidi Clarke, executive director of the Sandals Foundation.

"Education is critical, and that's where the Sandals Foundation comes in. We want to keep our islands clean and beautiful for citizens, visitors and marine wildlife alike."

The elimination of Styrofoam is particularly important in the Caribbean region, where marine wildlife across the more than 700 islands and coastlines is abundant. According to Environment America's Wildlife Over Waste campaign, scientists have found plastic fragments including Styrofoam in 86 per cent of all sea turtle species, 44 per cent of all seabird species and 43 per cent of all marine mammal species.

All Sandals and Beaches Resorts are certified by the EarthCheck benchmarking and certification program, with nine resorts currently holding master certification.

The company is believed to be the only hotel chain in the world to have all of its resorts certified.

SRI said it will also explore opportunities to eliminate other plastic across its resorts by Sept. 2019.



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STATUS QUO: Women struggling for equality in Miami-Dade County ~ report

A recent study in Miami-Dade County, home to thousands of Caribbean nationals, has shown that women are still not being equally compensated to men in the workplace.

According to the report on the status of women and girls in the county, a joint effort by the Miami-Dade Commission for Women, the Miami-Dade Commission Auditor and Florida International University Metropolitan Center released last month, women's pay still lags behind men's.

During a presentation of the report's findings to the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners, Dr. Maria Ilcheva, who authored it, noted that a key finding is that a larger percent of women have a bachelor's degree or higher, yet women get paid 85 cents to a dollar a man earns. The wage gap has increased from 13 percent to 15 percent since 2014.

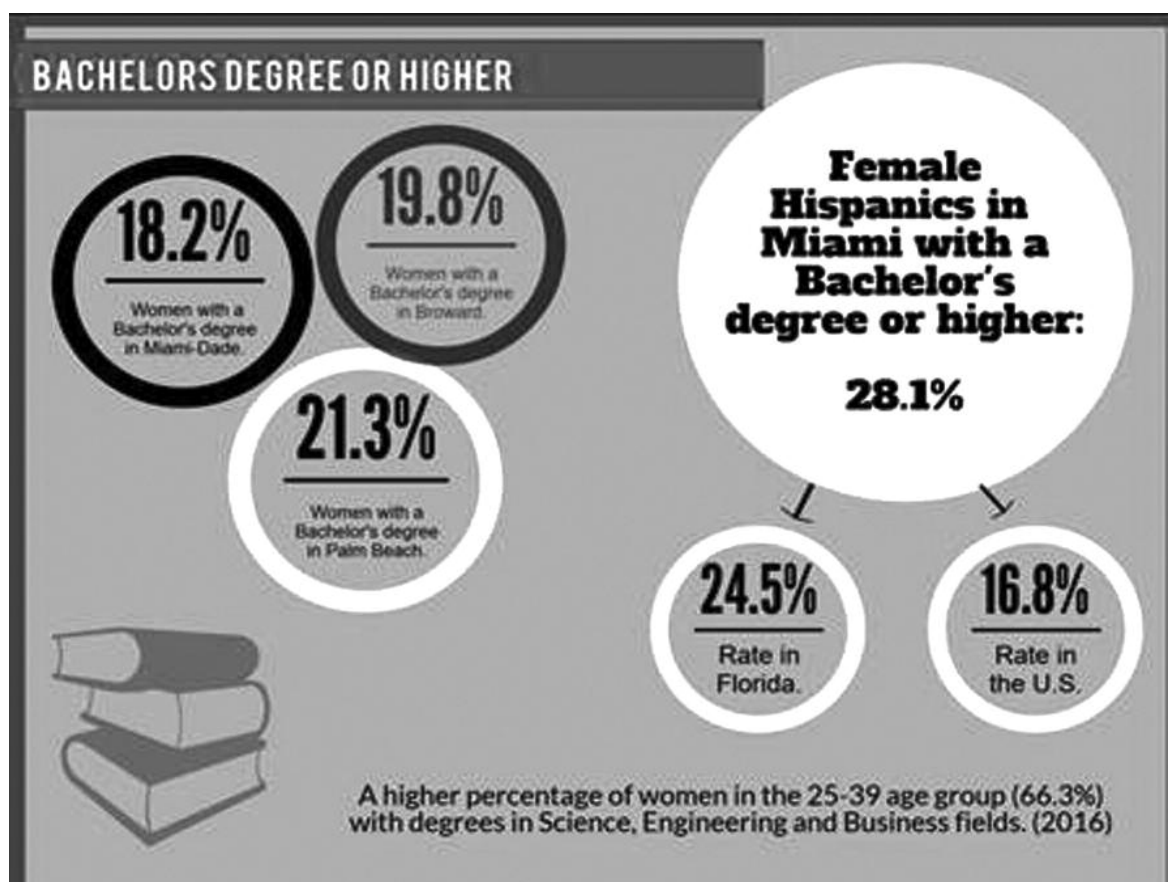
However Ilcheva, from the Metropolitan Center, also noted an upside for women. The findings show a significant decrease in the salary gap between women and men employed by Miami-Dade County government. The

average salary of female employees in 2018 is 11.3 percent lower in comparison to male employees. In 2016, the gap was 14 percent.

Other key findings of the report include: The increase in female educational attainment, insights on female entrepreneurship, including the percentage of women-owned businesses that receive county contracts, and the significant poverty rate of women in Miami-Dade, which is significantly higher for women of color.

BENCHMARK

It has been 55 years since the federal Equal Pay Act was signed into United States law. The report came as a result of legislation sponsored by Miami-Dade County Commissioner Daniella Levine Cava. In 2015, the Board of County Commissioners adopted the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The ordinance requires a report to be produced each year providing a benchmark for measuring gender equity in the county.



"Behind each of these statistics is a hard-working mother, neighbor, sister, friend, co-worker who is doing her level best, every day, to get ahead," Commissioner Levine Cava explained in a recent press release.

"We must continue to work together to close the wage gap, ensure gender equity in the workforce, and make sure our women and girls are treated fairly."

The Miami-Dade Commission for Women prepared policy recommendations based on the report. One highlight of the commission's recommendations is that the

county adopt policies to require businesses with county contracts and 50 or more employees to provide parental leave.

For a copy of the report and recommendations, contact Levine Cava at District8@miamidade.gov or call 305-378-6677.



National College Fair comes to Miami

Representatives from nearly 200 colleges and universities are scheduled to attend the 2019 Miami National College Fair on **Feb. 24**.

The reps will meet with students and parents on subjects such as financial aid, college planning, admission and testing requirements.

The fair, which has free admission, will be held from noon to 4 p.m., at the **DoubleTree** by Hilton Hotel Miami Airport & Convention

Center, 777 N.W. 72nd Ave., Miami, Florida.

Parking is \$5. Cash only.

Select informational sessions will be presented in Spanish and Haitian creole. A counseling center will be available to allow students and their parents the opportunity to talk with professionals regarding college preparation, admissions and scholarships.

By pre-registering, students can print a bar-coded confirmation to be used at the

fair as an electronic identification. Students can pre-register at www.gotomyncf.com.

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) and Miami-Dade County Public Schools are sponsoring the fair.

For more information, contact the college fair hotline at **305-995-1739** or visit www.nacacnet.org.



HAIL THE MAN



Jamaican American Winston Barnes, second right, commissioner of the South Florida City of Miramar, was recently honored by one of the Caribbean's leading companies in the United States. JN Money Services (USA) Inc. recognized Barnes at a luncheon held in Pembroke Pines. Barnes, who was conferred with the Order of Distinction Commander Class by the Jamaican government in October, was lauded for his achievements and service to Jamaica and thanked for his support to JN. Also attending the function were, from left Leon Mitchell, assistant general manager, The Jamaica National Group; Oliver Mair, Jamaica's consul general to Miami; Carmen Bartlett, former regional manager, JNMS USA South East Region; and Horace Hines, JNMS general manager.

HOMESPUN HUMOR



Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness, right, shares a joke with General Colin Powell, a former United States secretary of state whose parents were from Jamaica, while the two attended a dinner hosted for the prime minister recently in Washington, D.C. The function was attended by several representatives of Jamaica and the U.S.

'Sizzling Sixties' to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The African American Research Library and Cultural Center (AARLCC) in South Florida will this month host "The Sizzling Sixties – Celebrating Peace in Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr."

The event is scheduled for **Jan. 18**.

Highlights include a cocktail, food and music of the 1960s.

The AARLCC is located at 2650 Sistrunk Blvd., Fort Lauderdale. For more information, call **954-357-6282**.



Windies names Englishman interim head cricket coach

Richard Pybus has been named interim head coach of the West Indies senior men's cricket team, sparking a firestorm of criticism over the manner in which the Englishman was chosen.

A statement early this month from Cricket West Indies (CWI) noted that Pybus would take up the top role "with immediate effect. But Leeward Islands Cricket Board President Enoch Lewis called for the appointment to be rescinded in the interest of transparency, fairness and due process.

"He (Pybus) will lead the technical team for the upcoming visit of England, the Triangular Series in Ireland, the 2019 Cricket World Cup

(CWC) and the visit of India in July and August," the CWI statement added.

Lewis claimed Pybus was "hand-picked" by CWI President Dave Cameron. Nic Pothas had been CWI's first choice but, according to Lewis, Cameron ended discussions with the South African after determining negotiations were at a "stalemate."

The CWI's statement explained that recruitment for a permanent head coach would be conducted shortly, with the hope of appointing one by September.

The West Indies' next assignment is a series against England this month in the Caribbean.



West Indies qualifies for cricket's T20 World Cup

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates – Reigning champion West Indies has qualified automatically for next year's Twenty/20 World Cup in Australia.

The Caribbean side booked its spot by virtue of its current seventh place in the ICC T20 rankings at the end of 2018, with the top eight teams, including hosts Australia, securing places at the showpiece event.

Minnows Afghanistan, coached by Trinidadian and former West Indies head coach Phil Simmons, also qualified directly by virtue of its eighth place in the rankings.

Former champion and three-time finalists Sri Lanka, ranked ninth, and Bangladesh, 10th, will have to go through the group stage of the tournament with six other qualifiers to make the Super 12.

Six teams from the ICC T20 World Cup Qualifier later this year will join Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in the group stage, with four qualifying to the Super 12 stage.

West Indies won the T20 World Cup for the second time in 2016. Since then, the team's form has been erratic.

- Edited from CMC.



SPORT BRIEFS

Caribbean trio sign new USL contracts

Jamaican midfielders Shane Malcolm and Saeed Robinson, along with Trinidadian defender Jamal Jack, have been re-signed by Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC for the upcoming 2019 United Soccer League (USL) season.

The club said the trio were important to the side and had kept hold of them to ensure stability, especially with several other changes expected to be made.

"With as much turnover we will have on the team, it's important to have players familiar with the club," said Switchbacks head coach Steve Trittschuh.

"These three contributed a lot last season and I expect them to perform even better in 2019."

Caribbean Club Shield draw in Miami

Miami will host this month's official draw for the second Caribbean Club Shield set for Curacao in April.

The draw will be held at CONCACAF's headquarters on Jan. 13 and will decide how the 13 participating teams will be arranged across the four groups.

Ex-Bermuda captain joins U.S. club's coaching staff

Former Bermuda captain Khano Smith has joined Birmingham Legion F.C. as assistant coach at the expansion United Soccer League (USL) club.

Smith, 37, moved from Florida to link up with former New England Revolution colleagues Jay Heaps and Tom Soehn at the Birmingham, Alabama club, saying it was an offer he could not refuse.

The former assistant coach of the U.S. National Women's Soccer League's team Orlando Pride will serve under General Manager Heaps and Head Coach Soehn.

- Compiled from various sources.



Jamaican swimmer wins world championship gold



Atkinson

South Florida-based Alia Atkinson won gold for Jamaica in the 50 meters breaststroke at last month's 2018 FINA World Short Course Swimming

Championships in Hangzhou, China.

Atkinson clocked 29.05 seconds on Dec. 12, a day after celebrating her 30th birthday. The time was just

outside her own world record of 28.56.

"I am happy to finally get the gold in the 50m," Atkinson said.

"There (are) a lot of stereotypes about age and I just turned 30 so it's really cool to see the 30-year-olds still able to do it."

Atkinson also defeated arch rival Ruta Meiluyte of Lithuania, who won silver. Italy's Martina Carraro earned bronze.

It was Atkinson's first gold medal in the event at the world championship. She won three silver medals in previous competitions.



Jamaica draws Brazil, Australia, Italy at women's soccer World Cup 2019

Jamaica, the only Caribbean nation to reach the finals of soccer's senior women's World Cup, now knows which teams it will play at this year's tournament in France.

The Reggae Girlz were placed in Group C following last month's drawing in the host nation. There, they will

face Australia, Brazil and Italy.

Six groups of four teams each will kick off the tournament. Defending champion United States has been drawn in Group F, alongside Chile, Sweden and Thailand.

Group A includes host France, Nigeria, Norway and

South Korea. Group B has China, Germany, South Africa and Spain. Japan, runner-up in 2015, will tackle Argentina, England and Scotland in Group D. Cameroon, Canada, Netherlands and New Zealand make up Group E.



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~ A CARIBBEAN TODAY SPECIAL FEATURE

CARICOM congratulates Haiti on Independence anniversary

GEORGETOWN, Guyana – Haiti has received congratulations from its Caribbean neighbors as the French-speaking nation celebrates its 215th anniversary of Independence.

Irwin LaRocque, secretary general of the Caribbean community (CARICOM), on Jan. 1 noted that the resilience, courage and determination of Haitians continue to be an inspiration to all.

“This occasion is, indeed, cause for celebration, but it is also a timely reminder of the historic importance of the Haitian Revolution and its continued significance as a symbol of triumph over adversity in the quest for liberty, equality and control of national destiny,” LaRocque said in his congratulatory message to President Jovenel Moïse.

He said Haiti’s leadership, as it represented CARICOM at major hemispheric and



LaRocque

global fora, including the G7 and the Quartet of the Community for Latin American and Caribbean Countries (CELAC) last year, was highly appreciated.

INFLUENCE

“These were important opportunities to articulate the interests and concerns of the community to the most influ-

ential global actors,” LaRocque said, adding that the 15-member grouping was looking forward to Haiti’s continued efforts to participate fully in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), which allows for the free movement of goods, skills, labor and services across the region.

LaRocque said Port au Prince’s participation “will be of great assistance in creating an enabling environment for enhancing the welfare and advancement of all its citizens.”

Haiti gained its political Independence on Jan. 1, 1804 after Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a former slave, led the revolutionaries at the Battle of Vertières on Nov. 18, 1803 where the French forces were defeated.



Nation ‘laden with challenges’, but there is hope’ ~ U.N.

UNITED NATIONS – The head of the United Nations Mission in Haiti has told the Security Council that the French-speaking Caribbean community (CARICOM) country is “laden with challenges, but also hope.”

Triggered by violent demonstrations and numerous allegations of government mismanagement of public funds, plus “worrying episodes” of violence in some neighborhoods in the capital Port-au-Prince, Special Representative Helen La Lime said that although progress has been slow, the U.N. Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) has had a positive impact.

Noting progress on “reinforcing rule of law institutions, increasing the capacity of the Haitian National Police, and promoting human rights,” she

said the government now has a dedicated ministerial level focal point for human rights, which “indicates Haiti’s readiness to engage with international human rights bodies and to prepare a national action plan.”

Through a constructive and peaceful dialogue, La Lime said the democratically-elected government of Haiti could implement programs that improve the lives of its citizens. She said that, at the request of Prime Minister Jean-Henry Céant, a joint commission had been established between MINUJUSTH, his advisers and other U.N. agencies, “to remove bottlenecks in implementing the mission’s mandate and to provide a technical support forum.”

- Edited from CMC.



Haiti establishes commission to monitor public policies

PORT AU PRINCE, Haiti – Haiti has appointed a presidential commission to monitor the effectiveness of public policies.

According to the official announcement signed by President Jovenel Moïse and Prime Minister Jean-Henry Céant late last month, the commission will be chaired by a coordinator appointed by presidential decree and it will have a technical secretariat whose composition, powers and operating procedures will be set by internal regulations.

“Once established, the Commission will define its structure, its organization and operating method as well as its work plan,” the Order stated, noting that the term of



Moïse, left, and Céant

office of the commission will be 30 months from the date of its establishment.

“Every three months, the Commission will have to submit a detailed report to the President of the Republic on the monitoring and the effectiveness of the public policies implemented for the realization of his campaign promises.

This report will be made public,” the statement added.

The announcement stated that various stakeholders related to the National Public Administration will provide the commission, in accordance with the laws, all the collaboration necessary for the accomplishment of its mission.

“The State will place

at the disposal of this Commission the human, material and logistical resources necessary for the accomplishment of its mission,” the announcement added.

- Edited from CMC.



Human rights group criticizes prison conditions

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The National Network for the Defense of Human Rights (RNDDH) has lamented the prison conditions in Haiti, telling the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) that as many as 75 percent of prisoners are currently awaiting trial.

In a report to the IACHR, where the Haitian government was represented, the human rights group said 37 percent of prison buildings, some of which have existed since the times of the colony, are old and endanger the life of the detainees. It said the maximum capacity is 3,000 prisoners, but as of Oct. 23, 2018 the prisons held 11,839 people, nearly four times their

capacity.

The human rights group said contrary to Article 19 of the Principles and Good Practices for the Protection of Persons Deprived of Liberty in America of March 13, 2008, drawn up and published by the IACHR, Haitian detainees are not separated by sex, age, the alleged offense or legal status. It said that the beds and mattresses are not enough for the prisoners and thousands sleep on the floor, on pieces of cardboard or cloth brought by members of their family.

POOR

The prison toilets are dirty, smelly and poorly maintained, the RNDDH said,

adding that the food ratio as envisaged by the only nutritionist of the Haitian prison system is rarely respected.

The human rights group told ICHR that, in Haiti, arbitrary pre-trial detention is the rule.

The Haitian government, which was represented at the hearing, is reported to have acknowledged the prison situation is chaotic and that it was necessary to intervene to improve the general conditions. It has pledged to address the illegal and arbitrary pre-trial detention as quickly as possible and to step up its efforts to reduce the rate of 75 percent pre-trial detention to 20 percent.



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KEEPING TABS: Haiti to conduct survey of all nationals in diaspora

PORT AU RINCE, Haiti – Haiti has signed an agreement that will allow the Haiti

Renewal Alliance (HRA) to conduct an inventory of all Haitians in the diaspora

worldwide.

The agreement was signed by Marnatha Irene Ternier, minister of Haitians living abroad (MHAVE) and HRA President Firmin Baker in the presence of Guissepe Lopette, head of mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

“This memorandum of understanding comes to materialize an idea of President Jovenel Moïse, who believes it necessary to list all the sons and daughters of the country living in foreign lands, in order to have information on their host country, their areas

of expertise or profession and their willingness to return to Haiti or to help the country in well-defined circumstances,” said Ternier.

DATABASE

She said the information will allow Haiti to build a reliable database of resources that represent the members of the nation's diaspora.

“This initiative is of paramount importance to all our diaspora compatriots who want to reintegrate into the social, economic, cultural and professional life of the country,” Ternier explained last month.

“It is also an opportunity for the government to benefit from the expertise and availability of its sons and daughters living outside the country,” she said, adding that she was urging all members of the diaspora to participate in the initiative.”

Backer said his organization would ensure the success of the project.

“We will work very closely with the MHAVE to provide the necessary answers and help trace the compatriots of the diaspora who can serve Haiti in time and place,” he added.



E.U. funding project to fight forced child labor

PORT AU PRINCE, Haiti – The European Union is funding a 30-month project aimed at combating forced child labor in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

The Jesuit Service for Migrants/Solidarite “Fwontalye-Haiti” and the E.U. have launched the

to curb it. Workers will receive economic support.

GOAL

“Our goal is, on the one hand, to supervise Haitian workers and organizations in this sector so that they can better identify and defend cases of violation caused



“Ann leve kanpe pou dwa yo respekte” project aimed at preventing child labor in the agricultural sector mainly in north and north east of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

The E.U. is providing a million euros (one euro = US\$1.29 cents) for the project that will support civil society in its actions to protect vulnerable groups such as migrant workers, victims of forced labor.

More than 2,500 migrants will benefit from training activities and 500 from support for obtaining identity documents. A study will be conducted to better understand the problem of forced labor and identify measures

often by the victim's ignorance of his rights,” said the E.U. Ambassador to Haiti Vincent Dege.

“On the other hand, to work with private sector companies and public sector actors on the Haitian and Dominican side, so that they are aware of this issue and can deal with violations and expand human rights protections,” he said, adding “forced labor at the border and the issue of migration must be linked to socio-economic conditions that must also be addressed and bring structural responses from the Haitian state.”

- Edited from CMC.




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