

# Caribbean Today

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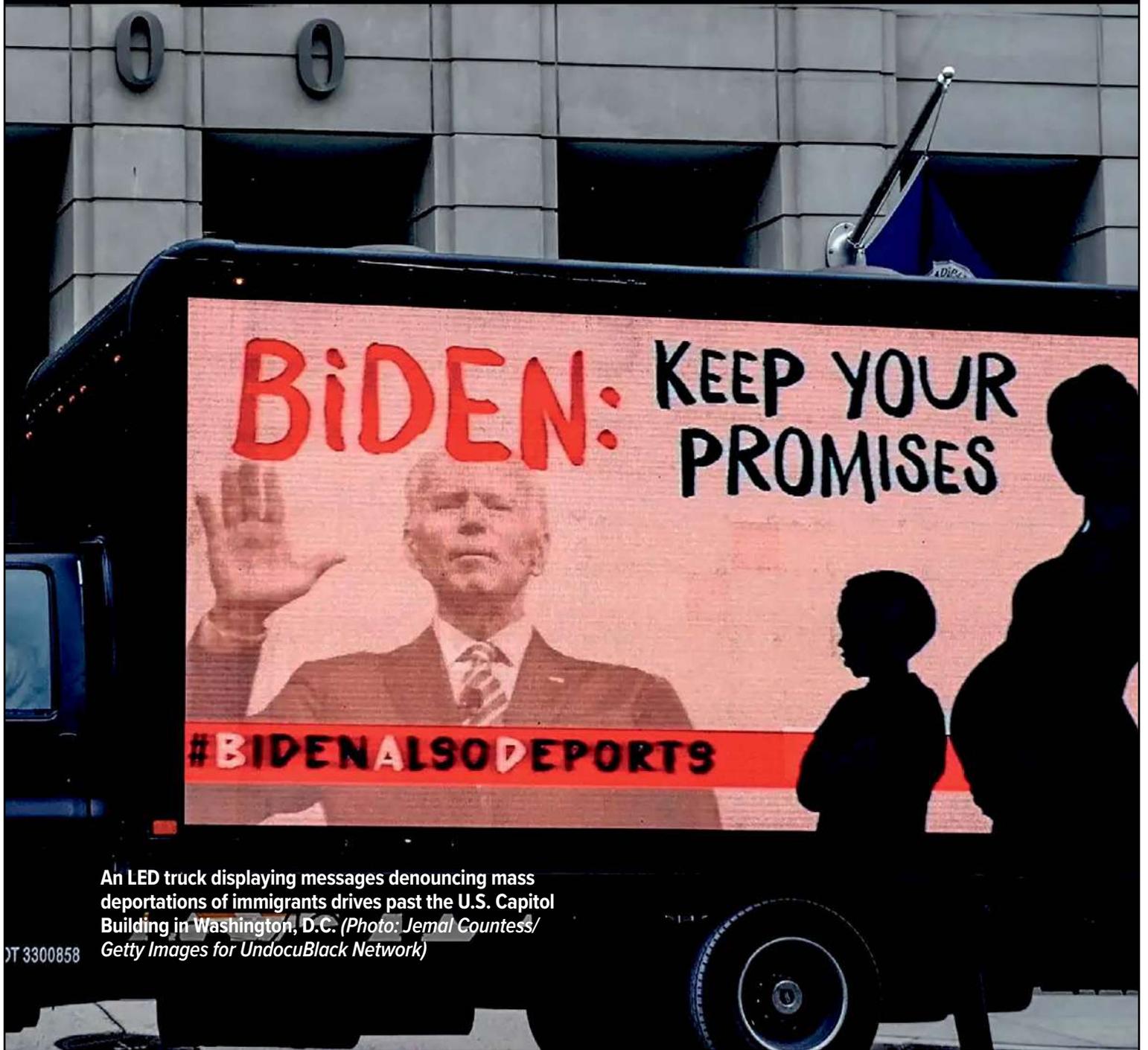
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# Here Are Some Of The Top Headlines Making Caribbean News This Week:

## REGIONAL

Two nationals from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Gloria Monique de Mees from Suriname and Arif Bulkan from Guyana, have been appointed as new commissioners to the Washington-based Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which is also initiating a new institutional phase.

From January 1, 2024, these new appointees, alongside Andrea Pochak of Argentina, began serving as commissioners. Stuardo Ralón will continue his tenure in the commission. These appointments were made during the 53rd General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), with their terms set to last from January 2024 to December 2027. Commissioners Roberta Clarke of Barbados, Carlos Bernal, and José Luis Caballero will also continue their service.

The IACHR, an autonomous principal organ of the OAS, is mandated to promote and defend human rights in the Americas and serves as an advisory body to the OAS in human rights matters.

## JAMAICA

Jamaica experienced a modest reduction in its murder rate for last year, with the latest official data indicating a total of 1,251 murders as of December 17, 2023. This figure represents an 8.2 percent decrease compared to the same period last year, which saw 1,471 murders. For context, Jamaica's total murder count for last year was



Displaced Haitian women and children shelter in a theatre in downtown Port-Au-Prince. (UNOCHA/Giles Clarke image)

1,498.

In a detailed breakdown, the parish of St Thomas, located in the southeastern part of Jamaica, witnessed a significant 46 percent decrease in murders, with 18 fewer incidents reported. St Andrew Central also showed a notable improvement, with 24 fewer murders compared to the previous year.

In the northwest, Trelawny reported 21 homicides, while Manchester, situated in south-central Jamaica and ranked as the sixth-largest parish, recorded 41 murders. Both areas saw a 25 percent reduction in murder cases.

However, not all regions experienced a decline. Hanover, Jamaica's second smallest parish, observed a 56 percent increase in murders, rising to 69 cases from last year's 44. Similarly, St Ann, located on the island's north coast, experienced an increase from 66 murders last year to 78 this year.

Other areas with increases include Clarendon, positioned to the south, and Kingston Western, each reporting nine additional murders compared to last year. Portland, on the northeast coast, also saw a slight increase, with two more murders so far this year than the same period last year.

## HAITI

Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has expressed deep concern over the escalating gang violence and instability in Haiti, which is causing immense suffering. On the occasion of Haiti's 220th independence anniversary, Trudeau highlighted the nation's worsening humanitarian, security, and political crises. Canada, working alongside CARICOM and other international partners, is committed to supporting Haitian-led efforts to restore peace, security, and stability. Amid the socio-economic

turmoil following President Moïse's assassination, criminal gangs have increased terror through rape, extortion, and control over food supplies. The country is also grappling with demands for new elections and widespread protests. The United Nations Security Council has approved a Kenya-led multinational force to help restore order. The Haitian National Police Union reported significant losses and resignations among officers in 2023, with stations looted and families of officers targeted. The UN Children's Fund, UNICEF, last month denounced a deadly Christmas Day attack by an armed group on a family in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. Four people, including two girls under the age of 10, were killed in the incident, which occurred in the Croix de Bouquet district. Four other family members were kidnapped.

## ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES

St Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves has described as "unfortunate" a photograph showing him and his Foreign Affairs Minister, Keisal Melissa Peters, with the map of Venezuela that includes Guyana's Essequibo County.

"It has been drawn to my attention that a photograph, taken in December 2022, in which I appeared with other persons ostensibly showing a 'papier-mâché' depiction of a map of Venezuela which, controversially, includes the Essequibo or part of it, has surfaced/resurfaced on social media," Gonsalves said in a January 4 letter to Presidents Dr. Irfaan Ali of Guyana and Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela.

In his letter to the two presidents, Prime Minister Gonsalves said he had been "advised that the event at which this photograph was taken was one commemorating the life and work of the great Liberator, Simon Bolivar."

But he admitted: "I am informed that photographs were being taken in front of flags of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela and a bust of Bolivar. While the photographs were being taken, I am advised that someone attached to the Venezuelan Embassy placed the 'papier-mâché' depiction of the said map in front of us. I did not look at what the depiction was. I assumed that it was about Simon Bolivar."

## THE BAHAMAS

The Bahamas recorded its first murder of 2024 with a fatal stabbing incident in western New Providence. The Royal

Bahamas Police Force reported that on January 1, 2024, they detained a 26-year-old man for the murder of a 51-year-old family member.

The incident occurred shortly before 5 am, following an altercation at their home. The dispute intensified, leading to the suspect attacking the victim with a knife, inflicting multiple stab wounds. The 51-year-old man did not survive his injuries. Authorities arrested the suspect at the scene of the crime. The investigation into this tragic event is ongoing.

## BELIZE

Bishop Lawrence Sydney Nicasio, the respected leader of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Belize City and Belmopan, passed away at the age of 67. The Office of the Vicar General in Belize City announced his peaceful passing at approximately 4:54 am on January 1, 2024, at his residence in Belize City. Bishop Nicasio had been under hospice care following a prolonged battle with cancer.

His 34 years of dedicated service in priestly and Episcopal ministry profoundly impacted many lives. The Catholic Diocese of Belize expressed its deep condolences and offered prayers for his family, as well as for the priests, religious friends, and faithful who were influenced by his ministry and leadership.

## GUYANA

The festive season has been marred by tragedy for a family in Guyana, following a devastating fire that claimed the lives of three relatives. The victims have been identified as 30-year-old Zella Lawrence, her 16-year-old niece Angelique Lawrence, and 8-year-old niece Ronika Lawrence.

The incident occurred in the early hours of the morning, with the Guyana Fire Service (GFS) reporting their response at 2:05 am to a fire at a two-storey residence, made of wood and concrete, at Lot 2692, Central Amelia's Ward, Linden.

Firefighters were able to contain the fire to the lower level of the building, but not before it caused significant damage, including the destruction of a sofa set, substantial damage to about four meters of ceiling, and loss of various clothing items.

The cause of the fire remains undetermined at this stage. Fire Prevention officials are scheduled to revisit the site to further investigate and determine the origin of this tragic blaze.

- Compiled from CMC News & Loop News



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NURTURING  
GREATNESS

# Biden's Deportation Numbers Now Outpace Trump's

WRITTEN BY  
CT STAFF WRITER

Its official – the Joe Biden administration has bested The Donald on immigration, deporting more immigrants than the Trump administration.

That startling news in the 2024 Presidential election year comes from data from Biden's own Department of Homeland Security (DHS) data, analyzed by the Cato Institute's David J. Bier. In concrete numbers, the Biden administration is deporting 3.5 times more immigrants per month than the Trump administration did, the data shows.

Recent data reveals that the Biden DHS has deported a higher percentage of detained border crossers in its first two years compared to the Trump DHS in its last two years, Bier says. Additionally, the likelihood of release post-arrest was higher during Trump's tenure than under Biden.

Under the Trump administration, the DHS recorded 1.4 million arrests in the fiscal years 2019 and 2020 or in 24 months. By December 31,

2021, only 47 percent of these detainees had been deported, including those arrested under Trump but deported under Biden, while 52 percent were released within the United States.

In contrast, the Biden administration saw over 5 million arrests in its initial 26.3 months, with nearly 2.6 million or 51 percent being deported and 49 percent released.

This means that under Trump, less than half of those arrested were deported, while under Biden, the majority faced deportation.

The pandemic-related "Title 42" policy, in effect since March 2020, allowed for swift expulsion of most crossers to Mexico. This policy ended in May 2023, so post-March 31, 2023, the release percentage likely rose. Nonetheless, release rates were higher under Trump before Title 42. These fluctuations illustrate that the Biden administration has not significantly altered immigration enforcement.

Through coordination, planning, and execution that include U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement,



President Joe Biden has made few trips to the southern border since becoming president. Here he is at the El Paso port of entry, Bridge of the Americas in El Paso Texas on Jan. 8, 2023. (AP image)

since May 2023 and through November 30, DHS removed or returned over 400,000 individuals, including more than 65,000 individual family members. The vast majority of those removals and returns are from southwest border encounters. The total is also nearly the number removed and returned in all of fiscal year 2019 and exceeds the annual totals for each year 2015 – 2018.

Daily removals and enforcement returns per day are nearly double what they were

compared to the pre-pandemic average - 2014-2019.

The Immigrant Legal Resource Center, (ILRC), says it is appalled by the Biden administration's direct departure from campaign promises, in which he vowed to stop deportations in his first 100 days.

"Biden, again, has demonstrated this administration's willingness to adopt racist policies and treat immigrants as political pawns. The leadership we need now requires standing up to political

theater and implementing real policy solutions in the face of complex issues. Leadership requires listening to the communities meeting the needs of migrants in compassionate and humane ways. Leadership requires standing up to political pressure and rejecting hate," said ILRC Policy Director Sameera Hafiz.

"The Biden administration has shown a lack of courage and true leadership and that its only immigration stance is to turn its back on immigrants," Hafiz added. "Biden must stop giving into hateful rhetoric and anti-immigrant lawmakers who don't want you to hear the truth about vibrant border communities."

This comes as two CNN surveys found that among immigrant voters, Biden and Trump, despite his xenophobic comments on immigrants, are tied at 48 percent. If this holds, it would be a major shift from the 2020 election, when Biden won immigrant voters by about 20 points, according to the Cooperative Election Study.



## Year In Review - A Look Back At 2023 In The Caribbean

COMPILED BY  
PETER RICHARDS

It was extremely hot in the Caribbean in 2023. And the projections are that the heat will continue into the New Year. Climatologist at the Barbados-based Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH), Dr. Cédric Van Meerbeeck, says even though the Caribbean is accustomed to heat, higher temperatures are negatively impacting residents of the region.

On average, Jamaica for example, experienced high temperatures made four times more likely by climate change during the last 12 months, making it the country where climate change was most powerful at work.

### COP 28

So, it is no wonder that the 15 member Caribbean Community, (CARICOM), looked forward with great expectations to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) that was held in Dubai from November 30 to December 12.

So did it achieve that objective? Roosevelt Skerrit, the CARICOM chairman, acknowledged that while there had been advances "those advances are all still in the form of promises."

A major agreement to transition away from fossil fuel use has been regarded among the highlight of COP 28, but for Guyana's Vice President Dr.

Bharrat Jagdeo, there were many disappointing outcomes of the conference. He said the main disappointment has been the lack of progress on developing carbon markets.

### POLITICS

Politically, the heat in the Caribbean was felt in many quarters, none more so than in Antigua and Barbuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guyana and Haiti.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne, led his ruling Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP) to a nail-biting victory in the January 18 general election, winning nine of the 17 seats, down from the 15 seats it enjoyed in the last Parliament, for a third consecutive term in office. The party hopes of improving upon the January results were dashed in October when Kelvin "Shugy" Simon of the main opposition United Progressive Party (UPP) easily retained the St. Mary's South seat, he had earlier vacated over claims that his nomination in December 2022 was illegal since he was still a public servant.

UPP leader, Harold Lovell, felt the heat and announced his resignation, after he failed to led the party to victory in the January general election.

In February, the Suriname National Party (NPS) announced its departure from the coalition government of President Chandrikapersad Santokhi in Suriname after two of its ministers were instructed to



Crime continued to be an issue across the Caribbean in 2023.

submit their resignations.

Education, Science & Culture Minister, Marie Levens and Spatial Planning and the Environment Minister, Silvano Tjong-Ahin had been instructed to leave the government as the NPS also announced that it was leaving the coalition that included Santokhi's Progressive Reform Party (VHP) that won the 2020 general elections

Santokhi continued to feel the political heat in February as he warned that his government would not tolerate any indiscipline in the Dutch-speaking CARICOM country after police used teargas to disperse demonstrators, who had gathered outside the Parliament building demanding his administration reverse its policies that have led to the removal of subsidies on a number of items including fuel.

The leader of the Virgin Island Party (VIP), Dr. Natalio Wheatly was sworn into office as the Premier of this British

Overseas Territory following the April 24 general election in which none of the four political parties had secured an outright victory. Wheatly's VIP secured the support of Territorial At-Large winner, Lorna Smith, who was elected on a ticket of the National Democratic Party (NDP) and later sworn in as Deputy Premier. Her decision gave the coalition the seven seats needed to take control of the 13 seat Parliament.

Over in the Cayman Islands Premier Wayne Panton in November confirmed his departure from the PACT coalition government, less than 24 hours after it survived a motion of no confidence. Panton was replaced as head of the government by his former deputy, Juliana O'Connor-Connolly.

### HAITI

Haiti symbolized the political heat that had been beating down on the Caribbean in 2023, as

efforts continued at the national, regional and international levels to ensure security, political stability and socio-economic development in the French-speaking CARICOM country, particularly following the July 7, 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse.

After months of lobbying, the United Nations Security Council in October voted overwhelmingly in favor of sending a Kenya-led multinational force to assist in Haiti as it contends with widespread gang violence.

The UN estimates 5.2 million people, half the population, currently require humanitarian assistance. Gang violence has displaced approximately 200,000 residents and killed 3,000 people this year alone, with 1,500 more kidnapped for ransom.

### BELIZE

The Belize government said it had met the International Court of Justice (ICJ) deadline for the country to file its Memorial in the dispute with Honduras regarding the sovereignty over the Sapodilla Caye.

### BORDER DISPUTE

The decades old dispute between Guyana and Venezuela heightened in 2023, despite the fact that the two countries are awaiting a ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the validity of the 1899 Arbitral Award settling

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)

# Haitian American Former Harvard President Says She Was Called The “N-Word”

A day after Haitian American Dr. Claudine Gay resigned as president of Harvard University after an uncharacteristically tough six months, she is speaking out and sharing her personal experience in a New York Times op ed.

Dr Gay, who made history as the University’s first black president, the first Caribbean American and Haitian American and only second female President in its 388 year history, said she was “called the N-word” more times than she cared to count in the past six months. But in the op ed she did not give more details of the verbal attacks or shared any examples or incidents.

Her tenure is the shortest in the history of the university. In her resignation letter, she cited personal attacks “fueled by racial animus” and stated that she wished to act in the “best interests” of the Harvard community and to enable it to navigate current tensions sparked by the Israel-Gaza war.

In her Times Op Ed she stated: “On Tuesday, I made the wrenching but necessary decision to resign as Harvard’s president. For weeks, both I and the institution to which I’ve devoted my professional life have been under attack,” she wrote. “My character and intelligence have been impugned. My commitment to fighting antisemitism has been questioned. My inbox has been flooded with invective, including death threats. I’ve been called the N-word more times than I care to count.”

Gay admitted to making “mistakes,” especially in her initial response to the “atrocities of Oct. 7,” aka, the attack by Hamas forces on southern Israel.

“I should have stated more forcefully what all people of good conscience know: Hamas is a terrorist organization that seeks to eradicate the Jewish state,” Gay stated. “And at a congressional hearing last month, I fell into a well-laid trap. I neglected to clearly articulate that calls for the genocide of Jewish people are abhorrent and unacceptable and that I would use every tool at my disposal to protect students from that kind of hate.”

She said that her “hope is that by stepping down I will deny demagogues the opportunity to further weaponize my presidency in their campaign to undermine the ideals animating Harvard since its founding: excellence, openness, independence, truth.”

But she warned that “the campaign against me was about more than one university and one leader.”

“This was merely a single skirmish in a broader war to unravel public faith in pillars of American society. Campaigns of this kind often start with attacks on education and expertise, because these are the tools that best equip communities to see through propaganda,” she added. “But such campaigns don’t end there. Trusted institutions of all types — from public health agencies to news organizations — will continue to fall victim to coordinated attempts to undermine their legitimacy and ruin their leaders’ credibility. For the opportunists driving cynicism



Former Harvard University President Haitian American Dr. Claudine Gay testifies during a House Education and Workforce Committee Hearing on holding campus leaders accountable and confronting antisemitism on Capitol Hill on Tuesday, Dec. 05, 2023, in Washington, DC. (Photo by Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post via Getty Images)

about our institutions, no single victory or toppled leader exhausts their zeal.”

Gay is the daughter of Haitian immigrants to the US. She spent much of her childhood in New York and, later, Saudi Arabia, where her father worked for the US Army Corps of Engineers. Gay also attended a private boarding school, Phillip Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, and is the cousin of author and academic Roxane Gay.

A political scientist by training, Gay previously served as dean of social science for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard. She first joined Harvard in 2006 as a professor in the Department of Government, where she also completed her PhD in 1998. Gay earned her bachelor’s degree in economics from Stanford University in 1992.

Gay, 53, was named the

Wilbur A Cowett Professor of Government at Harvard in 2015. She is also a professor of African and African American studies. She became the 30th president of Harvard University when she took the post on July 1, 2023. She succeeded Lawrence S Bacow, 72, who had served as president since 2018.

Following Gay’s Congress testimony in December, a Washington Free Beacon report and a Substack post by right-wing activist Christopher F Rufo made claims about alleged plagiarism by Gay in research papers from 1993 and 2017, and in the acknowledgements of her 1997 Harvard dissertation.

Harvard’s board investigated these allegations in December and concluded that she did not violate their standards for research. Without specifying which work, the board said that some articles merely required additional

citations.

“President Gay is proactively requesting four corrections in two articles to insert citations and quotation marks that were omitted from the original publications,” Harvard Corporation said in an email to affiliates.

Dr. Gay returns to serve as professor of government and of African and African American studies. She defended her academic work in the Op Ed and its impact on her field of political science, saying that some of her critics “recycled tired racial stereotypes.”

“It is not lost on me that I make an ideal canvas for projecting every anxiety about the generational and demographic changes unfolding on American campuses: a Black woman selected to lead a storied institution,” she added. “Someone who views diversity as a source of institutional strength and dynamism. Someone who has advocated a modern curriculum that spans from the frontier of quantum science to the long-neglected history of Asian Americans. Someone who believes that a daughter of Haitian immigrants has something to offer to the nation’s oldest university.”

Harvard has tapped Alan M. Garber, a White economist and physician, provost and chief academic officer, to serve as interim president until a permanent replacement can be named. Garber was reportedly raised by Jewish parents, and has expressed regret about the University’s initial response to the war in Israel and Gaza.

- NewsAmericasNow.com



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## Virgin Islander Now Vice Mayor Of South Florida City

A Virgin Islander City of Tamarac Commissioner has been unanimously voted into the post of vice mayor of the South Florida City.

The Tamarac District 2 Commissioner, Morey Wright, born in the Virgin Islands to a Virgin Islander mother and a Jamaican father, will serve as vice mayor for a one-year term, with the responsibility of acting as mayor in the mayor’s absence.

Wright is a University of Florida alumnus who graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. He also earned two master’s degrees in business and government from Johns Hopkins University.

He was elected to the Tamarac City Commission



Morey-Wright is the new Vice Mayor of Tamarac.

in November 2022. During his time in office, he has represented the City of Tamarac as a voting delegate for the 97th

Annual Florida League of Cities Conference. Wright also served as chair of the auditor selection committee.

“I’m honored to be appointed as Tamarac’s Vice Mayor,” said Wright. “I am excited to continue to work with the Commission, residents and community members to develop meaningful programs and initiatives that will positively impact Tamarac and ensure that our City remains a vibrant and thriving community for all.”

Professionally, Wright is an executive at a South Florida-based e-commerce company. He also owns a small business that consults on digital technology and marketing.

- NewsAmericasNow.com



# Former Trinidad & Tobago PM To Be Funeralized On Jan. 9th

The government of Trinidad and Tobago has announced that the national flag will be flown at half-mast at all state and non-state agencies, as well as the country's diplomatic missions worldwide, as a mark of respect for the late former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, who passed away on Monday, Jan. 1, 2023, at the age of 90 in Florida.

The T&T Ministry of National Security confirmed the half-masting of the flag, starting immediately, while expressing condolences over Panday's demise. The Ministry recognized his extensive and notable contributions in various roles, including Trade Unionist, Member of Parliament, Leader of the Opposition, Minister of National Security, and Prime Minister.

President Christine Kangaloo expressed her deep sorrow over Panday's death, describing him as a "giant of a man" who led the nation with passion and compassion. She extended her deepest condolences to his family, friends, and all those grieving his loss.

Panday's recent illness had been kept private, with the specifics undisclosed. His daughter, Mickela Panday, announced his passing on her Facebook page, sharing that he died surrounded by his family. In her statement, she reflected on his life, describing him as a fighter to the end, known for his wit and humor. Praising him as a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, leader, and friend, she affirmed that his inspirational spirit would live on in those who knew him. The family, she added, would continue to celebrate his life and cherish the memories shared with him.

Panday, an attorney, trade unionist, economist, actor, and former civil servant, first entered Parliament in 1976 winning the Couva North seat. He served as opposition leader on five occasions between 1976 and 2010 and was the founding



Former Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister, Basdeo Panday – 1933-2024.

member of three political parties including the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) an amalgam of opposition parties and the UNC .

In 2006, Panday was convicted of failing to declare a bank account in London and imprisoned. However, on March 20, 2007, that conviction was quashed by the Court of Appeal and on May 1, he resigned as the UNC chairman, with the party's executive refusing to accept his resignation. He lost the party's internal elections on January 24, 2010, to Persad

Bissessar, who led the UNC into a People's Partnership coalition that won the general elections that same year.

Panday's political career began in 1965, when he joined the Workers and Farmers Party and an unsuccessful run for Parliament. He then became the first person of Indian descent to lead a government here and was first elected to Parliament in 1976. He served as opposition leader on five occasions between 1976 and 2010 and was the founding member of three political parties including the now main opposition United National Congress (UNC) .

Panday was well known for his wit and humor, and as prime minister reminded the population "anyone who attacks my government shall not escape unscathed." He is survived by his wife, Oma and four daughters as well as other relatives.

His funeral will be held next Tuesday morning, Jan. 9th at the Southern Academy for the Performing Arts (SAPA) in San Fernando and will be conducted according to Hindu rites.

- *Rewritten from CMC*



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## Haiti's Challenges Persist 220 Years Later

On Jan. 1, 2024, Haiti turned 220 years old. That's 220 years since it fought for and paid for its independence from France. The French government finally acknowledged the payment of 90 million francs in 1888 and over a period of about seventy years, Haiti paid 112 million francs to France, more than \$560 million today.

But 220 years later, Haiti's woes continue, marked by poverty and gang violence. From January to October 2023 alone, gang violence left 3,960 dead, 1,432 injured and 2,951 victims of kidnappings. Gangs are increasingly organized, neighborhoods previously considered safe, such as Carrefour Feuilles, Solino, Tabarre, Petion-Ville or areas of Delmas, have been added to the growing list of areas under the influence of armed groups, leading to an uncontrolled exodus.

According to the United Nations, armed gangs now control more than 80% of the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area. After visiting the country in July, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said Haitians were "trapped in a living nightmare" because the gangs limit access to food and health care.

In addition to the crisis of violence, more than 42% of its population is in need of humanitarian aid and up to 40% suffer from severe food insecurity, according to data from international organizations. Haiti is still trying to recover from a 2010 earthquake that its government said killed more than 300,000. The U.S. Agency for International Development has provided more than \$2 billion to fund rebuilding efforts. However, a recent U.S. Government Accountability Office report said that most of the projects USAID funded have been delayed or scaled back, with only half of the major projects getting finished.

In this context, women, children and the elderly are the main victims, hundreds of thousands of people had to flee their homes to take refuge in precarious places. Other hundreds of thousands left the country through regular migration programs such as the one promoted this year by the United States, as well as undertaking dangerous journeys through irregular routes.

The impact on the everyday lives of Haitians in Haiti is tremendous, especially on women and children as evidenced by the story of Rodeline, a



Carrefour Feuilles, Solino, Tabarre, Petion-Ville or areas of Delmas, have been added to the growing list of areas under the influence of armed groups. (PHOTO: X/@AAVG193)

Madan Sara, as highlighted in a recent World Bank story.

Every morning, before the first light of dawn, Rodeline embarks on her daily routine. She cooks for her family, then packs her buckets and bags to commence her journey. Living in the northern, remote areas of Haiti, she travels to nearby farmers and markets, eventually making her way to Port-au-Prince. Rodeline is a vital cog in the Haitian economy, known as a Madan Sara - a term for the resilient women traders who, for over two centuries, have bridged rural farmers with urban markets,

sustaining a crucial trade network.

These women, often with limited education and opportunities, usually inherit this role from their mothers, perpetuating a generational legacy that underpins a fragile trade system. Rodeline, like her peers, navigates varied terrains by foot, donkey cart, mototaxis, or vans, dictated by the volume of her cargo, from her secluded village to the bustling markets of Port-au-Prince. There, she sells fresh produce acquired from farmers, alongside household goods and clothing.

Despite their indispensable role in Haiti's economy and society, Madan Saras like Rodeline operate within the informal sector, lacking essential labor protections and enduring harsh, sometimes perilous working conditions. Rodeline is part of the 80 percent constituting Haiti's informal labor force. She confronts numerous hazards daily, including unsafe travel conditions, potential robbery, and extortion. Moreover, in public markets, these women often face threats, including kidnapping and physical or sexual violence, predominantly from male aggressors.

Rodeline's journey is fraught with risks, including treacherous roads, the threat of theft, and extortion. The constant travel also forces a difficult choice between working or caring for her children, leaving her family's financial stability hanging in the balance.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in May 2020 further disrupted her life. Rodeline, along with many other women, had to halt her Madan Sara activities. This was indicative of a broader trend: a sharp decline in women's workforce participation, exacerbated by increased domestic responsibilities and societal expectations.

Recently, Rodeline contemplated rejoining the labor market, seeking a more stable job with reduced risks. However, her aspirations were dampened by entrenched cultural norms and gendered societal expectations,

which often confine women to domestic roles and limit their career prospects. This gendered division of labor is starkly evident in Haiti, where women primarily engage in service, retail, textile, and trade sectors, rarely ascending to managerial roles.

Moreover, women like Rodeline, especially with young children, face significant challenges in maintaining consistent employment. They must often prioritize household responsibilities, further hindered by the prevalence of sexual harassment in workplaces, which adds to the hostility of their work environment.

Rodeline also considers entrepreneurship but confronts barriers such as limited access to physical and financial resources. In rural Haiti, women's ownership of productive assets like housing and land is significantly lower than men's, impeding their economic independence and ability to start businesses or engage in other income-generating activities.

However, there's a glimmer of hope. Policy interventions and job training programs tailored for women could pave the way for Rodeline and others to overcome these challenges. Such programs, focusing on trades where women are underrepresented and offering support like childcare and transportation subsidies, could be transformative. Additionally, covering topics like self-esteem, civic engagement, reproductive health, and financial literacy, these initiatives could empower women in Rodeline's community, addressing gaps in information, social capital, and financial resources, while also tackling gender-based violence.

In summary, Rodeline's story is a testament to the resilience and challenges faced by Madan Saras in Haiti, highlighting the need for systemic changes and support to improve their working conditions and overall livelihoods.

- *Rewritten from the World Bank, the AP and Telesur.*



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# South Florida Commemorates MLK Day With A Series Of Events

South Florida is gearing up to celebrate MLK Day on January 15, 2024, in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday. This year, a variety of events are scheduled across South Florida to commemorate his legacy:

## 1. 20th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Inspirational Breakfast

Organized by the YMCA of South Florida, the 20th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Inspirational Breakfast will take place on January 12 at First Baptist Fort Lauderdale. This event, starting at 7:30 a.m., is part of a series of activities celebrating Dr. King's life and promoting community unity and service. The weekend will also feature a luncheon, a Teen Town Hall, and Day of Service projects in Broward and Miami-Dade counties.

Keynote speakers include Donzaleigh Abernathy, daughter of civil rights movement co-founders Rev. Dr. Ralph David Abernathy and Mrs. Juanita Jones Abernathy, and Ndaba Mandela, Nelson Mandela's grandson. The event will also present the Dave W. Cash Youth Leadership Award and the Spirit of Community Award.

Tickets are available at [ymcasouthflorida.org/standforsomething](http://ymcasouthflorida.org/standforsomething).

## 2. City Of Sunrise Salute

The City's 2024 celebration of the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. will feature FREE events on Saturday, January 13th



Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Boca Raton.

and Sunday, January 14th. They include the:

“Write Your Dream: A Poetry Workshop for Teens” on Saturday, January 13th from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Sunrise Civic Center Art Gallery, 10610 West Oakland Park Boulevard. This writing workshop for students age 13 to 18 will be facilitated by teaching artists from the Omari Hardwick blueapple Poetry Network. Each poet will receive breakfast, lunch and writing supplies. Space is limited and pre-registration is required. Call (954) 747-4646 to sign up or register at <https://www.sunrisefl.gov/Home/Components/FormBuilder/Form-Builder/e521fa22e43146f8b9f-07316885cb8bb/482>

Check out the family film titled “Devotion” on Saturday, January 13th from 2:00 pm at the Sunrise Civic Center Theatre, 10610 West Oakland Park Boulevard. Experience

the inspirational true story of Jesse Brown, the first Black aviator in U.S. Navy history, and his enduring friendship with fellow fighter pilot Tom Hudner. Their heroic sacrifices during the Korean War made them the Navy's most celebrated wingmen. \*Seating is limited: Up to four free general admission tickets are available per family. Call (954) 747-4646 for details.

And A Night of The Arts from Sunday, January 14th from 6 pm to 10 pm at the Sunrise Civic Center Art Gallery & Theatre, 10610 West Oakland Park Boulevard. There will be an opening reception in the Art Gallery at 6 p.m. featuring the artist Tracy Guitau's exhibit, “The Power of Three: A Trifecta Exhibition—Paintings, Ceramics and Fashion.”

Then get ready Motown Tribute Concert and Poetry in

the Theatre at 7 p.m. This high-energy show pays homage to two Motown sensations - The Temptations and The Four Tops. “Get Ready!” features a talented ensemble of performers who capture the groups' mannerisms, vocal stylings and stage presence. From “My Girl” and “Ain't Too Proud To Beg” to “Reach Out I'll Be There” and “I Can't Help Myself,” this show delivers hit after hit. Seating is limited: Up to four free general admission tickets are available per family. Call (954) 747-4646 for details.

## 3. Miami MLK Parade

Join Miami's annual parade to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., on January 15, 2024 from: 11:00 AM To 5:00 PM. The parade covers eight miles along Northwest 54th Street from 10th to 32nd avenues in Liberty City. This route traces the steps that Dr. King traveled in Miami during his frequent visits.

Parade-goers can expect high-school marching bands, student athletes, dance teams, drill teams and cheerleaders on foot, as well as floats, cars and fire trucks carrying local politicians, union leaders and activists. For a Caribbean twist, Carnival dancers will take to the streets for dance and musical performances. Miami's celebration is one of the country's oldest and largest, drawing crowds of more than 500,000 people in years past.

The parade concludes near Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park, where a Family Festival takes place from noon to 5 p.m. with live music, dance, cultural programming and theatrical performances. The family-friendly celebration is designed to honor, promote, unify and preserve Miami's vibrant African and Caribbean heritage. All are welcome to join in the celebrations.

You'll find a crafts marketplace with vendors selling clothing, books, jewelry, tropical plants, herbs, spices, arts and crafts and more. At the Jamz Mainstage, international recording artists and top DJs will perform favorites including R&B, soul, jazz, reggae, rap, salsa, merengue, hip-hop and other genres, while the Cultural Stage will host theatrical performances and art exhibitions. At the Children's Village you'll find educational and interactive games, sports and arts projects about the legacy of Dr. King.

The Food Corner will have a wide variety of food trucks and grocers dishing up everything from soul food to creole and traditional Caribbean and African dishes, such as African falafel, Brazilian espetinhos, Jamaican patties, Haitian griot, Bahamian conch fritters and much more.

## Pre-Parade 5K Run & Fitness Walk

Wake up bright and early on Martin Luther King Jr. Day and participate in the annual 5K Run & Fitness Walk, which begins at 8 a.m. at the MLK Plaza Metrorail Station. Runners should arrive for registration between 6:30 and 7:45 a.m.

Later that morning, a unity celebration and community blessing will take place at 10 a.m. following the race with leaders from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu faiths, among others, pledging to continue Dr. King's work for spiritual and social change through interfaith collaboration.

## 4. Fort Lauderdale King Parade

Fort Lauderdale will host its King Holiday Celebration Parade on January 15th, starting at Sistrunk Boulevard and NW 5th Avenue and concluding at Joseph Carter Park, where a multi-cultural festival will take place.



# New Laws Now In Effect In Florida

As of January 1, 2024, Floridians have a range of new laws to deal with, that will impact everything, from ethics in public office to transportation safety.

## 1: SB-774: Ethics in Public Office

In a move to enhance transparency, a new law demands more local officials to publicly disclose their finances. This includes details like net worth, assets, and income sources. The law, causing a stir with numerous resignations from public officials, aims to align all officials with the financial transparency standards already expected of the governor and other key figures.

## 2: HB-425: Expanding ‘Move Over’ Law

Florida's “Move Over” law is broadening its scope. Now, drivers must also make way for or slow down near



disabled vehicles showing hazard signals, on top of existing requirements for emergency and service vehicles. Fines for non-compliance range from \$60 to \$158.

## 3: HB-1627: Bail and Pretrial Detention Reforms

Significant changes are coming to bail and pretrial detention practices, especially for certain felony offenders. This includes a standardized bond schedule set by the Florida Supreme Court and potential additional conditions like

community service.

## 4: HB-7061: Child Protective Investigations

Child protective investigations in seven Florida counties, including parts of the Tampa Bay area, will transition from local sheriff's offices to the Florida Department of Children and Families.

## 5: HB-1275: Persons with Disabilities Registry

The “Protect Our Loved Ones” act introduces a registry for individuals with disabilities to aid law enforcement interactions. This registry will include personal and contact information, along with relevant details about the individual's condition.

## 6: HB-109: State Park Campsite Reservations

Florida residents get a head start on booking state park accommodations. They can now reserve cabins, campsites, and RV spots a month earlier than non-residents.



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**FEATURE**



# Temporary Peace - Tensions Ease In Venezuela-Guyana Border Dispute For The Moment

BY DAWN A. DAVIS

A temporary peace continues between Guyana and Venezuela following the December 14th Argyle Agreement in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to ‘cool things down.’

But tensions continue as Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro on December 28th has ordered more than 5,600 military personnel to participate in “defensive” exercises, after the UK deployed a warship to waters off the coast of Guyana in a show of support for the former British colony.

Maduro said he was launching an action “of a defensive nature in response to the provocation and threat of the UK against peace and the sovereignty of our country.”

The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) on December 24th that it would send the patrol vessel HMS Trent to Guyana, amid a simmering territorial dispute that began when Maduro renewed Venezuela’s claim to the oil-rich Essequibo region.

Maduro’s response comes after he and Guyana President Irfaan Ali signed a declaration on December 14, 2023 affirming that: “Guyana and Venezuela, directly or indirectly, will not threaten or use force against one another in any circumstances, including those consequential to any existing controversies between the two State.”

The Argyle Agreement, reached in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, further stated: “Any controversies between the two States will be resolved in accordance with international law, including the Geneva Agreement dated February 17, 1966.”

With the intention of easing

tensions around contested border lines between the two South American countries, the discussions took place in St. Vincent and the Grenadines facilitated by its Prime Minister Ralph E. Gonsalves, along with Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, Roosevelt Skerritt, with other CARICOM leaders observing as well as with leaders from Brazil, CELAC and the UN.

**COMBUSTIBLE**

This comes after years of bitterness from Venezuela, which claims ownership of the disputed 61,600 sq ft Essequibo region, which has been legally inside Guyana’s borders since the 1899 Paris Arbitral Award.

But, even with this somewhat tense agreement, it’s not over just yet. The near combustible rhetoric that threatened to boil over late last year, still hangs in the air as both countries hold on to claims to the rights of this valuable territory.

Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith, a Caribbean policy expert and Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and Fellow with the Caribbean Policy Consortium told Caribbean Today: “This issue dates to the colonial period. Guyana became part of the British colonial possession sphere when they were able to succeed the Dutch who had major occupancy of what is now Guyana. But what the British and the Dutch failed to do in 1814 was to clearly demarcate the boundary between Guyana, then British Guyana, and Venezuela.”

The Caribbean policy expert further explained that to address these now troubling border questions, in the 1940s, Britain hired a German explorer, Robert Schomburgk, to survey the



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, r., and Guyanese President Irfaan Ali, l., shake hands at the Argyle Agreement talks over Essequibo in St. Vincent on Dec. 14, 2023. (CARICOM handout image)

eastern and western boundaries of the colony between British Guyana and Venezuela. The explorer would subsequently declare lines of demarcation in what became known as the Schomburgk Line, which was accepted by the British but rejected by the Venezuelans.

Venezuela then sought help from the United States of America, headed then by President James Monroe, who warned Britain - and all European powers - even threatening war, over its efforts at re-colonizing the Americas under the famous “Monroe Doctrine.”

To avoid conflict, Britain and Venezuela agreed to arbitration in the presence of a neutral party, and these parties agreed on what territories belonged to each. These experts met in Paris, explained Griffith, and subsequently the 1899 Paris Arbitral Award was reached.

“But it turns out that Britain was awarded more than Venezuela,” said Griffith. “However, Venezuela signed the agreement, they accepted agreement. They sent teams to do physical on-the-ground demarcation and there was common agreement that these are the boundaries.”

**RESOURCE RICH**

A specialist on Caribbean security, drugs and crime, and the author of several books on Caribbean security and political economy, Griffith noted that the massive Essequibo territory is resource rich.

Could this be a motivating factor for ownership?

“In 2015, when the massive oil deposits in Guyana were first discovered, a kind of accentuation with Venezuela with what I call its intimidation playbook began,” Griffith confirmed. “Venezuela had been pushing this issue long before 2015, It’s just that they raised the level of the pursuit. And it makes it important to remind your readers about a few factors about this territory called Essequibo. There is offshore and onshore

oil. There is gold. There is manganese. There are diamonds. There is uranium.”

And importantly, Griffith emphasized: “Hundreds of thousands of indigenous people live in the Essequibo region. So, if you take that territory away from Guyana you’re taking away identity, people, resources, land. You’re taking away the basis for a nation existing.”

Although many in Guyana are nervous about any possibility of physical conflict with Venezuela, Guyanese citizens at home and abroad stand behind their government’s stance. In fact, the 8 Caribbean countries - Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – which are a part of the Regional Security System created in 1982 - operate under one defense treaty. Hence, an attack on one would immediately trigger a response from the other members.

**REFERENDUM**

Clearly ignoring the December 1, 2023 International Court of Justice’s petition that the Essequibo region has not been declared part of Venezuelan territory, President Maduro held a referendum on December 3, 2023, where its citizens voted to declare Essequibo a state of Venezuela, with plans to give citizenship to those living in the region. But, many see this as a political maneuver.

“The reality is that the Essequibo issue has long been a political football in Venezuelan politics, even before Maduro,” said Griffith. “Maduro’s predecessor, Hugo Chavez used it as a political football, but he also played it down for many years in the context of his own domestic politics. But the combination of the recognition of this powerful new Petro-wealth and Maduro’s own intent to stay in power, he is now (back to) using that political football.”

So what can Guyana do? They can certainly reach out to partners diplomatically and

militarily. Importantly, support will come from some of those partners because they have their own interests to protect. One of those partners is Brazil, which has a border with every South American country except Chile and Ecuador, Griffith explained.

So, changing the border between Guyana and Venezuela would open a Pandora’s box of border disputes for Brazil, for the same 1899 Arbitral Award was the basis for determining the boundaries between Brazil, Venezuela, and Guyana.

“Guyana cannot itself repel Venezuela,” added Griffith. “They have been depending upon partners such as CARICOM, the Commonwealth, The Organization of American States, to keep Venezuela at bay.”

Now, with the agreement to avoid escalating tensions that could lead to military conflict, Presidents Ali and Maduro will meet again within the next two months, in Brazil, to try and come closer to resolving this territorial dispute.



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# Biden Is Losing His Base As He Tries To Be Trump Light On Immigration

As President Biden and Democrats face a new election this New Year, it is increasingly obvious that they are in big trouble. A recent Wall Street Journal poll shows Biden's approval rating hitting a new low. About 37 percent of respondents in the Journal poll said they approve of the job he is doing as president, while 61 percent of respondents had an unfavorable view.



FELICIA J. PERSAUD

Former President Obama's senior adviser David Axelrod called it "very, very dark" for Biden's re-election campaign. Meanwhile, a Gallup poll found that 56% of Americans view the Republican Party unfavorably and 58% saying the same of the Democratic Party. The GOP's current standing with Americans is even stronger on matters of national security, where it leads the Democratic Party by 22 points for protecting the country from international terrorism and military threats.

This as a KKF.org poll found that many immigrants do not feel that their views or the interests of immigrants generally are well represented by either of the two major U.S. political parties, and half of all immigrants say that who the president is makes no difference in their lives.

I don't need polls to tell me the administration and Democrats are in big trouble. The fact is that the administration continues to alienate its base of progressive and immigrant voters as it tries hard to be Trump light, especially on immigration.

The man who came into the office promising to undo the aggressive immigration policies of the Trump administration, and usher in a more humane

approach is now making a deal with Republicans in the Congress to gut asylum and refugee legal protections in exchange for foreign military aid for Ukraine, Taiwan and Israel.

The White House is opening toward the Republican position, potentially accepting a plan that would allow immediate expulsions akin to those used during the COVID-19 pandemic, detention for migrants and deportations of those who do not seek asylum, CBS News.

Progressive and Latino Democratic lawmakers and advocates are aghast, and rightfully so, as the changes in immigration policy mirror the far-right goals of the GOP, which is shoring up their own base while Dems. move further and further into oblivion.

Caribbean immigrant and White House mouthpiece, Karine Jean-Pierre, however, sees this as a "bipartisan compromise."

"(The president) believes we need to fix what's happening with the broken immigration system," she said. "He's willing to find a bipartisan compromise to get that done."

Perhaps what Jean-Pierre should note is this so called "bipartisan compromise" will continue to piss off the President's fast dwindling base, paving the way for the right wing to win again in 2024. They smell blood in the water, Biden's and Democrats and they are happy to delay their holiday to do for the juggler as the Democratic controlled Senate puts Israel and Ukraine first, over their American voting base. AS People's Action Executive Director Sulma Arias accurately pointed out: "President Biden won in 2020 by campaigning against Trump's racist immigration and asylum policies."

Now says Arias, "it is unconscionable for Majority Leader Schumer and the Biden Administration to even consider

trading necessary protections for refugees and asylum seekers for foreign military aid."

"Democrats should not give in to Republican demands for more suffering for migrants. These callous and dangerous negotiating tactics that will harm many people are exactly the wrong direction for this country, and we will remember this moment in November," he

added.

Arias is right. The base that swept Team Biden into office in 2020 has lost all faith in the administration and that will undoubtedly be reflected in November 2024. Democrats and Biden along with his overtly arrogant mouthpiece would do well to take warning now.

Will the Ukrainians, Taiwanese and Israelis vote for

Biden and save him instead of the base of immigrant, youth and black voters that have consistently helped Democrats win again and again? I think not!

The writer is publisher of NewsAmericasNow.com, the Black Immigrant Daily News.



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## See Ya

It's a brand New Year, and many people plan to make a fresh start, a new beginning, which sometimes includes a change in the relationship. Yes, dumping their partner.



TONY ROBINSON

But nobody likes breaking up, unless of course, you're the one doing the breaking up and you're a cruel person. Or maybe your spouse was treating you badly and you really want to sever ties and get on with your life.

Sometimes the person doing the breaking up may feel badly, if they have a conscience, and feel sorry for doing the deed: "I really feel bad for breaking up with her, for she's such a nice person."

Others can be brutal, as they use the most insensitive methods to drop the hatchet, such as sending a terse text message, or over the phone: "It's over; I don't want to see you again, ever."

That's cold, and in this age of technology, that method of breaking up occurs quite frequently. Just press the delete button, or erase or block. But why do people breakup?

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)



FAMU FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY MEDICAL MARIJUANA EDUCATION AND RESEARCH INITIATIVE

# Smallness And Separateness Will Not Do In 2024

BY SIR RON SANDERS

As we gaze upon the dawn of a new year with some uncertainty, the time has come for a profound reflection on the trajectory of the 15 Caribbean nations constituting the Caribbean Community, (CARICOM).

This juncture prompts the nations of the region to take stock of the strides made, recognize the opportunities neglected in the pursuit of individual sovereignty, and confront the dual challenge of advancing domestic well-being while strengthening their global standing.

In this pivotal moment, it is evident that the more pressing threats to CARICOM's progress emanate not solely from climate change, but primarily from the lack of social cohesion and political consensus both within CARICOM nations and between them.

The choice before CARICOM countries now is the same one that has always confronted them: pursue a closer union that would make them stronger together or a march alone, knowing they would assuredly be weaker, but hoping gambling on good fortune to muddle through.

So far, CARICOM countries, or at least, their political leadership, have gambled on their ingenuity to maintain the trappings of sovereignty while conceding autonomy to external forces, which, for one reason or another, prop them up, but maintain their dependence.

Since the 1960s, when Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Barbados embarked on separate pathways of independence, they and the other CARICOM countries that followed them, have had fluctuating periods of economic and social development, but none of them has become independent. They have paid a steep price for cherishing individual sovereignty, manifested in their smallness and in their lack of capacity to exercise influence in the world.

The reality is stark: despite commendable strides on the domestic front, CARICOM nations remain on the fringes of global significance. Economic growth, for the majority, is stunted, shackled by burdensome levels of unsustainable debt. External shocks, such as the reverberations of the COVID-19 pandemic and the volatility of commodity prices, further strain their fiscal capacities.

The opportunity missed lies in the aftermath of the dissolution of the West Indian Federation, as each nation opted for the allure of self-reliance. They made the mistake that the United States of America

did not. As US historian Carol Berkin put it, the 13 former British colonies formed a union "on the firm conviction that a strong government representing all the peoples of a Federal State was the surest path to economic growth and prosperity, to civil law and order, and to winning the respect and recognition from foreign nations necessary to insure America's continued independence." And so, it turned out to be.

While over the years, in recognition of their weakness, CARICOM countries have established joint institutions and collective machinery, they have fallen short of creating a legally binding, political umbrella that would be an effective instrument for dealing with critical domestic and foreign challenges.

Importantly, CARICOM leaders failed to do what the founding fathers of the US knew to be essential. They failed to do the hard work of governance which is to create a nationalism built on shared identity as citizens of a united Caribbean. Thus, the pursuit of separate sovereignties still hampers the strength of CARICOM countries in economic, financial, and diplomatic arenas.

None should believe that periods of economic good fortune that reflects itself in episodes of economic growth are sufficient when underlying structures of weakness remain. Eventually, it is the fundamental weaknesses not the occasional successes that determine national viability.

CARICOM needs to reignite the flame of genuine independence. To do so CARICOM countries must re-evaluate the concept of a Caribbean Single Market and Economy, fostering regional cooperation that transcends national borders.

In addition to external challenges, CARICOM countries face a significant hurdle in the form of internal political rivalries both within individual states and among the member nations. The relentless pursuit of political power and influence often takes precedence over the crucial need for social cohesion and national consensus - foundational elements for achieving fair and balanced regional development.

While diverse opinions on policy matters are essential in democratic societies, the detrimental practice of dismissing opposing views solely for narrow political gains undermines the very essence of progress. It becomes imperative to recognize that prioritizing regionalism over nationalism is the key to fostering growth, fortifying economies, and building the necessary capacity for true independence.

A looming concern

threatening Caribbean stability is the alarming surge in gang-related violence, prominently evident in Haiti. The cultivation of gangs is not merely a local predicament but a symptom of organized crime seeking to destabilize the Caribbean as hubs for illicit activities. Addressing this menace necessitates a united front, built upon social cohesion and national consensus, lest it becomes an insurmountable impediment to economic and political integration.

The time is opportune for leaders across CARICOM, spanning government, opposition parties, the private sector, unions, and academia, to reignite the vision of deeper integration. The emphasis should unequivocally be to pursue regional development and national interests on parallel tracks, recognising that each can contribute to the other.

Pursuing national concerns to the exclusion of regional development is self-defeating.

Except for Haiti, the lessons ingrained in CARICOM's shared history since the 1930s, underscore the significance of interdependence, preserving a distinctive Caribbean identity, and collectively acquiring the capital and capacity requisite for the region to stand as a robust, respected, and influential area globally.

The road ahead demands a paradigm shift in our political culture — one that places social cohesion and national interest at the forefront. By transcending political rivalries and fostering a spirit of collaboration, CARICOM nations can harness their collective strength to navigate the complexities of 2024 and beyond.

The vision of independence within interdependence remains

an attainable beacon, promising a future of prosperity for the diverse and dynamic nations that constitute the Caribbean Community.

It is not beyond the creativity of the region to create a constitutional mechanism in which CARICOM countries can assign to a central agency, composed of representatives of their states, to sustain unity that benefits all. Separateness and smallness will not do.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The writer is Antigua and Barbuda's Ambassador to the US and the OAS. He is also the current President of the OAS Permanent Council. The views expressed are entirely his own.

- CMC



## See Ya

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

The causes are infinite, but usually it's because a third party entered the equation. He or she cannot deal with two at one time, and wish to spend more time with the new person, so the solution is to breakup.

Maybe it's on their own volition, or maybe they got an ultimatum: "It's either she or me, make your choice."

Usually when faced with a breakup, the first question asked is: "Why, is there someone else?" Most times there is, for people rarely step out of a relationship unless there's another one pending.

Boredom is also a major factor why people breakup. One partner just got bored with the other and decided to break it off. Women do not accept this reason or even believe it, and question the man's love: "You never really loved me or cared about my feeling, that's why you are bored with me now."

That being said, sometimes breaking up can be a blessing in disguise, as it can free you to move on to a better life: "I feel as if a weight lifted off my shoulder. I'm glad that he broke up with me."

What happens after the breakup though? Some of those affected may slip into a deep depression that they never recover from, never get involved with anyone else, and despise the very thought of a future relationship.

I have known women who were dumped by their lovers and sank so deep into a depression that they swore off men forever. Men on the other hand, tend to take a different approach. Well, some men do, for there are still a few who act as if only one



woman exists in the world, and if she leaves, his life is over.

Other men though, take a different approach, and play the field as if there is no tomorrow. Having now been freed of the shackles of a sour relationship, he now has the freedom to pursue any and every skirt that he sees.

That feeling of liberation can be exhilarating: "She did me a favor when she broke up with me, now I can really have fun."

There's a caveat though, as this only applies if you're still young, for after a certain age, the field may seem just a bit too daunting for you to play in.

For some persons, parting ways, breaking up or divorcing can be most liberating, while for others it can be devastating:

"What am I going to do, where am I going to go, he left me and now I have no one."

That happens to a lot of women, and they never seem to be able to get another man, especially if they're past a certain age. Yes, breakup-rebound is for the young, for after a certain age, you're off the market and left to linger on the shelf of solitude. See ya!

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Tony Robinson is an independent contributor to Caribbean Today and the views expressed here are his own. He can be reached at seidoIyard@gmail.com for feedback.



# Garcelle Beauvais Joins Forces To Mobilize \$90 Million For Haiti

As Haiti turned 220 on Jan. 1st, Haitian American actress and humanitarian Garcelle Beauvais is collaborating with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in their Pockets of Hope initiative, which aims to mobilize \$90 million over the next three years for education, health, and economic development projects in Haiti.

Beauvais is teaming up with Pockets of Hope to raise awareness of the need for greater investments in Haiti, and to help highlight where ongoing Haitian-led organizations have the potential for significant, sustainable impact through additional support.

“I’m thrilled to be partnering with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation on the Pockets of Hope campaign because it’s not about somebody coming in and giving a handout and being the hero,” Beauvais said. “It’s about making the Haitians their own heroes. We know what we lack, and we know how to

improve our own lives. We just need support. This campaign is reminding people that Haiti still needs help and also that there is hope for Haiti. And that hope lies in the Haitian people.”

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation unveiled a significant \$30 million commitment over three years to enhance opportunities for Haitian children, families, and communities. This commitment is part of the larger \$90 million Pockets of Hope campaign, initiated by the Kellogg Foundation and its partners, including additional pledges totaling \$20 million from other funders like the Digicel Foundation, Dunn Family Charitable Foundation, and Porticus. This collaborative effort focuses on empowering local communities in Haiti through initiatives in education, health, and economic security.

The philanthropic support for Haiti has seen a decline



Haitian American actress and humanitarian Garcelle Beauvais is partnering with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation as part of the Pockets of Hope campaign.

recently, despite the growing needs in the region. Pockets of Hope seeks to reverse this trend by rallying partners from across the philanthropic world to commit to supporting Haitian-led efforts for a brighter future. The Kellogg Foundation aims to bring together funders,

nonprofits, members of Haiti’s diaspora, and other supporters to increase investment in initiatives conceived and led by Haitians, poised to make a transformative impact on communities.

La June Montgomery Tabron, president and CEO of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation,

reflects on the post-2010 earthquake scenario, where despite immense generosity, most efforts were short-term. Since 2011, the Foundation has been a steadfast partner in Haiti, working closely with local organizations and leaders. Now, they are inviting other funders to strategically collaborate and amplify the impact of these local groups, believing in the power of local leadership to instill hope and drive change in Haiti.

Christina Kirby of Porticus North America expresses enthusiasm for joining the Pockets of Hope campaign, highlighting a shared commitment with the Kellogg Foundation to Haitian-led initiatives in education. Their collaborative investments aim to build on current successes, guided by Haitian leadership and expanded through strategic partnerships.



# IRAWMA Makes A Triumphant Return To South Florida



Ephraim Martin Presents Spice With The Global Queen Of Dancehall Award At The 40th International Reggae And World Music Awards (IRAWMA) In Kingston, Jamaica Last May.

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL

After an eight-year break, the International Reggae And World Music Awards, (IRAWMA), returns to South Florida for its 41st staging. The event, which will be launched January 25th at Lauderhill Performing Arts Center, takes place at that venue on March 22nd.

For the past four years, the IRAWMA has been held in Jamaica. Founder, Ephraim Martin, said it was time for a South Florida comeback.

“South Florida has always been special for us, we have a lot of good friends there and we are looking forward to being there again,” he told Caribbean Today.

There will be awards in 38 categories, five of which are new. Those are Best Singjay Artist, Dancehall Performer of The Year, Best African Entertainer and Best Social Media Influencer.

There is also a Special Awards of Honour to persons who have made extraordinary contributions to music and other industries. Submissions are also

open for the IRAWMA Best Song Contest, which debuted last year and was won by roots singer History Man.

Martin, a journalist from St. Thomas parish in Jamaica, started the IRAWMA in 1982 in Chicago where he has lived since 1980. He was a reporter with the Gleaner Company Ltd. in Jamaica and the Chicago Daily Defender when he promoted the inaugural show.

It has since been held in New York at the famed Apollo Theater, Atlanta and Trinidad and Tobago. Reggae’s elite artists, producers, songwriters and administrators have been honoured by Martin and his team.

He noted that his organization transcends awards, having participated in and initiated a number of social events such as the anti-Apartheid movement in Chicago, and celebration of Marcus Garvey’s 100th birthday.

This year, expanding the IRAWMA’s reach beyond its West Indian base is one of Martin’s priorities.

“We are hoping to take

it to the next level. Since the (Covid-19) pandemic we have not been on any of the networks. We want to get back to that point if we get the sponsors,” he said. The IRAWMA last aired

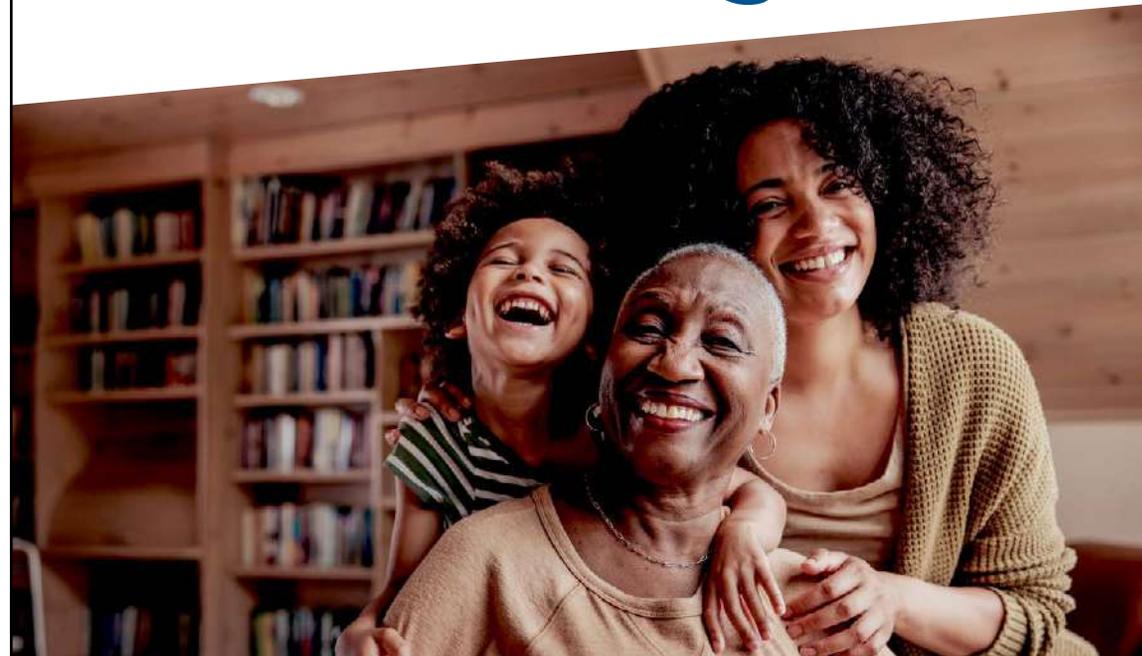
(delayed) on a major network (NBC) in 2018.

Marcia Griffiths, Mutabaruka, Olivia Grange, Jamaica’s entertainment minister, Koffee, Popcaan, Sean Paul and

Christopher Martin were some of the winners at the IRAWMA 40th anniversary show.



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# Soca Artist Ricardo Drue's Funeral Set For January 9th



Ricardo Drue: 1985-2023.

The funeral for renowned soca artist Ricardo Drue is scheduled for January 9th. Nicola Barriteau, Drue's mother, announced the arrangements in a statement yesterday.

The ceremony will begin at 1 pm at the Holy Family Cathedral in Antigua, Drue's birthplace.

In her first public statement since Drue's unexpected passing last month, Barriteau expressed gratitude

for the public's support and love towards her family during this challenging time.

"There are no words at this time to express the overwhelming love and support given as the family continues to process and come to terms with the passing of our beloved son Ricardo

Robert Barriteau Drue," she said.

She acknowledged the difficulty of this period, stating, "We are thankful for the respect shown during this extremely difficult time. Whilst we all wish the hands of time could be rewound, the harshest reality of life is unfortunately death and as much as the family would give anything to have him with us in the physical, the ultimate

acknowledgement is the Almighty is in full control." Drue, known for hits like

"Vagabond" and "Toxic Love," passed away on December 12th, 2023, at the age of 38.

The cause of his death has not been disclosed.

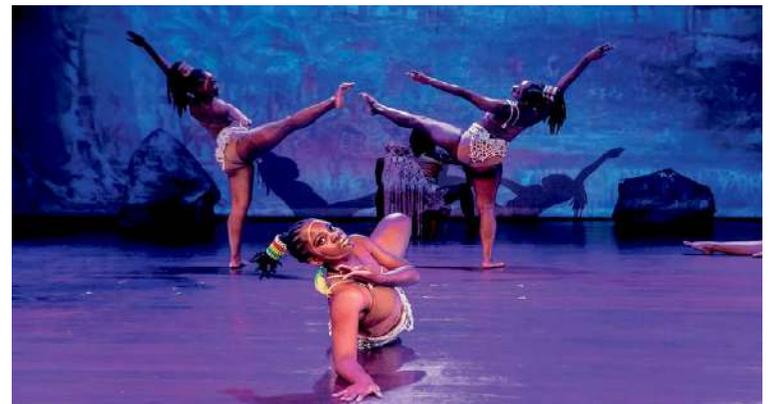


## Jamaica's Renowned Dance Ensemble Returns To NYC For Spectacular Performance

L'Acadco - A United Caribbean Dance Force and the premier contemporary dance ensemble of Jamaica, makes a much-anticipated comeback to New York City with a gala performance on January 11th.

This marks their first appearance in the city in two decades. The event, featuring a special performance at the Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay College, will be under the patronage of the Consul General of Jamaica to New York, Alston Roach-Wilson and aims to celebrate Dr. Una S.T. Clarke's contributions, aligning with the theme: Building Bridges Through The Arts.

A portion of the proceeds will benefit the New-York-based Jamaican charity Children of



This electrifying cultural exchange promises to leave patrons spellbound and enthralled.

Jamaica Outreach, (COJO) Inc. Tickets are available at touchstonelink.com/lacadco.

The event will highlight the exceptional talent and agility of L'Acadco's dancers, offer-

ing both long-time supporters and newcomers a mesmerizing experience. The performance will feature contemporary pieces and traditional Caribbean dance forms, choreographed by Jessica Shaw, Orville McFarlane, and L'Antoinette Stines, the company's Artistic Director. Notably, Dr. Stines' acclaimed works, Satta and Honfour, will be part of the evening's repertoire.

It will be further enhanced by the presence of special guest Amma D. McKen, a renowned Yoruba Orisha Singer and Priestess of Yemonja. A Brooklyn native, McKen has been immersed in Yoruba sacred music since the age of 14 and holds the prestigious title of Akpon. She has the distinction of being the first African American woman to produce a musical recording of these traditional songs, "Alaako Oso: Owner of the Songs is Eloquent."

L'Acadco's roots trace back to 1978 when Dr. L'Antoinette Stines founded Miami's first Black dance company. After returning to Jamaica in 1982, Dr. Stines and her company have become influential ambassadors of Jamaican and Caribbean culture. Dr. Stines developed L'Antech, a unique Caribbean dance technique, blending Classical Ballet with Jamaican and Caribbean dance styles. This innovative approach has been integral to L'Acadco's expression of the region's vibrant culture and heritage.

Celebrated as Jamaica's leading contemporary dance company, L'ACADCO's members hail from across the Caribbean, including Barbados, the Bahamas, Grenada, Bermuda, Cuba, Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago. Since its inception, the company has stood as a dynamic representative and advocate of Caribbean culture and dance. For more information, visit lacadco.com.



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## Two Healthy Recipes To Help You Keep Your New Year Resolutions

It's a brand New Year and another chance to make and affirm your commitment to healthier eating. After all, your health is your wealth. Here are two healthy recipes to help you keep that resolution to eat better.

### Fish With Orange Sauce



#### INGREDIENTS

- 6 slice(s) fish fillet
- 4 cup(s) water
- 1/4 cup(s) Cane Vinegar
- 1 teaspoon(s) salt
- 1 teaspoon(s) Black Pepper

- 1 teaspoon(s) garlic, chopped
- 1 cup(s) flour
- 1 teaspoon(s) baking powder
- 1/4 cup(s) Vegetable Oil
- 1 cup(s) Orange Juice
- 1 teaspoon(s) ginger, grated
- 1 teaspoon(s) cornstarch
- 1/4 cup(s) water
- 1 tablespoon(s) Margarine

#### METHOD

- Clean and wash fish in a solution of vinegar and water.
- Season fish fillets with salt, black pepper, and chopped garlic. Set aside.
- Combine flour and baking powder and coat fish fillets. Shake off excess flour.
- Heat Vegetable Oil in a skillet and lightly fry fillets until golden brown.
- To Make Sauce
- Bring Orange Juice to a boil, add grated ginger and cornstarch mixture. Stir and add Soft Margarine and stir until margarine has dissolved.

#### TO SERVE:

- Serve fish fillets with Orange Sauce and garnish with orange slices.
- Serve with steamed Grace Long Grain Rice, dasheen, breadfruit or yam.

- [GraceFoods.com](http://GraceFoods.com)

### Lemon-Mango Shrimp and



#### Vegetable Pasta

#### INGREDIENTS

- 8 shrimp skewers
- 1 mango, divided

- 2 lemons, for zest/juice
- 1 (0.75 oz) package fresh basil
- 4 cloves garlic
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 14 oz zucchini (or vegetable) spirals
- 1/2 cup julienne-cut sun-dried tomatoes
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese

#### METHOD

- Set shrimp skewers out to thaw, if needed.
- Slice large, wide sides off mango, slightly off-center to avoid the pit; discard pit. Score mango flesh with knife lengthwise, then crosswise to make cubes.
- Scoop mango flesh out of skins (about 1 1/2 cups); discard skins. Zest lemons (2 teaspoons) and juice (1/4 cup).
- Add to blender (or food processor bowl): lemon juice

and zest, 1/2 cup mango, basil (leaves only), garlic, and 1/2 teaspoon salt; process until smooth.

- Drizzle in oil with blender running on LOW.
- Arrange shrimp skewers in shallow dish; coat with 1/2 cup lemon-basil dressing and let stand 15 minutes to marinate.
- Preheat grill (or grill pan) on medium.
- Place shrimp skewers on grill (discard marinade); cook 2-3 minutes on each side until pink and opaque.
- Toss in serving dish: zucchini, sun-dried tomatoes, feta, and remaining 1 cup mango, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and lemon-basil dressing (about 1 cup); top with shrimp.
- Serve.

- [Publix.com/recipes](http://Publix.com/recipes)



## Anguilla Gets Ready For Culinary Experience 2024

Anguilla is gearing up for its prestigious Anguilla Culinary Experience (ACE), an annual gourmet festival slated from May 23rd to May 26th, 2024. Celebrating its third year, ACE is set to transform the island into a culinary hotspot, featuring an array of events across its top resorts, restaurants, and villas.

Online ticketing is now open for the festival, promising an epicurean journey that underscores Anguilla's status as the Caribbean's premier culinary destination. Guests can anticipate a fusion of flavors and styles, as local and international chefs collaborate to create unique dining experiences, utilizing Anguilla's fresh fish, seafood, and produce. A highlight of the festival includes a portion of proceeds funding educational programs for aspiring chefs and hospitality professionals in Anguilla.

The festival kicks off with a spectacular opening night at Aurora Anguilla Resort & Golf Club. The 'Taste of Aurora' will offer guests a tour of the resort's diverse culinary offerings, accompanied by live music and the chance to win raffle prizes. Throughout the festival, guests will be treated to various signature events. These include a 'Barefoot Beach Dinner' at Maundays

Bay, a bespoke tasting menu by award-winning chefs at Villa Alegria, and a vibrant cabaret at Savi Beach Club. Additionally, a Farm-to-Table Garden Dinner will showcase fresh produce at Aurora Anguilla Resort & Golf Club.

The ACE Beach BBQ & Basket Battle is another festival highlight, offering guests an authentic beachside barbecue experience, complete with a cooking challenge featuring the Anguilla National Culinary Team. The festival concludes with a Sunday Funday at Malliouhana's beach bar and restaurant, promising an evening of live music and tropical cocktails.

In between major events, festival attendees can enjoy special menus and culinary activities across the island, from Johnny Cake making to rum punch bar tours.

Festival co-hosts Trudy Nixon and Janine Edwards, along with numerous sponsors, have ensured a diverse and engaging program. The event's flexibility allows guests to tailor their experience to their tastes and budget.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [AnguillaCulinaryExperience.com](http://AnguillaCulinaryExperience.com).



## Put Tamarind On The Menu In 2024

Tamarind, a fruit native to Africa, India and the Middle East, has lent its acidic, tangy-sweet flavor to Latin, Caribbean and Mexican cuisines for centuries. Today, this plump, pod-like fruit is jet-setting across the world, feeding a global curiosity for what's next in food, drink and flavor.

That's according to the 24th edition of McCormick's Flavor Forecast, an annual report illuminating the latest culinary trends shaping the way people prepare and enjoy food worldwide. Every year, over four dozen global chefs, culinary professionals, trend trackers, food technologists and team members tap into their expertise and passion to uncover stand-out predictions and trends, and with this year's report, they've identified tamarind as the flavor to watch out for.

"We're thrilled to encourage people to experience the versatility and tang of tamarind. It's truly the perfect ingredient that can be incorporated into both savory and sweet dishes," says Hadar Cohen Aviram, executive chef, U.S. Consumer at McCormick.

Whether you're a home chef or foodie, McCormick is dishing up inspiration for incorporating tamarind into your life, both at home and when dining out with its new Tamarind & Pasilla Chile Seasoning, and by collaborating

with Black Tap Craft Burgers & Beer on limited-edition, tamarind-infused menu items.

### Here's a McCormick recipe for Tamarind Lemon Pepper Lemonade.



Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 5 minutes

#### INGREDIENTS:

##### Lemon Pepper Syrup:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1/4 cup McCormick Coarse Ground Black Pepper, ground with mortar and pestle
- 1 teaspoon McCormick Pure Lemon Extract

##### Lemon Pepper Sugar:

- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon McCormick Coarse Ground Black Pepper
- 1 lemon, zest only

##### Tamarind Lemonade:

- 6 cups water

- 3/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 6 teaspoons tamarind paste

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. For the Lemon Pepper Syrup, mix sugar, water and black pepper in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil on high heat, stirring occasionally until sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat; let steep for 15 minutes. Strain through a very fine mesh sieve. Stir in lemon extract; cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.
2. For the Lemon Pepper Sugar, mix sugar, black pepper and lemon zest until no lumps remain. Store in an airtight container until ready to serve.
3. Place 1 tablespoon of the Syrup in shallow bowl. Dip rims of 6 (10-ounce) glasses into Syrup, then dip in Lemon Pepper Sugar to coat. Fill glasses halfway with ice; set aside.
4. To prepare Lemonade, whisk water, remaining Syrup, lemon juice and tamarind concentrate in a large pitcher until well blended. Pour into prepared glasses. Refrigerate until chilled or serve immediately. Garnish with fresh lemon wedges, if desired.

- [StatePoint](http://StatePoint)



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Peter A. Webley  
Publisher

## Be Aware Of JN.1: A Rising COVID-19 Variant

The CDC is closely monitoring JN.1, a SARS-CoV-2 variant, which as of December 23, 2023, is estimated to represent 39-50% of COVID-19 variants in the U.S. This variant is outpacing others in its spread, with projections showing a rapid increase in its prevalence.

Lab data indicates that current vaccines, tests, and treatments remain effective against JN.1. This variant, a highly mutated strain of Omicron, could potentially cause a significant surge in COVID-19 cases, potentially challenging hospital capacities this winter, especially when combined with other respiratory illnesses like RSV and flu.

JN.1 has become the dominant COVID-19 strain in the U.S., quickly surpassing the previous dominant variant, HV.1. In Europe, countries like Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark are experiencing unprecedented COVID levels in wastewater, even surpassing previous Omicron peaks.

JN.1, an Omicron descendant, now accounts for approximately 44.1% of U.S. COVID-19 cases. It's particularly prevalent in the Northeast and Southeast regions, including Florida. While not more severe than previous strains, JN.1 is highly transmissible, prompting renewed emphasis on precautions like hand washing, avoiding sick individuals, and wearing masks during travel.

The WHO's recent risk evaluation highlighted JN.1's enhanced immune evasion compared to its BA.2.86 parent strain, suggesting previous infections may offer less protection. However, current COVID-19 vaccines are still considered effective.

In Florida, hospitalizations are rising due to flu and COVID-19. The state health department reports increasing emergency visits and admissions for flu, particularly among the elderly. The CDC recommends flu vaccinations to reduce severity and



The COVID virus has continued to mutate. (Credit: Getty Images)

improve immune response. Hand washing and avoiding touching your face are also advised to prevent both flu and COVID-19 infections. RSV cases, however, are declining in Florida.

Singapore, a country without typical winter respiratory disease spikes, is seeing a rise in COVID hospitalizations. About 20% of new COVID infections in

the U.S. are attributed to JN.1, with Florida recording 92,586 COVID-related deaths since 2020.

In the Dominican Republic, an epidemiological alert has been issued due to multiple respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, RSV, Influenza A (H1N1), and others. COVID-19 variants

EG.5.1, FL.1x, and JN.1 have been identified, with over a million reported acute respiratory infections.

Public Health advises vaccinations, especially for vulnerable groups, and recommends avoiding crowded places, practicing physical distancing, and wearing masks in case of illness.

Healthcare centers are urged to strengthen surveillance and public education on preventive measures against influenza and COVID-19.

The GISAID Initiative reports that 73% of genetic sequences are from lineages descended from the XBB variant, including JN.1, classified as a "variant of interest" by WHO due to its rapid spread but comparable health risk to other Omicron sub-variants.



## RSV Can Impact Adults Too

Each year, it's estimated that more than 160,000 U.S. adults are hospitalized and 10,000 of them die due to Respiratory Syncytial Virus, or RSV, a common respiratory virus. While most people only develop mild symptoms similar to that of a common cold, RSV can be dangerous for certain people at high risk, including some adults.

The American Lung Association's campaign to educate people living in the United States about RSV in adults is supported in part by a grant from GSK. As part of the campaign, they are sharing patient insights, along with information about the risk of severe complications from RSV, and steps people can take to help protect themselves

### RISK FACTORS

Adults 65 years and older are at higher risk of RSV that can be severe and even life threatening. Also at high risk are adults with chronic heart or lung disease, and adults with weakened immune systems. RSV in some cases may worsen asthma or COPD symptoms, lead to pneumonia or bronchitis, or even result in congestive heart failure. Adults at high risk need to be especially vigilant during RSV season, which is occurring in the United States right now.

Michele D.'s childhood memories of medical visits and treatments for her asthma helped shape her path in life, inspiring her to become a Registered Respiratory Therapist so that she could care for and educate others also living with asthma or other lung diseases. Even with Michele's extensive knowledge of respiratory diseases and her

lived experience of growing up with asthma, her severe bout of RSV in December 2022, which hospitalized her and led to pneumonia, took her by surprise.

"I'm a respiratory therapist, and I know RSV can be serious, but I wasn't expecting it to impact me the way that it did and for as long as it did," says Michele. "I don't think most people living with chronic lung disease realize how an RSV infection can impact their lives. I didn't."

### PREVENTION

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to lower your risk of severe RSV:

- Keep up to date on all recommended vaccinations. In June 2023, the CDC recommended RSV vaccination for adults 60 and older who have discussed with their healthcare provider whether it's right for them.
- If you live with a chronic lung disease, such as asthma or COPD, work with your healthcare team to keep the condition under control so your lungs can better heal from infectious respiratory diseases.
- When possible, stay away from individuals who are sick with respiratory infections to reduce your chance of becoming ill.
- Wash your hands often and try not to touch your face with unwashed hands as that is a common route for infections to occur.

For more information and prevention resources, and to learn your risk for RSV complications, visit [Lung.org/RSV](https://www.lung.org/RSV).



## SPRING HEALTH



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# TRAVEL NEWS

## Bidens Ring In The New Year In The Caribbean Ahead Of Silly Season

President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden upheld a family ritual on Dec. 31st, as they rang in the New Year in the Caribbean again, ahead of the 2024 silly season – the election cycle.

The US First Couple, joined for the first time by Granddaughter Natalie, arrived in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, on Dec. 27, 2023, embarking on their final family vacation before the pivotal 2024 election year. Natalie Biden, 19, is the eldest child of their late son Beau Biden.

As they prepare for what promises to be a challenging year ahead, the President and the First Lady relished some tranquil moments in the Caribbean before their return to Washington, D.C. The Bidens returned to Washington, D.C., after the New Year's holiday.

Amid the heightened focus on the Biden family in the lead-up to the election cycle, the



US President Joe Biden, First Lady Jill Biden and granddaughter Natalie at the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport, St. Croix, US Virgin Islands on December 27, 2023. (Photo by MANDEL NGAN/AFP via Getty Images)

President and the First Lady have been deliberately carving out time for family gatherings during the holiday season, including Thanksgiving and Christmas spent away from the capital with relatives.

Biden's job approval rating was 39% in December according to Gallup, marking a slight improvement from the 37% low points in October and November but the fifth time his rating is below 40% in 2023.



## Expanded Flight Options From Fort Lauderdale To The Bahamas And Turks & Caicos

Travel enthusiasts with a Caribbean dream can rejoice as Fort Lauderdale now offers an expanded array of flight options to The Bahamas and Turks & Caicos.

Silver Airways recently launched its first flight to Providenciales in the Turks and Caicos Islands on December 18th, 2023. This service includes two non-stop flights every week directly from Fort Lauderdale to Providenciales.

Arlington Musgrove, Minister of Immigration and Border Services, praised the new route, highlighting the exceptional beauty and allure of the Turks and Caicos Islands, which are famous for their pristine beaches and rich culture. He noted that Silver Airways' service will make these islands even more accessible.

Esmond Johnson, Regional Manager for Silver Airways, announced that introductory fares for this route start at just US\$129. The flight duration is approximately two and a half hours. The airline plans to use the 70-seat ATR72 and the 46-seat ATR42 aircrafts for these flights.

In a similar development, Makers Air, based in Fort Lauderdale, has initiated

new non-stop services to Long Island, significantly enhancing travel convenience to this destination. Operating on Thursdays and Sundays, Makers Air offers a semi-private experience from Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport, allowing for later check-ins compared to standard commercial flights.

Long Island is renowned for its natural beauty, boasting attractions like the famous Dean's Blue Hole, Hamilton's Cave, and the breathtaking Cape Santa Maria Beach. It's an ideal destination for enthusiasts of coral reefs, beaches, and outdoor activities like fishing, diving, and boating.

David Hoher, owner and president of Makers Air, expressed excitement over the new direct flights to Stella Maris, Long Island, describing the island as a hidden Bahamian treasure. The new route aims to provide a convenient travel option for tourists and locals alike. Makers Air has an expanding network of scheduled flights from Fort Lauderdale to various destinations in The Bahamas, including Chub Cay, Cat Island, Great Harbour Cay, Eleuthera, and Andros.



## Guess Who Is Coming To The Bahamas This April?

Does The Bahamas sound like the place to be this April? You may to start making plans to see Janet Jackson at Atlantis Paradise Island's "Music Making Waves" Series this year.

Ms. Jackson is set to grace the stage of the concert series on April 27, 2024. This performance at the resort's Casuarina Beach marks the launch of the series' 2024 season. Fans can anticipate a vibrant showcase of Jackson's greatest hits, ranging from "All For You" to "What Have You Done for Me Lately."

Atlantis Paradise Island is renowned for creating unforgettable experiences for its guests and locals. Audrey Oswell, President and Managing Director of Atlantis Paradise Island, expressed excitement about hosting the iconic Janet Jackson and her fans for an



Janet Jackson is coming to the Bahamas this April.

unforgettable evening on Casuarina Beach, enhancing the resort's reputation as a premier global destination. The concert series has a history of featuring renowned artists, with Lizzo performing in the previous year.

A segment of the concert's proceeds will benefit the Atlantis Blue Project Foundation, dedicated to marine conservation efforts in The Bahamas and further afield.



## Jamaica Named World's Leading Family Destination

Jamaica has proudly clinched the title of "World's Leading Family Destination." The Jamaica Tourist Board bagged the award at the prestigious 2023 World Travel Awards, held at the iconic Burj Al Arab in Dubai, UAE on December 1st.

The island nation was also celebrated as the "World's Leading Cruise Destination," marking a significant achievement in international tourism recognition.

Jamaica's Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett, expressed immense pride in these accolades, stating: "These awards affirm Jamaica's exceptional appeal to visitors globally and honour our commitment to delivering a world-class tourism experience."

Beyond its global recognition, Jamaica also continued its dominance in the Caribbean awards, securing the title of "Caribbean's Leading Tourist Board" for the 15th consecutive year and "Caribbean's Leading Destination" for the 17th year in



a row. Additionally, it was named the "Caribbean's Leading Cruise Destination" at the Caribbean sector of the World Travel Awards.

Regarded as the apex of recognition in the travel and tourism sector, the World Travel Awards are determined by votes from industry professionals and consumers worldwide,

celebrating excellence and commitment in the field. 2023 marked the 30th anniversary of the World Travel Awards, which began in 1993 to honor and celebrate excellence across all key segments of travel, tourism, and hospitality. To explore more about Jamaica and its offerings, visit [visitjamaica.com](http://visitjamaica.com).





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SCAN ME

**NEWS**



# Guyana To Join Trinidad And Tobago, Barbados In Regional Ferry Service Initiative

The government of Guyana has confirmed its participation in a groundbreaking regional ferry service, designed to connect the nation with Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados. This announcement was made by President Irfaan Ali during the sod-turning ceremony for the new US\$35 million Mackenzie/Wismar Bridge in Region 10 (Upper Demerara-Berbice), a project led by the China Railway Construction Corporation.

President Ali revealed the formation of a joint venture between Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Barbados, aimed at launching a ferry system for

both passengers and cargo. However, details about the service were limited. This initiative emerges as part of a broader effort by CARICOM, the regional integration movement, to enhance both sea and air transportation. One of CARICOM's goals is to reduce the region's substantial food import bill by 25% by 2025.

In 2022, CARICOM sought



President Irfaan Ali, government ministers and other officials turn the sod for the new US\$35 million Mackenzie/Wismar Bridge, Guyana. (CMC image)

financial support from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to establish this intra-regional ferry network. The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB),

based in Barbados, was assigned to develop a roadmap for a fast ferry service, initially focusing on trade links between Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, and Barbados.

Simultaneously, President Ali emphasized the urgency of completing the new four-lane highway project within two years. This highway, undertaken by the same Chinese company building the new GUY\$260 million crossing over the Demerara River, aims to facilitate the growing vehicular traffic in the mining town of Linden. In 2020, there were an estimated 768,000 vehicular

crossings over the existing bridge, a number which nearly doubled the following year, reaching about 1.5 million.

The new Mackenzie Wismar Bridge is expected to play a vital role in enhancing connectivity between Guyana's coast and its hinterland. President Ali highlighted its strategic importance in making Region 10 a hub for engineering, logistics, and trading, particularly considering the increased traffic from the south, including Brazil.

- *Rewritten from CMC*



## Year In Review - A Look Back At 2023 In The Caribbean

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

the boundaries between them. But in December, both Guyana and Venezuela agreed "directly or indirectly" not to threaten or use force against one another in any circumstances, as they continue to seek a resolution to the border dispute.

The two leaders have agreed to meet again in Brazil, within the next three months, "or at another agreed time, to consider any matter with implications for the territory in dispute, including the above-mentioned update of the joint commission".

### ECONOMIC NEWS

Caribbean countries were placed at the crossroads in 2023 with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) highlighting progress in economic recovery in most Caribbean economies, despite persistent external shocks. But the Washington-based financial institution warned that risks remain in the near-term.

The report noted that economic growth in the Caribbean was strong in 2022 but moderated in 2023. Real gross domestic product (GDP)

growth in the region, excluding Guyana, firmed to an estimated 4.2 per cent in 2022 as countries continued re-opening after the COVID-19 lockdowns.

### CRIME

Crime continued unabated in the Caribbean in 2023 with Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines all feeling the heat and registering significant number of murders as against the previous years.

The killings were most brutal and hideous and even toddlers were not spared the

wrath of the killers as had been the cases in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Bahamas, and St. Lucia, with the latter seeking assistance from the Barbados-based Regional Security System (RSS) to stem the spate of murders.

In a Declaration titled "War on Guns" the regional leaders said they were also calling on the United States to join the Caribbean in "our war on guns and urgently adopt and take action to stop the illegal exportation of firearms and ammunition into the Caribbean."

The regional leaders also

agreed to stand with Mexico on its legal action against US gun manufacturers and retailers and establish an entity under the CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) to assist in the containment of corruption and financial crimes, including money laundering and cybercrimes, through greater collaboration to harmonize related legislation and operational processes.

- *CMC*



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# Persaud Blames Lack Of Jamaican Government Support For Sale Of Tallawahs

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL

When the 2024 Caribbean Premier League (CPL) bowls off this year, three-time champions Jamaica Tallawahs will no longer be part of it.

In December, it was announced that Kris Persaud, the Guyanese businessman who owned the franchise, had thrown in the towel due to lack of support from the Jamaican government.

The South Florida-based Persaud told SportsMax cable channel that even in the best



The Jamaica Tallawahs team is no more.



The former owner of the Tallawahs, Guyana-born Kris Persaud, r.

of times for the Tallawahs, there was no support from the Jamaican government.

“When we won the tournament in 2022, we did not get an acknowledgement, a phone call or thank you from anyone in the house of government. I then

realized that cricket is not on top of anyone’s agenda there,” he said.

The Tallawahs also won the popular T20 tournament in 2013 and 2016, but the team has not played in Jamaica since 2019, which also frustrated Persaud.

“This has been a problem

since 2017 when there was no support for the team. We continued in 2018, we continued in 2019, bleeding money every year. We tried to explain to the government several times that part of the business model for franchise sports is for the host country to be a partner in that event,” said Persaud. “Other territories understand that very well and show support. We were speculating that this will be the same for Jamaica. We were wrong.”

The Tallawahs reached the playoffs of last year’s CPL which took place in September and was contested by six teams. Guyana Amazon Warriors won the tournament, defeating Trinbago Knight Riders in the final.

Persaud’s decision to pull up stumps with the Tallawahs is another body blow for Jamaican cricket. In September, Olivia Grange, the country’s sports minister, confirmed reports that

the government did not bid for Jamaica to host matches at Sabina Park in the T20 World Cup which takes place in June.

Grange gave “limited resources” as the reason for that decision.

But Wavell Hinds, the former West Indies batsman who is now a member of the Opposition People’s National Party (PNP) in Jamaica, is not buying that argument. In an interview with the Gleaner newspaper, he said the loss of the Jamaica Tallawahs franchise, is evidence the government has no plans to invest in cricket.

“Well, this continued approach by the government has certainly not helped and our country’s national sport is taking another beating,” Hinds stated.

Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and The Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago will host the T20 World Cup. Sabina Park, traditionally one of the top

grounds in the West Indies, has not hosted an international match since January 2022 when the West Indies played Ireland.

From the West Coast of Demerara in Guyana, Persaud migrated to the United States in his late teens, settling in New York City. An engineer by profession, he has operated the Home Owners Choice real estate company since 2005.

Persaud bought the Jamaica Tallawahs through his Worldwide Sports Management Group. The team competed in the inaugural CPL in 2013, defeating Guyana Amazon Warriors in the final.

A number of top players such as Chris Gayle and Andre Russell of the West Indies, and Ross Taylor of New Zealand, have played for the team.

Persaud sold the franchise to the CP and is reportedly in talks with Antiguan interests to start a new team in that country.



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## Peterborough’s Star Striker And Reggae Boyz Striker Not For Sale at Low Price



Peterborough’s standout striker and Reggae Boyz, Jonson Clarke-Harris. (CMC image)

Peterborough’s standout striker, Jonson Clarke-Harris, part of Jamaica’s Reggae Boyz, is off-limits for a major fee, as emphasized by the club’s director of football, Barry Fry. Despite being a highly coveted player, the 29-year-old is not likely to depart from the East England team, affectionately known as “the Posh,” cheaply during the ongoing transfer window that commenced on New Year’s Day.

Clarke-Harris, who clinched the Golden Boot by scoring 26

goals last season and has already netted ten in 24 appearances across all competitions this season, is valued highly by Fry, who insists on a worthy offer for the striker.

“He’s not going for a trivial amount. His goal-scoring prowess is remarkable, and his influence extends beyond the pitch, especially with his mentorship to younger players. Even when he’s not playing, he’s an invaluable asset,” Fry stated.

Last season, after

Peterborough missed a promotion opportunity to the Championship, Clarke-Harris was put on the transfer list. His potential move to Bristol Rovers, valued at 800,000 pounds, fell through at the eleventh hour on the deadline day in September.

However, Clarke-Harris bounced back impressively, scoring four goals in September for the Posh, including a double against Mansfield.

Recently, Clarke-Harris’s game time was limited in anticipation of a January transfer, but he celebrated his return to the starting lineup by scoring twice against Barnsley last Friday.

Fry highlighted that Clarke-Harris’s value to the team transcends his goal-scoring. He cited an instance from the FA Cup match against Salford, where Clarke-Harris’s leadership and encouragement were pivotal during a tense penalty shootout.

- Rewritten from CMC



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# SPORTS NEWS



## West Indies Look To Make History In Australia

The West Indies cricket team is looking to break a 20-year losing streak against Australia and avoid an eighth straight series defeat as gear up for their upcoming two-Test series this month.

Their last Test win over Australia was two decades ago during a 3-1 series loss at home, with their most recent victory in Australia dating back to 1997.

The Caribbean team is set to introduce at least four new players in the first Test against Australia, commencing January 16th at Adelaide Oval. The second Test will take place at the Gabba in Brisbane, starting January 25th. This development follows the announcement of seven uncapped players in their



Fresh from their win over England in the Caribbean, the West Indies are now hoping to make history and win over Australia. (Getty image)

15-member squad. Among the new faces greeted by fans, including pacer

Akeem Jordan at Adelaide airport, are opener Zachary McCaskie, wicketkeeper-

batsman Tevin Imlach, and all-rounders Justin Greaves, Kavem Hodge, and Kevin Sinclair. Pacemen Akeem Jordan and Shamar Joseph are also set to make their debuts.

Ranked eighth globally, the West Indies team faces a challenging series, especially with the absence of former captain Jason Holder and all-rounder Kyle Mayers, who opted to play franchise Twenty20 cricket instead. Furthermore, the squad will miss emerging fast bowler Jayden Seales due to a shoulder injury.

Kraigg Brathwaite will lead the team, with Alzarri Joseph serving as vice-captain for the first time. The selection panel, headed by former captain

Desmond Haynes, has also excluded seasoned players like Jermaine Blackwood and fast bowler Shannon Gabriel.

Australia, fresh from their victory in the Boxing Day Test against Pakistan in Melbourne, will be a formidable opponent. The least experienced Australian player in that Test was wicketkeeper-batsman Alex Carey, with 27 caps. The team might witness a shift with David Warner contemplating retirement after the final Test against Pakistan in Sydney and potential rest for some of their pace bowlers.

- *Rewritten from CMC*



## Reggae Girlz Top Caribbean Rankings

In a significant achievement for Caribbean football, the Jamaican women's national team has emerged as the top-ranked team from the Caribbean Football Union (CFU) in the latest FIFA World Rankings. Despite a slight drop of three places, the Jamaican team, also known as the Reggae Girlz, now holds the 40th position globally, placing them fourth in

the CONCACAF region. This ranking underscores their status as one of the top five CFU teams within the world's top 100.

Last year's highlight for the Reggae Girlz was securing a spot in the FIFA Women's World Cup, scheduled from July 20 to August 20, 2023 in Australia and New Zealand. Their journey to the World Cup included a commendable third-



Jamaica's Reggae Girlz has emerged as the top-ranked team from the Caribbean Football Union (CFU) in the latest FIFA World Rankings. (WILL MURRAY/GETTY)

CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup.

Other CFU teams have also been active, with their performances in various qualification tournaments influencing their FIFA rankings. Haiti climbed to 51st (sixth in CONCACAF), Trinidad & Tobago slipped to 78th (eighth in CONCACAF), Guyana dropped to 87th (tenth in CONCACAF), and Cuba rose to 89th (eleventh in CONCACAF), all marking their presence in the top 100.

Completing the CFU top 10, Puerto Rico remains at 103rd, the Dominican Republic is at 107th, Suriname at 132nd, St Kitts & Nevis at 138th, and Bermuda at 143rd in the world rankings.

St. Lucia, now ranked 155th globally, rounds off the CONCACAF top 20 list, marking a significant moment for Caribbean football on the global stage.

- *Rewritten from CMC*





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place finish in the CONCACAF W Championship, capped off by a 1-0 victory over Costa Rica in July 2023.

During the World Cup, sandwiched between encouraging draws against powerhouse teams like France and Brazil, Jamaica notched a 1-0 win against Panama in the group stage and advanced to the second round. Their campaign ended when Colombia narrowly defeated them 1-0.

However, the team faced

a setback in their quest for the 2024 Olympic Games, falling short in the CONCACAF qualification in September, where they lost 4-1 on aggregate to the reigning champions Canada.

The latter part of the year was challenging for the Reggae Girlz due to disputes with the Jamaica Football Federation. This led to a depleted squad participating in the Pan Am Games, which impacted their chance to qualify for the

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# Alan 'Skill' Cole: 70s Soccer Star And Bob Marley's Confidant Overcomes Health Crisis

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL

In an era flush with folk heroes, Alan "Skill" Cole stood tall during the 1970s as a soccer star and confidant of reggae king Bob Marley. A gifted midfielder who played professionally in the United States and Brazil, he was one of Jamaica's most popular figures throughout that turbulent decade.

Cole, 73, credits that sustained adulation for helping him to survive a serious medical episode last December. A bleeding ulcer left him hospitalized for more than one week, requiring emergency surgery at the University Hospital of the West Indies in Kingston.

A rush of well-wishers donated blood for the transfusion to elevate Cole's blood count which fell to levels that concerned his doctors. He said not eating on time resulted in the

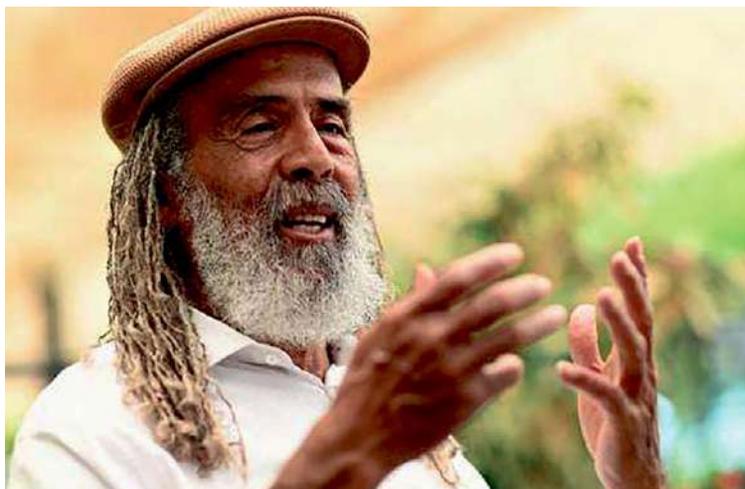
inflamed ulcer which caused him severe pain.

He admits it was a scary time.

"I had to get quite a few transfusions to bring back my strength, because I was on drips for about six days. I was bleeding; they pumped a lot of blood out of my system because some blood was in my upper abdominals," Cole disclosed. "What was really good for me is, that all my other functions were good...my kidney is good, everything. It was jus' di ulcer dat was di problem."

At the time of his interview with Caribbean Today in late December, the former Jamaica player was recuperating at his home in east Kingston. Early-morning walks and a citrus-free diet are part of a new regiment for Cole, a health buff known for long bicycle rides and regular workouts at the gym.

Born in central Kingston, Alan



Allan "Skill" Cole is recuperating and hoping to get his manuscript on his relationship with Bob Marley published soon.

Cole's prodigious talent made him a cult hero in the 1960s. He was a star player at schoolboy and senior club levels, who played for the Atlanta Chiefs in the North American Soccer League in the late 1960s, and for Brazilian division one team Nautica in the early 1970s.

During that period, he was part of Jamaica's growing Rastafarian movement and a key member of Marley's inner circle, helping to manage his rise as the next big thing in pop music. Cole not only toured with Marley as his manager and fitness coach, he is credited as writer of War,

one of the songs from Rastaman Vibration, the singer's 1976 album.

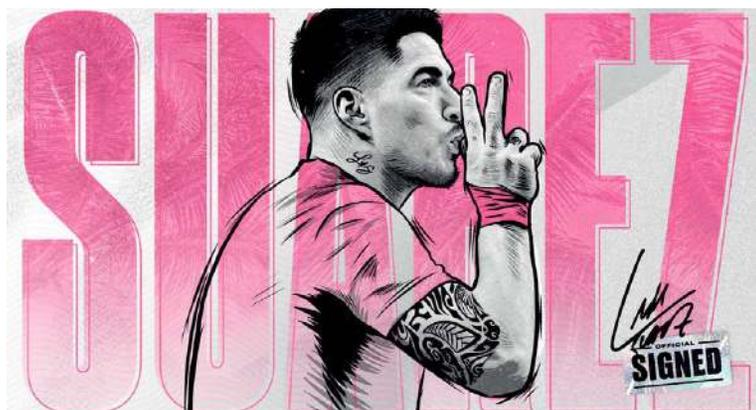
They were jogging in Central Park on September 21, 1980 when Marley suffered a seizure and collapsed. The remainder of his most ambitious US tour was cancelled two days later, after Marley performed at the Stanley Theatre in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Cole accompanied him to West Germany for radical cancer treatment from Dr. Josef Issels. Although he showed initial improvement, Marley's condition deteriorated by April, 1981 and he left West Germany for Miami where he died in May at age 36.

Skill Cole, who has written a manuscript about his personal and professional relationship with Marley, hopes to get it published soon.



## It Will Be Suárez And Messi For Inter Miami This Year



Luis Suárez artwork as released by Inter Miami following the signing. (Inter Miami image)

Long time soccer fans in South Florida are in for a treat next month. They will see Uruguayan forward Luis Suárez and Lionel Messi once more together, this time at Inter Miami's Feb. 21st Game against Real Salt Lake in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The 36-year-old striker arrived in Miami late last year on a one-year contract as a free agent, leaving behind his recent stint with Brazilian side Grêmio, where he made an impact in 53 games across all competitions last season, scoring 26 goals.

Suárez's remarkable 17 league goals were instrumental in leading Grêmio to a second-place finish in Brazil's Serie A, earning him the prestigious Golden Ball as the division's standout player. He embarks on a new journey with a one-year contract at Miami, extending his stay through the 2024 season.

Luis Suárez joins a star-studded lineup at MLS's Inter Miami. "We've committed to our supporters to attract the finest talents globally, aiming to assemble a team capable of competing at the pinnacle of football in the Americas," said Jorge Mas, managing owner of Inter Miami, in a club statement.

"After a season of accolades in Brazil, Luis is poised to be a vital part of our squad. Our ambitions are high, and we continually chase the dream of achieving greatness."

This transition to Miami, cutting short his two-year deal with Grêmio, marks a reunion for Suárez with former Barcelona colleagues Messi, Jordi Alba, and Sergio Busquets. Together, from 2014 to 2020, they celebrated four LaLiga triumphs and a Champions League victory at Camp Nou.

"I'm incredibly excited and motivated for this new chapter with Inter Miami," Suárez shared. "I'm eager to start and committed to contributing to this Club's aspirations of winning more titles. I'm confident in our collective potential. I'm dedicated to bringing joy to the incredible fan base of Inter Miami while proudly wearing the team's colors. I look forward to reconnecting with familiar faces and meeting all my new teammates and coaches."

Despite a career shadowed by controversies, including accusations of racism and multiple bans for biting opponents, Suárez's goal-scoring

pro prowess remains undeniable, marking him as one of football's elite strikers.

Inter Miami, meanwhile, is scheduled to face Al Hilal from the Saudi Pro League in a preseason match on January 29th

in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Neymar Jr., another former Barcelona teammate, joined Al Hilal but is currently nursing a knee injury. The team will also play against Saudi club Al-Nassir, which features Cristiano Ronaldo,

Messi's renowned rival, in a preseason game on February 1st in Riyadh.

- Rewritten from CMC





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