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(Jimmy Cliff PR image)



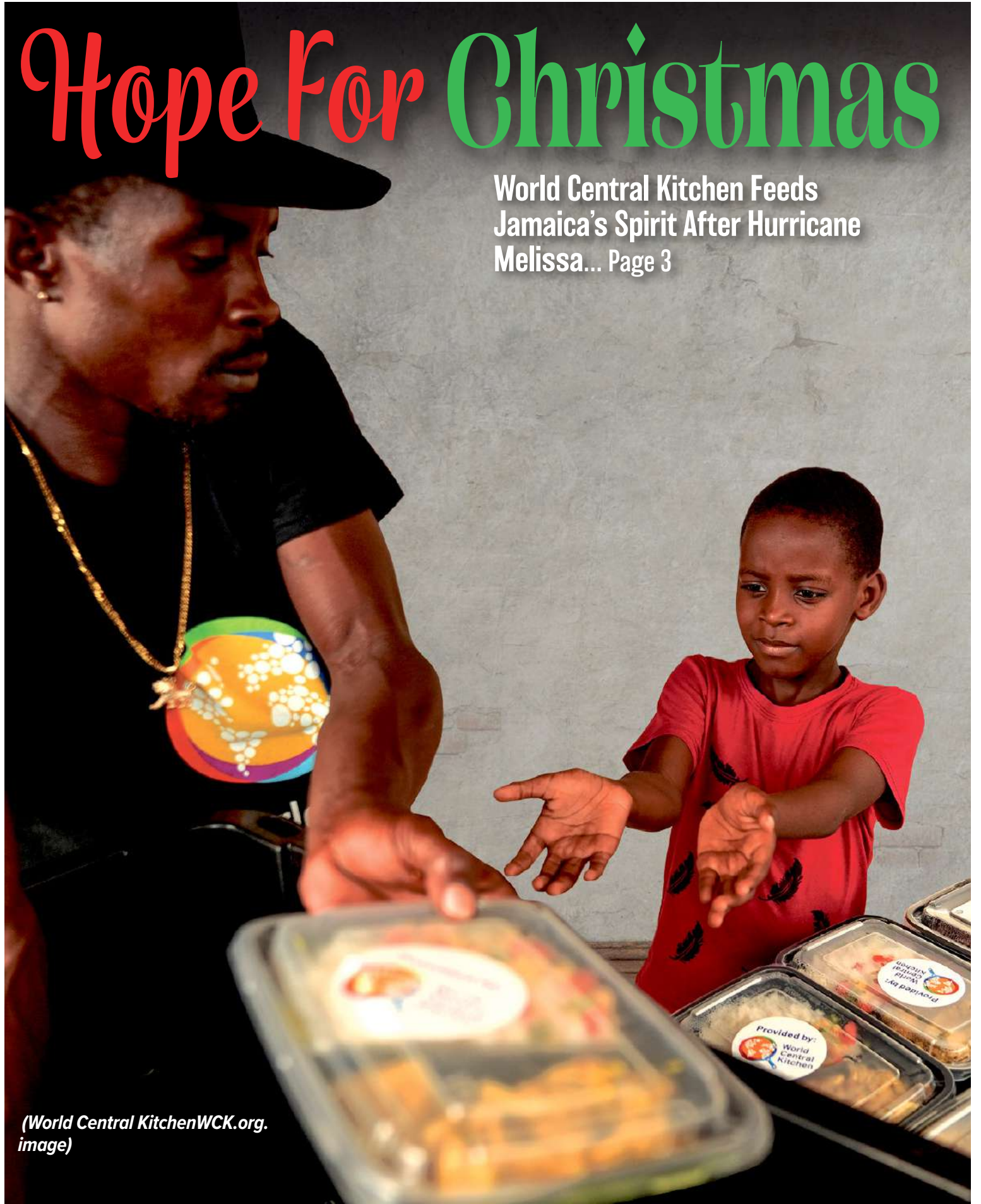
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(World Central KitchenWCK.org.
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Here Are Some Of The Top Headlines Making Caribbean News This Week:

REGIONAL

The Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Albert Ramdin has urged Venezuela and the United States to avoid escalating tensions and to pursue diplomacy instead, stressing that the Western Hemisphere must remain a “zone of peace.”

“I hope that both countries, Venezuela and the United States, restrain themselves and ensure that whatever other path can be found - diplomatically, through negotiations - becomes the priority,” Ramdin said.

“We don’t want any war in our hemisphere. Peace is what everybody in this hemisphere wants. Nobody gains from a war.”

Speaking during a wide-ranging “Dialogue for the Americas” interview with Trinidad-based journalist Wesley Gibbings, Ramdin said the region must safeguard unity and advance a consensus-driven agenda.

HAITI

Fritz Alphonse Jean, economist and member of Haiti’s Presidential Transitional Council, (TPC), has confirmed that he is the unnamed Haitian official hit with U.S. visa restrictions for allegedly supporting gangs and criminal networks in the country.

The U.S. State Department announced earlier this week that the sanctioned official had obstructed Haiti’s efforts to combat terrorist-designated gangs - an accusation Jean strongly denies.

Jean, a former central bank



Guyana’s We Invest In Nationhood, (WIN) Leader, Azruddin Mohamed, and supporters outside Parliament Building shortly after an extradition request court hearing on Nov. 24, 2025. (Facebook image).

governor and onetime rotating president of the TPC, told reporters he has “no connection whatsoever with any gang” and claimed the sanctions stem from political pressure linked to the Council’s consideration of replacing Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé.

The State Department, however, maintains its stance, saying it will revoke any valid visas held by the sanctioned official. The broader U.S. policy - announced in 2022 - targets individuals and family members who financially or materially support Haitian gangs. Haiti’s transitional authorities are under pressure to organize general elections next year, with tentative dates set for August and December. The announcement follows recent U.S. Treasury sanctions against individuals linked to the Viv Ansanm gang alliance, including Dimitri Herard and gang leader

Kempes Sanon, as part of an ongoing crackdown on Haitian criminal networks.

JAMAICA

Fitch Ratings has affirmed Jamaica’s Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating at ‘BB-’, but revised the outlook to stable from positive, citing the severe economic impact of Hurricane Melissa. The October 28 storm left 42 people dead and caused an estimated US\$9 billion in damage - roughly 30% of GDP, according to preliminary government figures.

Fitch now expects Jamaica’s economy to contract by 1.5% in 2025, with only a modest 1.8% rebound in 2026, as key sectors such as tourism, agriculture and mining face prolonged disruptions. Tourism revenue alone could fall 15% in both 2025 and 2026. The agency said the shock will

halt Jamaica’s decade-long debt reduction progress, projecting the fiscal balance to swing to a 3.2% deficit in FY2025 following last year’s surplus. Debt-to-GDP is expected to rise to 68% by 2026.

Still, Fitch noted Jamaica’s strong fiscal track record and significant buffers – including US\$250 million in contingency funds, multilateral credit lines, and up to US\$2.5 billion in insured losses - which support the stable outlook.

GUYANA

We Invest in Nationhood (WIN) leader, Azruddin Mohamed, says he will file legal action against House Speaker Manzoor Nadir, accusing him of failing to convene a meeting of opposition MPs to elect him Opposition Leader.

“We have to move to the court,” Mohamed told reporters last week, adding he has little confidence the Speaker intends to act. WIN holds 16 opposition seats, APNU 12, and the Forward Guyana Movement one. Until the matter is resolved, Mohamed said he will “continue doing my work as the presumptive Opposition Leader.”

Speaker Nadir did not respond to calls or messages, and Clerk of the National Assembly Sherlock Isaacs said he had not been informed of any upcoming meeting. Mohamed’s attorney, Siand Dhurjohn, said he has begun preparing legal proceedings ahead of an ultimatum that expired on Dec. 1st.

The Guyana government has maintained that Mohamed’s election as an MP - or even as Opposition Leader - would not shield him from extradition to the United States, where he faces charges of wire fraud, mail fraud, and money laundering. Mohamed insisted his extradition fight will take years: “You just can’t extradite someone like that.”

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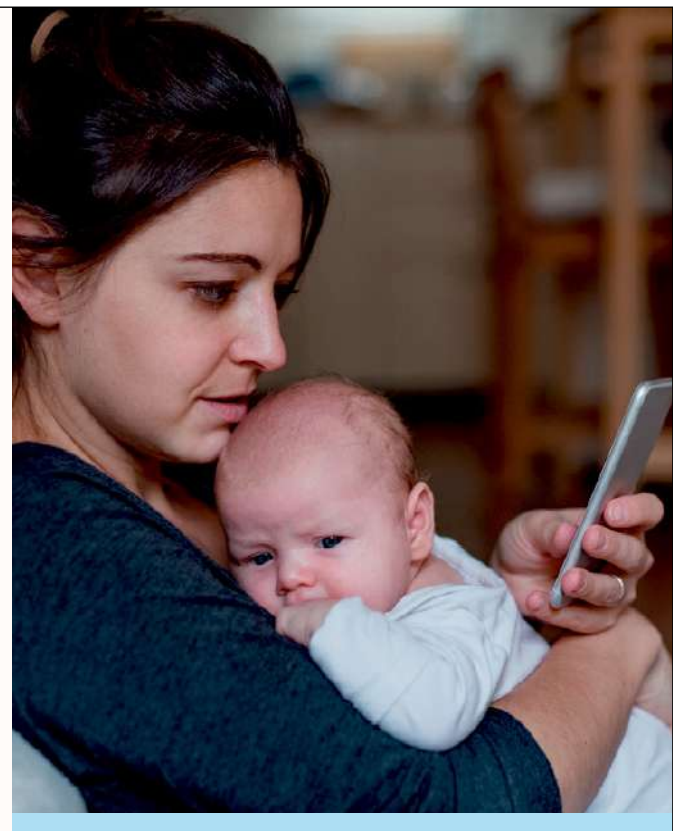
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Hope For Christmas: World Central Kitchen Feeds Jamaica's Spirit After Hurricane Melissa

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL
Edited by Felicia J. Persaud

One month after Hurricane Melissa ravaged Jamaica, the country is still counting the losses - the lives cut short, the homes submerged, the farms and businesses wiped away. Nightly newscasts and front pages continue to show the faces of the exhausted, the displaced and the grieving. Yet, woven through the grief are powerful stories of kindness, resilience and the human spirit at its most generous.

On the ground in the hardest-hit parishes, one organization has become a daily source of survival: World Central Kitchen, (WCK). Founded by renowned chef José Andrés, WCK has been in Jamaica since before the Category 5 hurricane made landfall on October 28th - 29th. As of this week, the organization has served over two million meals, working in partnership with 30 Jamaican restaurants to feed thousands of storm victims every day.

Western Jamaica - particularly Hanover, St. James, Westmoreland, St. Elizabeth, and adjoining parishes - absorbed the full force of Melissa's 185 miles-per-hour winds. The storm caused 45 deaths, left thousands homeless, and destroyed schools, hospitals, farms, and entire

communities. The scale of destruction is unlike anything Jamaica has experienced in decades.

For many survivors, WCK has become their most dependable source of nourishment and hope.

Richard Vernon, the mayor of Montego Bay, praised WCK's lifesaving work and the dedication of its teams. "St. James (parish) has benefited significantly from that number, and we continue to look towards the World Central Kitchen for the assistance with persons in need right across the municipality," he said.

Vernon also extended thanks to volunteers and donors who have kept the mission operational.

"We encourage persons to continue to contribute to their initiative because it is serving a very good purpose for the greater good," he added.

A Christmas Mission In Motion

According to WCK, its



World Central Kitchen founder and renowned Chef José Andrés, helping on the ground in Jamaica. (Photo credit: World Central Kitchen/WCK.org)

crews began mobilizing before the hurricane struck - knowing the storm had the potential to be catastrophic. Once the hurricane passed, their field teams were already set up across the island, ready to begin feeding communities immediately.

A statement on WCK's website notes: "We are now providing 20,000 hot meals each day across the hardest-hit parishes: Hanover, St. James, Westmoreland, St. Elizabeth, Manchester, Clarendon, and Trelawny." John Torpey, WCK's response director in Jamaica, told

Caribbean Today that the team is focused on both survival and economic revival.

"We are primarily providing hot meals to communities hardest hit here in Jamaica, but we have also been providing large quantities of drinking water, fruit and snacks like patties and buns which are local favorites." He added that investing in the island's recovery is key: "We buy

build back their business and is another great way to stimulate the recovery."

Chef Corps member Michelle Rosseau said she has been inspired by the Jamaican workers who show up each day despite dealing with their own losses.

"I am once again reminded of the unbreakable spirit, creativity and resilience of the



Singer Sean Paul lends a hand to help cook a giant vat of curry chicken at a WCK kitchen in Jamaica. (Photo credit: World Central Kitchen/WCK.org)

locally as much as we can and hire locally to help stimulate the economy. We are also partnering with local restaurants to provide meals. It is extremely important to WCK that we keep investment in the local economy as they

Jamaican people," she said. "I have worked with incredible locals in both Montego Bay and Negril who are living under very difficult circumstances.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

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Miami Families Relieved Family Members In Jamaica Alive

BY DAVID L. SNELLING
Edited By Felicia J. Persaud

Two families in Miami are breathing a sigh of relief after their Jamaican relatives, who went missing in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa, have been found safe and sound.

Initially, not being able to hear from their relatives since the hurricane, some Jamaican Americans in Miami feared the worst.

Kimali Stephen said her 85-year-old father, Albert Stephen, a retired Jamaican military veteran, was missing after the storm and she didn't know if he's still alive.

She said she hasn't spoken to him yet but he posted a video on social media to let his family in Miami know he was safe.

"He said he needs water and food," she said. "His home is still standing strong. I can't wait to talk to him."

She said her father moved to Argyle Mountain, a quiet community in Jamaica's Westmoreland parish, when he retired.

The area was among the hardest hit communities during

the hurricane.

Broward County resident Mattie Adamson told the Caribbean Today that her 58-year-old sister Sue Ann Bernard was also missing after Melissa struck the Caribbean nation, sparking concern and agony.

But she said her sister was able to send out a text that she was okay but home sustained some damage.

She said Bernard lives in Manchester, a parish community located in west-central Jamaica, which was also hit hard by Hurricane Melissa.

"What a relief and thank god," she said.

Not hearing from her sister for days, Adamson said it's been many sleepless nights for her not knowing her whereabouts.

"I prayed so many times for her safety," said Adamson, a retired correction officer. "I called her phone but there was no answer."

Both Stephen and Adamson reported their relatives missing to Jamaican authorities and checked the official disaster relief and recovery portal for updates on their loved one's safety and the



L-r: Kimali Stephen and her 85-year-old father Albert Stephen. (Facebook images)



recovery efforts.

All they could do was wait and hope for the best.

"My dad and I are very close. 'We talk every couple of days. But this? I can't sleep,'" Stephen said on social media while her father was still missing.

She said she lost her mother to cancer when she was 13 years old, and her father raised her since.

"He's all of got," Stephen

said.

Stephen decided to participate in relief efforts for Jamaica including a donation drive at the southwest corner of N.W. 7th Avenue and 48 Street in Miami.

She's collecting food, medical supplies and clothing for those impacted by Hurricane Melissa and she plans to travel to the Caribbean island soon.

Stephen said she can't wait to see her father.

Adamson is also doing her part to help those in need with a donation drive at her church, which has a large Caribbean population.

She said other church members who have family members in Jamaica are also planning a trip to the Caribbean nation to help out their loved ones.

"The hurricane really hurt the people," she said. "We want to help."

The Category 5 storm wrecked some USD 8.8 billion in damage on the Caribbean, which is equivalent to about 32 percent of the country's gross domestic project for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Additionally, the Jamaican government reported the death toll was 45.

Hundreds of homes, businesses and vehicles were destroyed, streets flooded, bridges washed out; mudslides triggered and power lines toppled, which led to no power and phone or internet services. Many are struggling to survive day to day and worry about how to rebuild their lives.



US Joint Chiefs Chairman Meets Trinidad PM Amid Heightened Regional Security Concerns

Regional security and the growing threat of transnational organized crime were at the center of a nearly two-hour closed-door meeting last Tuesday between Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and General Dan Caine, Chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The high-level talks, held at the Diplomatic Centre in St. Ann's, were described as "excellent" by the Prime Minister. Statements from the U.S. Embassy, the Office of the Prime Minister, and the U.S. military emphasized a shared focus on countering illicit narcotics, arms trafficking, and the activities of transnational criminal networks destabilizing the region.

But several aspects of the visit - including its timing and limited advance notice - have raised questions from the Opposition and a former military commander, who are calling for greater transparency given ongoing U.S. military operations in the Southern Caribbean.

General Caine arrived at Piarco International Airport early Nov. 25th aboard an official U.S. Air Force Boeing aircraft. He was escorted under heavy security to the U.S. Embassy in Port of Spain and later to the Diplomatic Centre, where he met privately with Persad-Bissessar. Security for the visit included the TTPS Special Branch,



US General Dan Caine, Chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff and T&T Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar share the famous T&T doubles. (Facebook image)

the National Operations Task Force, (NOTF), the Traffic and Highway Patrol Branch, and U.S. Diplomatic Security Services, (DSS).

The Trinidad visit followed a similar stop in Puerto Rico on Nov. 24th, where Caine met with U.S. troops amid a buildup of US warships and fighter jets in the region. It also came one day after the U.S. State Department designated Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro as a member of the Foreign Terrorist Organization "Cartel de los Soles," intensifying regional tensions.

Doubles Before Departure

Public Utilities Minister and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister Barry Padarath

shared a lighter moment from the visit, posting a photo of General Caine and Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar enjoying a local meal. Padarath said the U.S. military chief had told the Prime Minister he had heard about Trinidad and Tobago's famed "doubles" and the nation's liming culture. In response, the Prime Minister arranged a "hot on the spot" doubles tasting before his departure, giving the visiting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff a quick introduction to the country's beloved street food.

General Caine departed Trinidad shortly before 1 p.m., concluding a brief but closely watched trip that underscored Washington's deepening security engagement in the Caribbean.



Hope For Christmas: World Central Kitchen Feeds Jamaica's Spirit After Hurricane Melissa

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

And every morning the team is there on time (from as early as 4 a.m. in some cases) with a great attitude and a willingness to work till we are done."

She added that despite "highly limited conditions," the local team continues with: "...a smile and an innate sense of joy and just plain old 'good vibes.'"

Rosseau said the shared mission has revealed a deep unity: "It has reaffirmed my belief that we are all far more alike than we are different - no matter where we come from!"

No End Date - But Likely Through Christmas

WCK has not set a departure date, though the team expects to remain in Jamaica at least until Christmas - making this relief effort not only critical, but profoundly symbolic during the holiday season. For many who have lost everything, a hot meal delivered by caring hands is the closest thing they may have to Christmas comfort this year.

CARICOM Leaders Join The Effort

On November 17th, Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness - in his role as chairman of CARICOM - led a high-level tour of the areas most devastated by Melissa. The delegation included:

- Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley
- Guyana President Dr. Irfaan Ali

- Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne
- Grenada Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell
- CARICOM Secretary-General Carla Barnett
- IDB President Ilan Goldfajn

The Caribbean neighbors pledged support:

Barbados: field hospital and garbage trucks

Guyana: Defence Force engineers, rebuilding assistance, and 200 roofs

These efforts complement the work of WCK and local volunteers - forming a multilayered response to one of the worst natural disasters in Jamaica's modern history.

A Christmas Defined By Compassion

In a season typically defined by feasting and family gatherings, thousands of Jamaican families will instead spend Christmas rebuilding their lives. But because of organizations like WCK, the kindness of volunteers, and the generosity of global supporters, they will not face it alone.

WCK founder Chef José Andrés has long said that food is not just nourishment - it is hope.

And this Christmas, in the hills, shelters, and devastated communities of western Jamaica, that hope is arriving one hot meal at a time.



Late Jamaica Consul General To New York To Be Funeralized December 5th

The late Mrs. Alston Marie Wilson, CD, Jamaica's former Consul General to New York, will be funeralized on Friday, December 5th, with a Thanksgiving Service scheduled for 11 a.m. at Community Baptist Church in Englewood, New Jersey.

Wilson, who led the Consulate General from 2019 until her passing, was widely admired for her deep commitment to Jamaica and its Diaspora community across the northeastern United States.

In honor of her life and service, the Consulate General will open a Book of Condolence from Monday, December 1st to Wednesday, December 3rd, between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., at its offices at 300 East 42nd Street, Manhattan.

A Candlelight Reflection will also be held on Wednesday, December 3rd at 6:00 p.m. Due to limited capacity, in-person attendance will be first-come, first-served, with virtual streaming options to be announced.

As a mark of respect, the



Mrs. Alston Marie Wilson, CD, Jamaica's former Consul General to New York, will be laid to rest on Friday, December 5th in New Jersey. (Contributed image)

Consulate General will be closed to the public on December 5th to allow staff and community members to attend the funeral. Attendees will be subject to heightened security and are encouraged to arrive early.

Wilson, who was recently conferred with the Order of Distinction (Commander Class), had an accomplished career in international finance before entering diplomatic service. Born in St. Catherine, she migrated

to the United States and later held senior roles at Bear Stearns, Greylock Capital Management, and her own firm, The Alston Roach Group. She also founded cybersecurity company Cyberlock Solutions.

Appointed Consul General in 2019, Wilson oversaw Jamaica's interests across 33 U.S. states, Puerto Rico, and Bermuda, championing diaspora engagement, trade, investment, and modernization of consular services. She also chaired the CARICOM Consular Corps in New York.

Jamaica's Minister of Health Dr. Christopher Tufton was among those paying tribute, calling her passing "a deep and personal loss."

"You showed what true public service looks like," he wrote. "Your dedication, professionalism and compassion touched countless lives."

Mrs. Wilson is survived by her husband, Omar, and her children, Brian and Vanessa.



St. Vincent Opposition Sweeps To Power After 24 Years

After nearly a quarter-century in opposition, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' New Democratic Party, (NDP), has swept to a decisive victory, ending the long rule of Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves and the Unity Labour Party.

NDP leader Dr. Godwin Friday is set to become the country's new prime minister after the party secured 14 of the 15 elected seats on Nov. 27th, marking one of the most significant political shifts in the nation's recent history.

Friday's win signals the closure of an era dominated by Gonsalves since 2001 and reflects growing public demand for new leadership focused on cost of living, job opportunities, youth development, and climate resilience.

Regional leaders quickly offered congratulations. Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness praised the peaceful transition, calling it "an important moment for the Vincentian people... a new chapter of hope, unity, and progress."

The Vincentian Diaspora — especially in the U.S., U.K., and Canada — has welcomed the result, with expectations high for modernization of government services, stronger disaster preparedness, and deeper regional collaboration.

Friday now faces major challenges, including rising living costs, climate vulnerability, and stalled economic diversification, but he enters office with a rare and resounding mandate for change. A long-serving MP for the Northern Grenadines since 2001, Friday is one of the country's most academically accomplished leaders, holding a Ph.D. in Political Studies from Queen's University in Canada.

His election marks not just a change in government, but the beginning of a new political chapter for the small Caribbean nation - and a powerful reminder of the region's democratic strength.

- *NewsAmericasNow.com*



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NEWS

Jamaican Embassy, Diaspora & Southwest Airlines Team Up To Deliver Hurricane Relief Supplies

Nearly US\$30,000 worth of hurricane relief supplies was shipped to Jamaica on November 8, thanks to a coordinated effort involving the Embassy of Jamaica in Washington, D.C., the Montgomery County Council, Southwest Airlines, and Jamaican diaspora groups across the DC–Maryland–Virginia, (DMV) region.

The supplies - destined for communities hardest hit by Hurricane Melissa - were transported via a Southwest Airlines cargo flight from Baltimore/Washington International Airport to Montego Bay's Sangster International Airport.

Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States, Major General (Ret'd) Antony Anderson, was present for the first of several planned shipments and praised the partnership and the diaspora's rapid mobilization.

"The Government and people of Jamaica are deeply grateful for this support," Anderson said, adding that every contribution "reflects solidarity and compassion" as the island recovers from the Category 5



Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States, Major General (Ret'd) Antony Anderson joined with volunteers in packing relief supplies at the embassy of Jamaica main sorting hub at the Silver Spring Civic Building Veterans Plaza in downtown Silver Spring, Maryland. (Contributed image)

storm.

More than 40 volunteers assisted with sorting and packing at the main hub located at the Silver Spring Civic Building in Maryland. Students from Howard University, Georgetown University, UDC, the RalRosa Foundation, Caribbean nationals, and wider community allies

participated.

There are 18 drop-off locations in the DMV and over 100 more nationwide, with additional shipments expected later this week as donations continue to arrive.



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Jamaican Consulate Secures Philadelphia Warehouse For Hurricane Relief; CHOP & Delta Sigma Theta Deliver Critical Medical Aid



Honorary Consul of Jamaica in Philadelphia, Christopher Chaplin, 2nd from r., with CHOP and NJGCAC representatives. (Contributed image)

The Jamaican Consulate in Philadelphia has secured a dedicated warehouse from the City of Philadelphia to support Hurricane Melissa relief efforts, as local partners - including The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, (CHOP), and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated - mobilize urgently needed supplies for impacted communities in Jamaica.

The Oct. 28th Category 5 storm devastated western Jamaica, particularly the parishes of St. Elizabeth, Westmoreland, Hanover and St. James, prompting a surge of humanitarian efforts from the Diaspora and allies across Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey.

City Of Philadelphia Provides Critical Warehouse Space

In the days leading up to and following the hurricane, the Consulate established multiple drop-off sites across the region. Rapidly filled collection centers created an urgent need for expanded storage.

Honorary Consul of Jamaica in Philadelphia, Christopher Chaplin, secured warehouse space at 4000 New American Street following a meeting with Philadelphia Mayor Cherelle Parker, with support from Donovan West, the Mayor's Director of Business Roundtables.

Chaplin thanked the City for its swift partnership. "Mayor Parker did not hesitate to assure our community of her administration's support during this critical time," he said.

Information on additional drop-off sites and donation options can be found at: <https://www.jamaicaconsulatephiladelphia.com/>

Chop & Delta Sigma Theta Deliver Essential Medical Supplies

In a parallel effort, CHOP and the New Jersey Garden City Alumnae Chapter, (NJGCAC) of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, have collected and prepared pallets of medical equipment for shipment to Jamaica - supplies urgently needed at the Bustamante Hospital for Children.

The initiative was led by Dr. Shedia R. Laguer, Chair of NJGCAC's International Awareness & Involvement Committee, and Soror Yvette Pruitt, with support from Honorary Consul Chaplin. Dr. Laguer, also a CHOP employee, facilitated the partnership.

Delta Sigma Theta's international outreach program emphasizes global humanitarian action - values reflected in the collaboration.

Leadership guidance from CHOP's David Keifetz was instrumental in converting the initial idea into a fully coordinated relief mission.

"This collaboration demonstrates the profound impact we can achieve when institutions and community organizations unite with purpose," said NJGCAC President Soror Tishara Brickus-Landi.

Both CHOP and NJGCAC expressed gratitude to volunteers, partners and donors who contributed supplies and logistical support. As Jamaica continues its recovery, Philadelphia's Jamaican community and its allies reaffirm their commitment to providing sustained assistance in the weeks ahead.



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South Florida Schools Bleed Students As Housing Costs, Immigration Fears Rise

BY DAVID L. SNELLING

Student enrollment for Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach county school districts is on a sharp decline as the year comes to an end, triggered by an exodus due to cost of living increases, deportation and undocumented immigrants keeping their kids home to avoid being sent back to their home countries.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the third largest district in the nation, has reported roughly 13,000 fewer students for the current year compared to last year, and could lose millions of dollars in federal and state funding.

This year's numbers reflect 236,519 in student enrollment while the previous record was 248,949 students. The district is already facing a \$20 million budget shortfall and enrollment decline means less federal and state money, as public schools are funded on a per-pupil basis.

Broward County Public Schools are also facing a significant challenge due to a sharp drop in student enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year. The sixth-largest district in the U.S. has lost approximately 8,000 students this year and 35,000 in the past decade, as Superintendent Dr. Howard Hepburn and school board members are debating whether to close 34 schools between 2026-2027.

In October, the Palm Beach School district reported the student population for elementary, middle and high schools is down by 6,094 compared to last year,

jeopardizing an estimated \$40 million in state funding.

School officials said President Donald Trump's sweeping immigration crackdown and families relocating to other cities are driving students away. Immigrant parents are afraid to send their kids to school, fearing they will be targeted during ICE raids.

To be on the safe side, some parents have enrolled their kids in homeschooling, which falls under the umbrella of private schools or private tutors to teach kids at home.

According to Miami-Dade County Public Schools, roughly 2,550 students this year are from other countries, which is down from nearly 14,000 last year, and more than 20,000 in 2023. The school district oversees more than 400 schools with a majority Hispanic population, according to the Florida Department of Education.

Miami-Dade School Board Vice Chairman Dr. Steve Gallon III said Trump's immigration crackdown operation is taking a toll on student enrollment. He said his district, which includes Miami Gardens and Opa-locka, constitutes a large Caribbean population.

"Federal immigration is posing some concerns for families," he said. "We are seeing the impact now and moving forward by setting a comfort level for those families."

But according to USA Today, the Trump administration asserted there weren't any immigration raids at public schools in the United States since the president launched



Superintendent Dr. Howard Hepburn and school board members are debating whether to close 34 schools by 2026-2027.

his crackdown operation when he returned to office. Yet, immigration officials attempted this year to enter two public elementary schools in California to interview students.

County Schools officials reported that no immigration officials visited any of the schools but parents didn't want to take any chances and kept their kids home. "Students should feel safe in schools," said Broward County School Board Chair Debbi Hixon in a statement. "We live in a world where they don't. We have active shooter and lockdown drills once a month. To add that as an additional concern for safety is disheartening. I feel very un-American."

Miami-Dade Public Schools Superintendent Jose Dotres said during his presentation at the start of the school year that student population decline could not be directly attributed to immigration enforcement. But he said parents who moved out

of South Florida because of the cost of living increases included undocumented immigrants.

Gallon said South Florida's housing crisis is driving families out of the state.

"For families living in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties, we are facing a housing crisis," said Gallon. "They can't afford to live in South Florida and move out of the county and even the state."

According to Salary.com, Miami's 2025 cost of living is \$2904 per month for singles and \$6396 per month for families of four. Living costs in Miami are 17 percent higher than the U.S. national average and 76.8 percent higher than Florida's

state average, which reflects a 3 percent increase from 2024. The primary drivers of Miami's cost of living are soaring housing costs, elevated transportation expenses, and rising food prices.

For Broward County, renting two-bedroom apartment costs about \$1,950 per month, which is 29.4 percent more than the national average of \$1,430 and 15.7 percent than the state average of \$1,560. To live comfortably in Broward County, you would need to earn a minimum annual income of \$75,600 for a family, and \$59,200 for a single person.

Over the past five years, the median sales price of a house in Palm Beach County has risen by about 20% and is now about \$510,000. The average rent of \$2,100 for a one-bedroom apartment in West Palm Beach is up by about 22% over that time and, according to national figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the cost of groceries rose by almost 25% from 2020 through 2024.

Salaries in some fields have come close to matching those rising costs. But income in many other households has not kept pace with rising costs, making less expensive locales outside Palm Beach County an increasingly attractive option.



Dale Holness Launches Congressional Bid In Florida's District 20



Jamaican immigrant Dale Holness will be challenging current Haitian American Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick of Florida's District 20 for the seat.

On the heels of the indictment of current Haitian American Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick of Florida's District 20, former Broward County Mayor Dale V.C. Holness has officially re-launched his campaign for the seat.

He is positioning himself as a veteran Democratic leader with decades of service to working families. Holness, a community organizer for more than 40 years, said his campaign is rooted in the same principles that have shaped his public career - listening to residents, expanding opportunity, and bringing resources back to underserved communities.

"Leadership isn't about titles - it's about taking action that changes lives," said Holness, who lost in his bid for the seat to Cherfilus-McCormick in 2021. "District 20 deserves a representative who shows up, delivers results, and understands the struggles our families face every day."

He cited the latest ALICE

Report showing 47% of Florida households struggling to afford basic needs - a figure even higher in District 20 - as a call to urgent action. "These aren't just statistics. These are our neighbors and family members," he said.

The Jamaican immigrant has said he doesn't dwell on the narrow loss in November 2021, which was decided after a drawn-out period of recounting, challenges and legal arguments. "My focus is on how do we deliver for people," Holness said.



Haitian American Congresswoman Says She Is Innocent

Haitian-American, Florida U.S. Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick is declaring her innocence on the heels of her indictment by a federal grand jury in Miami on charges alleging she and several co-defendants stole and laundered \$5 million in federal disaster funds.

"This is an unjust, baseless, sham indictment - and I am innocent," the South Florida Democrat said in a statement on Nov. 20th. "The timing alone is curious and clearly meant to distract from far more pressing national issues. From day one, I have fully cooperated with every lawful request... I remain confident that the truth will prevail."

But she will step aside from her leadership position on a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee "while the matter is ongoing," House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries' office said.

According to the Nov. 19th indictment, prosecutors

say Cherfilus-McCormick, 46, her brother Edwin Cherfilus, and others diverted a \$5 million FEMA overpayment made to their family's health-care company during a 2021 COVID-19 vaccination staffing contract. Officials allege the money was routed through multiple accounts to disguise its origin and that a significant portion was used to support Cherfilus-McCormick's 2021 congressional campaign and for personal expenses.

Prosecutors further allege that Cherfilus-McCormick and co-defendant Nadege Leblanc arranged additional campaign contributions using straw donors, directing FEMA-funded money through relatives and associates who then made donations under their own names.

The congresswoman and her 2021 tax preparer, David K. Spencer, are also accused of filing a false federal tax return by categorizing political and personal expenses as business deductions and inflating

charitable contributions.

Federal officials condemned the alleged misuse of emergency relief funds.

"Using disaster relief funds for self-enrichment is a particularly selfish, cynical crime," said Attorney General Pamela Bondi. "No one is above the law."

U.S. Attorney Jason A. Rusing Quinones added that the indictment reflects a "commitment to protect American taxpayers."

If convicted, Cherfilus-McCormick faces up to 53 years in prison. Her brother faces up to 35 years, Leblanc up to 10 years, and Spencer up to 33 years.

FBI Miami and IRS Criminal Investigation are leading the probe. Prosecutors emphasize that the indictment is an allegation and all defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

- NewsAmericasNow.com



A Christmas To Remember - Jamaican Immigrant Makes History As Miami Dade College Medical Campus President

BY DAVID L. SNELLING

This Christmas is one that Dr. Alwyn Leiba will certainly remember. His journey has taken him from the trenches in Kingston, Jamaica to the top hierarchy at Miami Dade College in a history-making appointment.

Dr. Leiba was recently named president of Miami Dade College's Medical Campus, marking the first a Black/Caribbean immigrant and one from Jamaica has been chosen to head the Miami site in the school's 48-year history.

Dr. Leiba, who earned a bachelor's degree in dental hygiene, previously served as interim president for a year and his leadership and camaraderie with students and staff secured the position permanently, according to Miami Dade College Board of Trustees.

Dr. Leiba, an alumna, was also an MDC associate professor, department chair and the Dean of the School of Health Sciences. As the new president, he will oversee 2,680 faculty members including instructional staff, 39,139 students seeking careers in the healthcare industry and a budget.

Dr. Leiba, 49, told the Caribbean Today his appointment wasn't much of a surprise since he served in that role for a year. But he's elated to be the top brass at the medical campus for the long haul.

"I have been with the college for over 15 years and the opportunity to serve as interim president prepared me for it," he said. "It's been a great ride and when team members are doing a good job, opportunities will come your way."

Dr. Leiba said becoming president at a school where he started out as a student is a dream well-founded. "Returning to the institution where my journey began is both an honor and a responsibility I deeply value," he said. "Miami Dade College has always been a place of opportunity and transformation, and I look forward to continuing our mission of preparing the next generation of healthcare professionals."

The U.S. Department of Education recognized Miami Dade College's Medical Campus for its commitment to providing quality education and training in health science.

The college has been involved in various initiatives and programs that contribute to the success of its students and the broader community.

Dr. Leiba said he plans to take the medical campus to new heights with the initiatives and resources he started as interim president. He said among his priorities is making sure students are meticulously prepared when they enter the workforce including providing new



Dr. Alwyn Leiba has made history as the first a Black/Caribbean immigrant and one from Jamaica to head the Miami Dade College Medical Campus. (Photo courtesy of Miami Dade College Medical Campus)

technology which is essential for careers in healthcare.

Dr. Leiba said he plans on keeping tabs on technology evolution that is galvanizing the nation including Artificial Intelligence. "Students will become leaders and success is making sure they are getting the best educational resources in order to be successful out there," Dr. Leiba said. "My goal is to make sure students are armed with skills to be successful."

Dr. Leiba noted that his Caribbean upbringing meticulously prepared him for leadership roles. Growing up in Kingston, Jamaica to a single parent, Dr. Leiba said he toiled for

years to build himself as a fierce leader and competitor.

He said he was taught to give it 100 percent effort each day despite not feeling up to the challenges on some occasions. "Even if you don't feel like it, you still give it 100 percent," said the new President. "You never look at someone, who's successful with jealousy while you are giving it all you got to get to that point. You never know what they went through to get there. My Jamaican culture strengthened me to excel and be the best that I can be and do."

Dr. Leiba's academic credentials include a Doctorate in Higher Education Leadership from Northcentral University, an MBA in Healthcare Management from American Intercontinental University, a bachelor's degree in dental Hygiene from St. Petersburg College, and an associate degree in dental Hygiene from Miami Dade College.

He also broke racial barriers when he became the first Black person to serve as president of both the Florida Dental Hygienists' Association and the South Florida Dental Hygienists' Association. As president of both organizations, Dr. Leiba said he discovered a disparity with dental care and healthcare between the wealthy and impoverished populations.

So, he decided to bring more

awareness to the less fortunate on the importance of dental service which is crucial to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. He said lack of information and resources was at the bottom of the healthcare disparity.

"Vital information and resources are out there to support dental care at clinics for reduced rates," he said. "People don't have to go to the emergency room because it is expensive. We can tap into our resources within our county and state for affordable dental and healthcare."

Dr. Leiba also serves as chair of the Association of Florida Colleges Healthcare Education Commission. He helped launch programs designed to meet critical workforce demands across South Florida's healthcare sector.

Dr. Leiba said he hopes his journey inspires others who are traveling down a similar road. "Use me as a model but wait for the ending results," he said. "As a father, a man, a minority, I hope my experience will be a blessing to somebody."



From Sargassum To Oxford: Resa B. Nelson Is Turning Caribbean Problems Into Global Solutions

When Antigua's Resa B. Nelson, 26 first stepped into a biology lab at Hofstra University, she had no idea that the Caribbean crisis she grew up witnessing – mountains of odorous sargassum swallowing beaches across the region – would become the foundation of groundbreaking research that would ultimately send her to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar.

What began as a regional environmental nuisance has transformed into the launchpad for one of the Caribbean's most promising young scientific minds.

Nelson, 21, is the second Rhodes Scholar ever selected from Antigua and one of only nine finalists representing the Commonwealth Caribbean. Her journey, however, is deeply rooted in home – in the seaweed that continues to choke the coasts of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Jamaica, and much of the wider region.

Under the mentorship of Hofstra Biology Professor Dr. Javier Izquierdo, Nelson began researching how sargassum – the same brown algae that fuels tourism complaints – could be converted into biofuels and other bioproducts. What most Caribbean governments still view as a waste management nightmare, Nelson approached as a potential renewable energy source.

"Hofstra has given me

the technical skills and mental fortitude to pursue the work I want to do in the world," she said. "And the research I hope to continue beyond Hofstra."

Her curiosity and discipline opened doors far beyond Nassau Hall.

Nelson spent the summer of 2024 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, examining how T-cells detect cancerous cells. The following summer, she delved into neuroscience at the University of California Irvine, exploring how glycosylation genes affect brain function.

But it is her Caribbean-centered research – turning sargassum into energy – that most clearly positions her to help solve one of the region's most urgent climate challenges.

For Nelson, discovery is joy. "I just love cell biology," she laughed. "If I'm in a tissue culture room... that's a perfect day."

Her professors say that love of discovery is matched only by her commitment to purpose.

"Resa is an outstanding student, but even more important, she's an outstanding person," said Dr. Izquierdo. "Her service, leadership, and research all come together. That made her a fantastic Rhodes candidate."

Nelson's selection also reflects a growing reality: the Caribbean is producing a new

generation of scientists who see climate change not as an abstract problem, but as a daily lived experience requiring home-grown solutions.

For Nelson, that mission is personal.

Growing up in St. Peter, she watched sargassum wash into Antigua's northern shoreline year after year – damaging fisheries, suffocating beaches, and threatening coastal ecosystems. Her research represents a shift in thinking: instead of treating sargassum as waste, treat it as a resource.

A challenge can become a solution.

A crisis can become an opportunity.

And a region can produce the innovators needed to lead that shift.

Her path to Oxford also carries symbolic weight. Nelson once performed at Christ Church as part of the Antigua & Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra. The institution's historical ties to colonialism pushed her to imagine what it would mean for a young Caribbean woman to study there on her own terms.

"If the labor of my forefathers and foremothers helped build that institution," she reflected, "it would be meaningful for me to learn there."

At Oxford, Nelson plans to continue her work at the

intersection of biology, climate science, and renewable energy – work that could directly impact the Caribbean's future.

Beyond the lab, she mentors middle school students, tutors struggling learners, and holds tightly to the faith-driven principle of service her father instilled in her.

"My research is how I serve," she said. "It's how I plan to contribute to the world in a meaningful way."

With Hofstra recently earning the R2 research designation from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, Nelson's achievement also signals the rising strength of university-supported innovation coming out of immigrant communities and small island states.

And if her mentors are correct, this is only the beginning.

"I wouldn't be surprised," Dr. Izquierdo said, "if one day we're talking about Resa not only as a Rhodes Scholar, but as a corporate leader or even a Nobel Prize winner."

From the shores of Antigua to the laboratories of Oxford, Nelson is proving that the Caribbean doesn't just face climate problems – it can produce the scientists who solve them.

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Who Exactly Are These “Third World” Countries Trump Says He’s Banning Now?

Let’s talk about this new phrase Donald Trump has resurrected from the graveyard of outdated Cold War language: “Third World countries.”

A term the world has long abandoned for being racist, colonial and ignorant is now back in circulation - courtesy of the President of the United States - as he pushes a promise to “permanently pause migration from all Third World countries.”

But who is he talking about? Spoiler: It’s not Europe.

Trump rolled out this latest scare tactic after the tragic shooting of two National Guard service members in Washington, D.C., allegedly by an Afghan immigrant, Rahmanullah Lakanwal - a man who, ironically, had once worked with the CIA, guarded U.S. forces at Kabul airport and risked his life as part of the U.S.-funded Kandahar Strike Force.

But nuance has never been the strong suit of an administration determined to paint every immigrant of color as a terrorist-in-waiting.

Within hours, Trump declared a full stop on immigration from “Third World countries,” while his appointees scrambled to produce policy to support his rhetoric.

USCIS quickly issued guidance authorizing officers to use “country-specific negative factors” when vetting immigrants from 19 so-called high-risk nations - all of them, by the way, non-white, non-European countries. They are: Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela.

Not a single white-majority country made the list. Imagine that.

USCIS Director Joseph Edlow claimed that former President Joe Biden, spent “four years dismantling basic vetting” - which is false on its face - and declared that Trump’s approach will now prioritize American lives.

Yet, here’s what’s missing from Trump’s angry declarations:

The suspect was already vetted - repeatedly - by the CIA

and U.S. intelligence before being granted entry.

The U.S. recruited him.

The U.S. trained him.

The U.S. relied on him.

The U.S. brought him here.

But instead of questioning America’s own intelligence failures or the mental health toll of war - Trump is blaming 19 countries and millions of brown and Black people who had nothing to do with this shooting.

And while he was at it, he also announced plans to:

- End birthright citizenship,
- End all federal benefits for noncitizens,
- Re-examine thousands of existing green cards issued to immigrants from those 19 countries,
- And suspend all Afghan immigration entirely.

The UN had to remind Trump - again - that the United States is party to the Refugee Convention and cannot just deport people into danger.

But Trump’s anti-immigrant rhetoric doesn’t stop at Afghans. Haitian immigrants are the next target.

This week, the administration moved to terminate Temporary Protected Status, (TPS), for over 500,000 Haitians, effective February 3, 2026.

These are people who have lived in the U.S. for over a decade, built families, raised American children, paid billions in taxes, and kept entire industries running.

As Aline Gue, Executive Director of Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees, put it: “We are the backbone of entire industries... Our lives are here. Ending TPS threatens entire families and communities.”

She is right. Haiti is not safe. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not with kidnappings, mass rape, political terror, and gang rule.

Sending Haitians back now is not policy - it is cruelty. But cruelty is the point.

Whether Trump is threatening Afghans, Haitians, Venezuelans, Iranians, or Somalis, the message is the same: Brown and Black immigrants are the enemy. White ones are not.

That’s why white South Africans get prioritized refugee slots, but Haitians lose TPS. Afghan allies are suddenly “security threats,” but Europeans are “partners.”

Trump’s immigration agenda

has never been about safety. It is about reshaping America’s demographics.

And using tragedies - even before facts are known - to justify mass deportations and mass fear.

Meanwhile, the truth is simple, as Jeremy McKinney of the American Immigration Lawyers Association noted: “Radicalization and mental illness don’t know nationality.”

But bigotry does. And it’s now being written into federal policy - country by country.

Because when Trump says “Third World,” what he really means is: non-white.

And when he says, “pause immigration,” what he really means is: punish immigrants of color.

And when he says, “put Americans first,” what he really means is: return to a country that never actually existed.

As always, the people paying the highest price are the immigrants who have done everything right - and now live in

fear that everything they’ve built can be taken away with the stroke of a pen.

Felicia J. Persaud is the founder and publisher of NewsAmericasNow.com, the only daily newswire and digital platform dedicated exclusively to Caribbean Diaspora and Black immigrant news across the Americas.



FELICIA J. PERSAUD

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Women Divorce More?

Studies have consistently shown that women are more likely to file for divorce more than men. In fact, nearly 70 percent of divorces are initiated by women. That’s according to a research study conducted by the American Sociological Association, (ASA), which suggests that two thirds of all divorces are initiated by



TONY ROBINSON

women. Among college educated women, that figure jumps to 90 percent.

Is it because women tend to fare better after divorce, as the courts are usually more favorable to them, especially in the USA? They get to keep almost everything, the house, car, children, even the dog, leaving the man with nothing.

In most cases it’s the man who foots the lion’s share of the bills - mortgage or rent, utilities, school fees etc. Yet, when she divorces, she’s not instructed by the court to continue giving the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

VIEWPOINT



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America At 250: It's Time To Bring The Ballot Home

BY BEN JEALOUS

Americans aren't just anxious about next year's elections - they're uneasy in a deeper way.

In 2025, voters across the political spectrum worry that our country is one overheated news cycle away from political violence.

At the same time, election officials are sounding alarms about something quieter but just as dangerous: there simply aren't enough poll workers available to run our elections safely.

After years of threats, harassment, and burnout, thousands have walked away. The people who keep democracy functioning are exhausted, and the voters they serve are fearful.

On the eve of our nation's 250th birthday, we are heading toward an election cycle with a system that feels overstretched and overstressed.

Moments like this should force us to remember what earlier generations did when democracy came under strain. In the fall of 1918, as the Spanish flu tore through Chicago, hospitals overflowed and neighborhoods fell under quarantine.

Yet, the city refused to let democracy collapse.

Officials rushed paper ballots to residents' homes.

Nurses carried ballots to the sick; clerks delivered them to

families behind closed doors. It was improvised and imperfect—but it worked.

Chicago proved something we need to remember now: when the ballot comes to the voter, democracy survives.

As America approaches its 250th year, we face a similar choice. Will we cling to systems that assume voters and poll workers will always be able to show up in person on the same day?

Or will we meet voters where they actually live - with a system designed for the pressures and possibilities of modern life? For most of our history, we have expanded the right to vote only to surround that right with new hurdles. We ended property requirements, ended slavery, enfranchised women, and passed the Voting Rights Act - yet we never made voting simple.

Access grew, but the process remained fragile.

Today, with election workers burning out and public confidence eroding, the fragility is showing. Yet, this difficult moment offers something unexpected: clarity. Both political parties now see what they once resisted—that high turnout can help them.

Donald Trump proved that energizing unlikely voters can reshape the map. Democrats have long understood that expanding access brings in voters who

otherwise sit out.

Now Republicans know it, too. Participation is no longer a partisan advantage. It is a shared national opportunity. That recognition makes this the hour for community leaders to rise together - so that when the 2026 legislative season arrives, our lawmakers are ready to shape elections that are simple, secure, and worthy of the nation's 250th year.

A vote-at-home system is the clearest path to get there. A mailed-out ballot gives every voter the same chance to participate, whether they work a double shift, care for elders or children, lack transportation, or simply want the quiet time to study candidates without someone sighing behind them in line.

And these systems are secure. Every ballot carries a unique barcode voters can track

like a package. Signatures are verified against those on file. Bipartisan teams handle ballots at every step.

States like Colorado, Utah, and Oregon have shown that mailed ballots increase participation, build trust, and make elections easier to run and harder to disrupt.

Pennsylvania and Virginia now sit at the heart of whether the nation follows this path.

Pennsylvania's no-excuse mail voting, adopted in 2019, remains uneven after years of lawsuits and conflicting rulings. Standardizing procedures so every voter receives the same information and the same opportunity to correct mistakes would stabilize a system that often determines national outcomes.

Virginia - already further along than any Southern state - needs only the confidence to

finish the transition. Mailing ballots to all active voters, with a simple opt-out and a clear statewide education effort, would give the Commonwealth a model of civic strength heading into 2026.

The 250th anniversary of the United States should not be a moment simply to celebrate our democratic inheritance. It should be the moment we improve it.

If we want a democracy strong enough for the next 250 years, we must bring the ballot home - back to the kitchen table, where Americans make their best decisions.

Ben Jealous is a professor of practice at the University of Pennsylvania and former national president and CEO of the NAACP.



Women Divorce More?

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

man romance and affection, but he has to continue with his financial obligations in perpetuity.

There are so many stories of women marrying wealthy men and entering the union with nothing, then divorcing the man after two years and walking away with millions.

But still, women tend to get married more than men do. In fact, women will get married multiple times, far more than men. Is it because they know that divorce favors them, and even if they do so multiple times, they are the ones who benefit?

Can you just imagine a man divorcing three times and having to pay alimony, maintenance and such to three ex-wives? He'd end up in the poorhouse.

So, why do women get divorced more than men do? One theory is that many women are never satisfied and are always looking for something or someone better, even when they're already married.

So, even as she's with the man, she's just biding her time and on the lookout for someone or something better to come along. Many times you'll hear a wife say this about her husband: "Oh, he's okay, but deep down I know that I could have done better."

Still, there are legitimate and tangible reasons why women divorce, with one being abuse. That scourge is of pandemic proportions, as many women are victims of physical abuse from their men. That being said, physical abuse accounts for only 20 percent of divorces, with infidelity being higher.

There's also emotional abuse, which is often as powerful as the physical kind, and women will leave for that reason too. But apart from those cliché obvious reasons, many women leave marriages for other seemingly innocuous invisible intangible, yet very real



reasons.

It's been suggested that a woman often compares relationships, so the current man who she's involved with is merely just another rung on her ladder. He is often compared to the previous men who she was involved with, so if he seems to fall short and doesn't measure up to her ex or exes, it's goodbye.

Some women may verbalize it: "You will never be the man that my ex was," while others may not say it, but they'll mentally compare. The question is though, if those exes were so great, why are they exes?

So, at times the current guy will sense a glacial drifting away from her as she becomes distant, cold, aloof - just like the iceberg, with the tip showing some of the problems, but the larger issues laying beneath the surface; submerged but serious and ominous.

"I just found myself disliking him more and more every day and didn't even know why." "Everything he did annoyed me, so I had to find a way out." The clinical research says that many wives feel held back by marriage, and the statistics of

90 percent of college educated women getting divorced corroborates those findings. If the woman feels that she's basically better than the man and she can survive without him, then she's gone.

That being said, it's very rare that you'll see an uneducated woman of a lower socio economic class leaving her man. But what about the men, why do men get divorced? Well, many men will tend to remain in the relationship despite the problems. So even if the man is not satisfied, fulfilled or happy in the marriage, he'll remain, but seek those pleasures elsewhere.

So even though women tend to divorce more than men do, many men have the ability to leave the relationship not on a physical level, but on an emotional one.

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 seido1yard@gmail.com for feedback.



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Star-Studded "Jamaica Strong" Concert Aims To Raise \$1M For Hurricane Melissa Relief

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL

As Jamaica struggles to recover from the devastation caused by Hurricane Melissa, some of the country's top artists will perform at 'Jamaica Strong,' a December 12th fundraising concert at the UBS Arena in Long Island, New York.

The event is a joint production between Irie Jam Radio, RoadBlock Radio and Jammins Entertainment. Bobby Clarke, CEO of the Queens-based Irie Jam Radio, said the objective is clear.

"We want to use this star-studded event to raise a minimum of \$1 million dedicated to immediate relief efforts for those most severely affected by Hurricane Melissa," he told Caribbean Today. "People are suffering right now, and we must respond with speed, accountability, and scale."

Grammy winners Sean Paul, Shaggy and Inner Circle are among the acts confirmed for Jamaica Strong. Others are Gramps Morgan, Ky-Mani Marley, Marcia Griffiths, Richie Stephens and Tessanne Chin.

Clarke added that the show is not a one-off initiative.

"We recognize that this devastation cannot be fixed overnight. It requires a sustained, organized, long-term effort," he said. "That is why Jamaica



Caribbean stars unite for the Jamaica Strong Benefit Concert on Dec. 12 at UBS Arena, raising up to \$1M for Hurricane Melissa relief and rebuilding efforts.

Strong NY Inc. intends not only to produce this benefit concert but also to create a full three-to-five-year calendar of fundraising initiatives."

"Our mission is to support both urgent needs and long-term rebuilding efforts until our communities are stable, restored, and thriving again," he added.

Clarke and Kacy Rankine of RoadBlock Radio agreed to organize a benefit concert while on the 'Welcome To Jamrock Cruise' in November. They had seen the destruction caused by Hurricane Melissa, which hit Jamaica on October 28th.

"I said, 'let's come together and do something for Jamaica,' and he said, 'let's go,'" Rankine recounted. "And that's how the

whole Jamaica Strong concert was formed."

It was Rankine who contacted veteran booking agent George Crooks of Jammins Entertainment, to take charge of recruiting the acts.

"Shaggy was the first to commit," said Rankine. "He (Crooks) then called the UBS Arena and they did not hesitate, they wanted to be part of the venture because they saw the dire need."

Most of Jamaica's rural parishes were ravaged by Hurricane Melissa, a Category 5 force that destroyed infrastructure, homes, hospitals and power lines. It caused 42 deaths and left hundreds homeless.

'Jamaica Strong' is one of several humanitarian efforts by the country's entertainment industry. Many artists, including Spice, Buju Banton, Vybz Kartel, Sean Paul, Wesrok and Richie Stephens have donated relief supplies to affected communities. Tickets are available at ubsarena.com.

Mission Of Hope

Meanwhile, VP Records supported the Mission of Hope

Office, and other partners across Jamaica's cultural and diaspora communities. Two aircraft departed Miami for Kingston with more than 100,000 pounds of essential supplies for areas affected by Hurricane Melissa.

The mission continued Irving's established work in disaster response. A Guinness World Record holder for his solo flight around the world, he has organized multiple humanitarian operations across the region,



VP Records executives and singer Buju Banton supported the Mission of Hope humanitarian flights to Jamaica on November 10th and 11th. (VP Records image)

humanitarian flights to Jamaica on November 10th and 11th, led by Captain Barrington Irving through Experience Aviation in collaboration with the Buju Banton Foundation, the Miami-Dade County Commissioner's

including efforts following Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas and Hurricane Helene in North Carolina.



Freddie McGregor Leads Tributes To Jimmy Cliff

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL

For budding artists like Freddie McGregor, 'The Harder They Come' movie was the story of their lives. To see Jimmy Cliff play Ivan in that movie further strengthened their resolve.

His raw portrayal of the naive country boy who traveled to Jamaica's capital Kingston, looking for a break in a corrupt music business, resonated with McGregor who became one of reggae's biggest stars.

When Cliff died on November 24th at 81, McGregor was among the many paying tribute.

"The Harder They Come had a big, big impact, it was everything that happened to some of us," said McGregor. "So, I was glued to it for months, a true reflection of myself as a young boy from the country trying to make it in a tough music scene in Kingston back in 1963 at seven years-old."

He recalled "Uncle Jimmy" giving him sound advice throughout the years, a testament to Cliff's self-less nature.

Unlike McGregor, whose career took some time to take off, Cliff's rise was meteoric. He had a hit song with 'Hurricane Hattie' at 17 years-old for producer Leslie Kong, a Chinese-Jamaican who directed Cliff on his most



The late reggae legend, Jimmy Cliff, born James Chambers. (Getty image)

memorable hits, including 'The Harder They Come,' 'Wonderful World, Beautiful People,' 'You Can Get it If You Really Want,' 'Many Rivers To Cross' And 'Sitting In Limbo.'

Those songs made 'The Harder They Come' soundtrack which, like the movie, helped introduce Jamaican culture to an international audience. It was Cliff's first acting experience; the role was offered to him by director/writer Perry Henzell, who was also making his film debut.

Ivan was based on Ivanhoe "Rhyging" Martin, a notorious gunman who besieged sections of Kingston in 1948. Justine Henzell, daughter of Perry

Henzell, said while Cliff was an established artist when her father approached him, he showed unwavering commitment to the project.

"Jimmy was cast by Perry Henzell as Ivan in 'The Harder They Come' in the late 1960s, when the cameras started to roll on Jamaica's first feature film. Jimmy had never had an acting role before but his onscreen presence was as powerful as his stage presence," she noted. "He stuck with the project over the years as there were many times production had to halt for lack of funding," she added. "He supported all the future incarnations of the film on stage and otherwise."

Born James Chambers, Cliff was from Somerton, a rustic district in rural St. James parish. That is also the hometown of Percival James Patterson, the former prime minister of Jamaica and a close friend.

In his tribute, Patterson said the singer/songwriter's passing three weeks after Hurricane Melissa struck Jamaica, was telling.

"While storms pass, legacies endure," Patterson stated. He added that 'The Harder They Come' proved that, "a boy from the Jamaican countryside could conquer the world through talent, determination, and an unwavering belief in the power of music."

After Bob Marley's death at age 36 in May 1981, many reggae pundits expected Cliff to assume his mantle of reggae king. He maintained a steady presence in pop charts with songs like 'Reggae Nights' and a cover of Johnny Nash's 'I Can See Clearly Now.' He also starred alongside Robin Williams in the movie, 'Club Paradise.'

A two-time Grammy winner, Jimmy Cliff was inducted in the Rock And Roll Hall of Fame in 2010. He was the second Jamaican after Marley to gain such recognition.

His wife posted about his death with the note: "It's with

profound sadness that I share that my husband, Jimmy Cliff, has crossed over due to a seizure followed by pneumonia. I am thankful for his family, friends, fellow artists and coworkers who have shared his journey with him.

To all his fans around the world, please know that your support was his strength throughout his whole career. He really appreciated each and every fan for their love. I also wanted to thank Dr. Couceyro and the whole medical staff, as they have been extremely supportive and helpful during this difficult process. Jimmy, my darling, may you rest in peace. I will follow your wishes. I hope you all can respect our privacy during these hard times. Further information will be provided at a later date. See you and we see you Legend."

Jimmy Cliff is survived by his wife, Latifa Belaydi, their two children, Lilty and Aken Cliff, and other children from previous relationships, including the actress and singer Nabiyah Be. He will be accorded an official funeral by the Jamaican government, according to Entertainment Minister Olivia Grange, who called Cliff one of Jamaica's most influential ambassadors.



Uptown Top Ranking Goes Gold - 47 Years Later

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL

Uptown Top Ranking, a sing-along ditty by Jamaican duo Althea and Donna that topped the British national chart in 1978, has been certified gold by the British Phonographic Industry, (BPI) for sales and streaming equivalent exceeding 400,000 units.

The certification was announced in November. The single, produced by Joe Gibbs, was certified silver by the BPI in 2020 for sales of 200,000 units.

As news of Uptown Top Ranking's latest achievement made the rounds, Althea and Donna, who live in Florida and Georgia, respectively, were contacted for interviews. One of them was with the Jamaica Observer newspaper in which both women expressed

bittersweet feelings.

"There was no financial gain, we haven't gotten paid. We've never been compensated for this song. Right now, we are in litigation and we have lawyers working on it," said Althea, who co-wrote the song with Donna and Errol Thompson, who was engineer for the recording session.

Donna told the Observer that they had no idea Uptown Top Ranking would be a mega hit. "I remember we went to the studio on a Sunday morning, and (Inner Circle lead singer) Jacob Miller took us into the studio. He insisted that the song was going to be a hit, and he was right. We were teenagers and we were just having fun. But a hit song? That never crossed our minds," she said.

Uptown Top Ranking



Althea & Donna, singers and songwriters of the song "Uptown Top Ranking," which climbed to the top of the British singles chart in 1977.

went number one in the United Kingdom in February, 1978 and spent eleven weeks in the chart. It was the third Jamaican song to top the British chart in seven years, following Double Barrel by Dave Barker and Ansell

Collins, and Everything I Own by Ken Boothe.

Althea Forrest and Donna Reid were from middle-class homes. Both are from Kingston, Jamaica's capital, and first met in their late teens.

Uptown Ranking was a lighthearted jab at their upbringing which contrasted with most Jamaican reggae acts who were from impoverished communities. Althea and Donna were directed on the song by Gibbs, then the hottest producer in Jamaica.

Thanks to power-play on the British Broadcasting Corporation, (BBC), Uptown Top Ranking topped the British chart and earned them a spot on the highly rated Top Of The Pops television show.

To capitalize on the single's popularity, Virgin Records signed Althea and Donna. Their only album, also titled Uptown Top Ranking, was released in 1978 by Front Line, a Virgin Records subsidiary.



Love & Harmony Cruise & Best Of The Best Music Fest Deliver Aid To Jamaica



The Love & Harmony Cruise and Best of the Best Music Fest team delivered critical hurricane relief supplies to some of the hardest-hit communities in Jamaica following the destruction caused by Hurricane Melissa. (Contributed image)

The Love & Harmony Cruise and Best of the Best Music Fest team has delivered critical

hurricane relief supplies to some of the hardest-hit communities in Jamaica following the destruction

caused by Hurricane Melissa.

Teams, escorted by the Jamaica Constabulary Force and Senior Superintendent Dr. Terrence Bent, distributed aid across Sandy Ground (St. Elizabeth), Bluefields (Westmoreland), Salt Spring (Montego Bay) and Barnett Lane (Montego Bay) - areas where families faced severe loss and displacement.

Residents received care packages that included building materials, tarpaulins, flashlights, food items, toiletries, sanitary products, water, batteries, toys, clothing, shoes and other essentials. The distribution represents Phase One of an ongoing relief commitment.

"For seven years, Love & Harmony Cruise has proudly sailed with Jamaica at the center of our identity," said Ronnie Tomlinson, Director of Marketing & PR. "When Jamaica is in need, it is our honor to stand with her. This is only the beginning."

The team also announced that

the 2026 Love & Harmony Cruise, sailing April 1st -6th from Miami to Ocho Rios and Freeport aboard the Norwegian Jewel, will launch a special give-back initiative to continue supporting Jamaica's recovery after Hurricane Melissa.



Braata Productions To Host Christmas Grand Market Hurricane Relief Concert In New York

Braata Productions will stage its 13th annual Christmas Grand Market on December 6th and 7th, transforming its signature Caribbean holiday celebration into a major relief initiative for families in western Jamaica still recovering from Hurricane Melissa.

The two-day event - held at John Jay College in Manhattan on December 6 and Harry S. Truman High School in the Bronx on December 7th - will feature cultural performances, a Caribbean marketplace, Junkanoo parade and a special relief concert. This year's proceeds will directly support hurricane-affected communities through partners including the Rotary Club of Montego Bay and Motivate JA. Donation barrels will be available at both venues for non-perishable food items.

"Many of the families hardest hit live in rural areas that are often the last to receive assistance," Braata Productions said, noting that crop losses and damage to livestock have worsened food insecurity across the region. Sardines, rice, beans, pasta, canned meats, oil and similar items are being prioritized for collection.

A reimagining of the traditional Jamaican Grand Market, the event has evolved

into a wider celebration of Caribbean Christmas traditions, uniting artists, artisans and community organizations from across the region. This year's performers include gospel standout Jodian Pantry, Braata Productions founder Andrew Clarke, the acclaimed Braata Singers, Grenadian saxophonist Mystic Saxx, and the Nanm A Robenson Mathurin Dance Company of Haiti.

The initiative is being supported by New York elected officials including Senator Leroy Comrie, Assemblymembers Brian Cunningham and Khaleel Anderson, and Council Members Kevin Riley and Selvena N. Brooks-Powers.

EVENT DETAILS

Dec. 6th – Manhattan: Market opens 7 p.m., concert 8 p.m., at John Jay College's Gerald W. Lynch Theatre. Free for all CUNY students.

Dec. 7th – Bronx: Market opens 6 p.m., concert 7 p.m., at Harry S. Truman High School, 750 Baychester Avenue.

Tickets (\$30–\$35) are available at: <https://givebutter.com/CGM2025>



Art Of Black Miami Unveils Dynamic 2025 Lineup For Miami Art Week

The Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, (GMCVB) has announced a robust slate of exhibitions, performances and cultural activations for the 11th annual Art of Black Miami, (AOBM), celebrating Miami Art Week with its most expansive programming yet.

Now in its second decade, AOBM has grown from a seasonal initiative into a year-round cultural engine that amplifies Black and Afro-Latino artistry, drives tourism, and supports local creative economies across Greater Miami and Miami Beach.

"During Art Basel Miami Beach and Miami Art Week, AOBM elevates local voices as art organizations, galleries, and cultural spaces across neighborhoods like Historic Overtown, Little Haiti, Little Havana, Opa-locka, Miami Gardens and Downtown Miami attract global attention," said Connie Kinnard, GMCVB Senior Vice President of Multicultural Tourism & Development. "These events shine a light on

the destination's vibrant arts and cultural offerings." Art That Defines Miami's Cultural Pulse

AOBM celebrates a wide spectrum of visual arts - from painting and ceramics to photography, animation, film and printmaking. One standout example is the striking "Yellow Elder" sculpture by artist Asser Saint-Val, which commands attention in Coconut Grove and symbolizes the cultural reinvention shaping Miami's neighborhoods. The piece was the first sculpture to win the annual AOBM cover competition for M.I.A. Magazine.

Saint-Val's works will also be featured in the upcoming What's in Your Container exhibition, organized by the Diaspora Vibe Cultural Arts Incubator at Barry University.

AOBM 2025 Featured Events This year's program showcases a wide variety of artistic experiences across the region, including:

1. Peter London Global Dance Company: The Oneness
2. Woody De Othello: Coming

Forth by Day

3. Art Beat Miami
4. Kindred Animal Spirit
5. Miami MoCAAD's 10th Anniversary of Art, Tech & Innovation
6. Point Comfort Art Fair and Show
7. Umbrellas of Little Havana Art Festival
8. 16th Annual Cada Panel & Art Exhibition
9. Love of Urban Design® "Loud Week"
10. Afrikin Art Fair: Through Creation, We Find Meaning: Scenes from Home
11. Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami & Miami Art Week
12. 13th Annual Art of Transformation: At The Edge of Entanglement
13. No Room, No Vacancy

For the complete Art Week schedule, visit ArtOfBlackMiami.com.



Celebrate The Season With These Flavorful Caribbean Holiday Dishes

BY MADELYN HERRERA

The Caribbean is known for its sunshine, music, and hospitality and during the holiday season, the islands come alive with aromas that tell stories of heritage, family, and festivity. From savory stews simmering overnight to sweet breads baked with love, Christmas in the Caribbean is as much about the food as it is about the celebration. If you're planning your next winter getaway, these iconic holiday dishes might help you decide which island to visit – one plate at a time. Or you can make these iconic Caribbean holiday dishes at home this season and bring the Caribbean to your table.

Guyana: Pepper Pot



Guyana's national dish, Pepper Pot, is the heart of every Guyanese Christmas morning. This rich, slow-cooked meat stew – made with beef or oxtail, cassareep – a thick brown syrup from the Amerindians, made from grated cassava root, cinnamon, and hot peppers, is traditionally served with homemade bread or cassava bread. The dish dates back to the Amerindian people and symbolizes togetherness, as it can be reheated and shared for days.

Recipe For Pepper Pot

INGREDIENTS:

- 2–3 lbs. stewing beef, oxtail, or cow heel (or a mix)
- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1–2 hot peppers (like wiri wiri or Scotch bonnet)
- ½ cup cassareep (available on Amazon and in Caribbean stores)
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 3–4 cloves
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- Salt to taste
- Water, as needed

METHOD

Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat and brown the meat in batches until seared.

Add chopped onion, garlic and hot peppers. Stir and cook for 2–3 minutes.

Mix in cassareep, cinnamon, cloves, and brown sugar. Stir to coat the meat.

Pour in enough water to just cover the meat and bring to a boil.

Reduce heat to low and simmer for 2–3 hours, stirring occasionally, until the meat is tender and the sauce thickens.

Season with salt to taste and remove from heat.

Serve hot with Guyanese plait bread for dipping—the dish tastes even better the next day as the flavors deepen.

Jamaica: Curried Goat And Black Cake

In Jamaica, the festive table isn't complete without Curry Goat, a dish that blends Indian and African influences into a perfectly seasoned celebration. Served alongside rice and peas, it's a must at family gatherings. But dessert steals the spotlight: Jamaican Black Cake, made with soaked fruits, burnt sugar, and a generous pour of rum. It's dense, decadent, and deeply traditional.

Recipe For Curry Goat



INGREDIENTS:

- 2 lbs. goat meat (cut into medium pieces)
- 2 tbsp curry powder
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 2 scallions, chopped
- 1 Scotch bonnet pepper, minced (optional for heat)
- 1 tsp all-purpose seasoning or salt to taste
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 2 tbsp oil
- 2 cups of water

Method:

Season the goat meat with curry powder, onion, garlic,

thyme, scallions, pepper, and salt. Let it marinate for at least 1 hour, or overnight for deeper flavor.

Heat oil in a Dutch Oven pot and add a small spoon of curry powder – toast for 30 seconds to release the flavor.

Add the marinated meat and brown on all sides.

Add water to cover the meat and bring to a boil.

Lower the heat and simmer for 1½–2 hours, stirring occasionally, until the goat is tender and the sauce thickens. Adjust seasoning to taste and serve hot with white rice or rice and peas.

Recipe For Black Cake



INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups mixed dried fruits (raisins, prunes, currants, cherries)
- 1 cup dark rum
- 1 cup red wine
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup butter
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp mixed spice (or cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice blend)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

Recipe:

Soak the dried fruits in rum and wine for at least a week (or longer – the more time, the richer the flavor).

Cream butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs one at a time, then add the blended soaked fruits and vanilla.

In another bowl, combine flour, baking powder, and mixed spice. Gradually fold into the fruit mixture.

Pour batter into a greased baking tin and bake at 325°F (160°C) for about 1½ hours or until a skewer comes out clean. Once baked, brush the top with extra rum while warm to keep it moist.

Let cool before slicing –

it's traditionally served during Christmas gatherings and gift exchanges.

Trinidad & Tobago: Pastelles And Sorrel

Pastelles are small cornmeal pies filled with seasoned beef, chicken, or fish, wrapped in banana leaves and these tasty treats are a Christmas staple across Trinidad & Tobago. Making them is a family affair, often taking days of preparation. To accompany the pastelles and add to the Christmas spirit, locals sip Sorrel, a tangy red drink brewed from hibiscus petals, spiced with cloves, cinnamon, and a dash of rum. Together, they define a Trini Christmas.

Recipe For Pastelles

INGREDIENTS (for 6–8 pastelles):

- 2 cups cornmeal (masa or fine corn flour)
- 1 cup of chicken or beef broth
- 1 lb. ground beef, chicken, or fish
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp thyme
- 1 Scotch bonnet pepper, finely chopped (optional)
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- Banana leaves (or parchment paper) for wrapping
- Oil for cooking

METHOD:

Heat a little oil in a pan and sauté onion, garlic, and Scotch bonnet pepper until fragrant.

Add ground meat or fish, tomato paste, thyme, paprika, salt, and pepper. Cook until meat is fully cooked and the mixture is dry.

Mix cornmeal with broth to form a soft dough.

Cut banana leaves into 8–10 inch squares and lightly heat to make pliable.

Spread a spoonful of cornmeal dough onto the leaf, add a scoop of filling, and fold into a neat packet. Secure with kitchen string if needed.

Steam the pastelles for 30–40 minutes until cooked through. Serve warm with your favorite chutney or sauce.

Recipe For Sorrel

INGREDIENTS (serves 6–8):

- 2 cups dried sorrel (hibiscus

petals)

- 4 cups water
- 1 – 2 inches fresh ginger, sliced
- 4–6 whole cloves
- 1 – 2 cups sugar (to taste)
- 1 – 2 cups rum (optional)
- Cinnamon sticks for garnish

Method:

Boil water with ginger and cloves for 5 minutes.

Add dried sorrel and simmer for 10–15 minutes until the liquid is dark red.

Strain the mixture into a pitcher, discarding solids.

Stir in sugar while warm until dissolved.

Chill for several hours or overnight. Add rum just before serving if desired.

Serve over ice, garnished with cinnamon sticks for a festive holiday touch.

Puerto Rico: Coquito

Puerto Ricans know how to celebrate Navidad in style – and it starts with a sweet sip of Coquito – the island's famous coconut-based holiday drink that rivals eggnog. Made with condensed milk, cinnamon, and rum, Coquito embodies Puerto Rico's festive spirit.

Recipe For Coquito

INGREDIENTS (serves 6–8):

- 2 cups of coconut milk
- 1 cup sweetened condensed milk
- 1 cup evaporated milk
- ½ cup white rum (adjust to taste)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg

METHOD:

Combine coconut milk, condensed milk, and evaporated milk in a blender.

Add rum, vanilla, cinnamon, and nutmeg; blend until smooth.

Chill in the refrigerator for at least 2–3 hours.

Shake or stir well before serving, as ingredients may settle.

Serve in small glasses, garnished with a sprinkle of cinnamon on top.

Store in the fridge for up to a week; shake before each serving.

- NewsAmericasNow.com



*Most of us try to attract other people by the friends we keep and the way we carry ourselves.
If you are going to a party or a formal function, don't you dress well?
We all want to promote a favorable impression of ourselves to other people we meet and talk to.
If we agree on that, then think of this. Why should it be any different for your business?
If you want to project a favorable image of your company, in order to win customers, you should keep
your company with good friends and...dress your company well in...*

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HEALTH NEWS



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Trump Signals ACA Subsidy Extension “May Be Necessary” As Deadline Nears

President Donald Trump has now acknowledged that extending Affordable Care Act, (ACA), subsidies “may be necessary,” softening his stance as millions of Americans face steep premium hikes ahead of the enrollment deadline.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One on Nov. 25th, Trump rejected reports that the White House was considering a two-year extension of the subsidies, but conceded that some form of continuation could be required.

“Somebody said I want to extend it for two years. I don’t want to extend it for two years. I’d rather not extend them at all,” Trump said. “Some kind of an extension may be necessary to get something else done because the unaffordable care act has been a disaster. It’s a disaster.”

The shift comes after a bitter congressional fight over ACA tax credits that triggered the longest government shutdown in U.S. history. Senate leaders ended the shutdown with a deal that included a promise to hold a December vote on a Democratic bill addressing the subsidies.

But House Speaker Mike Johnson has refused to commit, calling the subsidies a “boondoggle,” though several

vulnerable Republicans have urged him to bring the issue to the floor.

A recent KFF poll shows broad support for extending the credits: 78% of Americans — including 59% of Republicans — want the subsidies continued.

Roughly 22 million ACA enrollees currently rely on the tax credits, with December 15th marking the deadline for Americans to select or change plans beginning coverage January 1, 2026. Open enrollment for 2026 plans closes January 15th.

With Congress away for Thanksgiving recess, Trump is spending the holiday at Mar-a-Lago. Press secretary Karoline Leavitt said discussions over the subsidies are “frequent and robust” within the White House.

Pressed about when he will unveil his alternative health plan, Trump repeated his preference for sending funds directly to Americans rather than insurers.

“Don’t give any money to the insurance companies, give it to the people directly,” he said. “Let ’em go out, buy their own healthcare plan... That’s what I like.”



Florida small-business owners share their ACA experiences with U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-25) amid rising health-care costs following the end of federal subsidies. (Photo courtesy of the Office of Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz)

REAL COSTS

U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, (FL-25), meanwhile, recently held a roundtable discussion and press conference with Affordable Care Act recipients who face skyrocketing healthcare costs due to Republicans allowing ACA enhanced premium tax credits to lapse and the passage of Trump’s Big Ugly Law.

“If Republicans continue to cater to the billionaires and ignore our families, family

budgets are going to be demolished. It’s going to force families to drop healthcare coverage altogether. Our neighbors won’t see their doctors. Chronic diseases will go undiagnosed,” said Wasserman Schultz. “People will end up sicker than they ever should be, and tragically, some people will needlessly die.”

Florida, as much as any state in the nation, faces one of the worst impacts if the ACA tax credits at the heart of the shutdown dispute are

allowed to expire. Of the top 15 congressional districts with the highest number of ACA enrollees, 12 of them are in Florida. On a yearly basis the State of Florida leads the nation in sign-ups for the Affordable Care Act.

In Florida’s 25th Congressional District, 203,000 people will see their health care costs rise if ACA tax credits expire and 82,000 people will lose access to health coverage entirely due to the impacts of the Big Ugly Law and expiring ACA tax credits.

Wasserman Schultz was joined by ICN and CT Editor Felicia Persaud, Executive Director of Florida Decides Healthcare Mitch Emerson, ACA recipients Saskia Madison, and Stephanie van Vark, family member of ACA recipient Jody Kaminsky, and Half Moon Empanadas HR Director George Zamora, who handles employee health planning for his company.

Persaud said her premiums will rise to over \$900 without the subsidy, a number she said is almost as high as her mortgage. “We are moving from the Obama Care plan to Trump Does Not Care plan,” Persaud said. “It is absolute wickedness as my granny would say.”



Jamaica Declares Leptospirosis Outbreak After Hurricane Melissa

Jamaica has declared an outbreak of leptospirosis following the devastation caused by Hurricane Melissa, with health officials linking the bacterial disease to six suspected deaths.

The Category 5 hurricane struck the island on October 28th, unleashing catastrophic floods and landslides fueled by nearly 30 inches (76 cm) of rain. Health authorities say the widespread stagnant and contaminated water left behind has created ideal conditions for the disease to spread.

Health Minister Dr. Christopher Tufton announced that nine cases were confirmed between October 30th and November 20th, with another 28 suspected.

Leptospirosis is transmitted through water or soil contaminated by the urine of infected animals - most commonly rodents. Humans can become infected through broken skin or contact with the eyes, nose, or mouth. Early symptoms resemble the flu, but the illness can escalate to life-threatening complications, including kidney failure, liver damage, meningitis, and severe internal bleeding. “The outbreak follows the passage of the storm, which has created conditions that have increased the risk of exposure to contaminated water and soil,”

Tufton said.

He urged caution for anyone exposed to floodwaters - particularly farmers, cleanup crews, emergency responders, and residents navigating affected areas.

Hurricane Melissa caused an estimated US\$10 billion in damage, crippling agriculture, tourism, and damaging nearly 200,000 buildings across the island.

How To Protect Yourself After Flooding

- Make water safe to drink: Boil all drinking water or use approved purification tablets such as Aquatabs.
- Cover wounds: Seal cuts, scrapes, or broken skin with waterproof bandages before going outdoors.
- Avoid floodwater: Do not walk, bathe, or swim in floodwater or freshwater sources that may be contaminated with animal urine.
- Use protective gear: Wear waterproof boots, gloves, and clothing when working in or near muddy or flooded areas.
- Prevent rodents: Store food, water, and garbage in tightly closed containers, and use traps to keep rodents away from your home.



Holiday Health Check: Tips To Prevent Muscle Decline During Weight Loss

As the holiday season rolls in, with its festive feasts, travel plans and cozy indulgences, it’s easy to let your health goals slip into the New Year’s resolutions pile. But while you’re managing your weight or trying the latest trending diets, there’s one vital part of your health that deserves extra attention this time of year: your muscles.

In today’s world of trending weight-loss hacks, shedding pounds has never seemed more accessible. But while the number on the scale may drop, there’s an important — and often overlooked — part of your health that might be taking a hit: your muscle mass.

From miracle diets to powerful GLP-1 weight loss injections, millions of people are embracing today’s science to achieve rapid weight loss - but many report significant muscle loss, too. In fact, studies show that up to 40% of weight loss can come from muscle, not fat.

And muscle loss isn’t just a fitness issue, it impacts your metabolism, energy levels, balance, and long-term ability to stay active and independent. During the holidays, when rich foods and busy schedules collide, supporting muscle health becomes especially important

for staying strong, energized and resilient.

Whether you’re trying to maintain your weight through the season or jumpstart healthier habits, here are some smart ways to keep your muscle mass merry and bright:

- Prioritize protein in your diet
- Incorporate strength training at least 2–3 times per week
- Stay active daily - even light movement helps
- Focus on nutrient-rich whole foods over strict calorie counting
- Incorporate a krill oil supplement into your daily routine, it’s been shown to help preserve muscle and support sustainable weight loss

Krill Oil: Protecting Muscle During Weight Loss

Did you know that krill oil naturally supports muscle function, enhances movement and protects joints? It also helps combat aging, oxidative stress and inflammation at the cellular level. Backed by science, krill oil offers a proactive way to maintain muscle health - key to aging well.

Recent research has shown that krill oil supplementation can

help preserve muscle strength and fat-free mass during dieting, particularly when paired with strategies like alternate-day fasting. In overweight and obese adults, krill oil supported functional strength, reduced inflammation, and helped ensure that weight loss did not come at the expense of muscle mass, protecting metabolism and long-term health.

Unlike typical omega-3 sources, krill oil delivers a natural complex of phospholipids, omega-3s, choline and astaxanthin in their most bioavailable form — nutrients that work synergistically at the cellular level to support muscle, metabolism and overall wellness.

To learn more, visit <https://www.superbakrill.com/blog/how-krill-oil-can-help-address-a-hidden-risk-in-weight-loss-muscle-loss>.

This holiday season, give yourself the gift of health: keep your muscles strong, your metabolism humming, and your body ready to take on the New Year.

- StatePoint



It's Almost Time For Junkanoo - The Dance of Freedom

BY DAWN A. DAVIS

Junkanoo is an integral part of the cultural fabric in The Bahamas each holiday season. The masquerade parade takes place every Boxing Day, December 26th, and on New Year's Day, January 1st.

This tradition, started by the enslaved Africans brought to the Caribbean by British colonizers in the 16th century, marked the three days the enslaved were allowed to rest from the backbreaking work they were forced to endure up until the end of the sugarcane planting season. The festival is also practiced in Jamaica as Jonkonnu, and Belize as Jankunu.

Some historians argue that the tradition began in The Bahamas, while others believe that these Christmas-time processions began in Jamaica and spread to the other islands. Either way, this exuberant and colorful celebration that involves masking, dancing and drumming through the streets is still practiced today showcasing Africans' spirit, hope and resilience.

According to anthropologists this ritualistic masquerading almost certainly commemorates John Konny (or John Canoe), a well-known African trader on the Guinea Coast during the era of slavery.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

This cultural phenomenon takes place on a massive scale in The Bahamas. And because of its importance to these islands

and the pride of place it takes in its history, Bahamian Junkanoo was officially inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2023. According to this United Nations agency, the Bahamian festival is considered a living tradition of the community and is recognized as being a vital part of its cultural identity.

"We are grateful that the uniqueness of Junkanoo in The Bahamas has been recognized as a unique cultural manifestation that is of us, has sprung from us, and belongs to us," declared Arlene Nash Ferguson, in a recent conversation with Caribbean Today. "This acknowledgement supports the Bahamian belief that ours is a festival unique in all the world!"

Ferguson is co-founder of the Educulture Junkanoo Museum and Resource Center in Nassau, the capital and largest city of the Bahamas. She is seen by many as a national treasure because of her work with the Junkanoo festival and her role in educating both locals and visitors about this unique celebration. Educulture Bahamas also offers cultural and educational services to schools and community groups.

The museum, housed in her childhood home, honors the history, heritage, and significance of this practice showcasing the colorful costumes, fabrics, music, and instruments. Costumes back then were made from whatever celebrants could find - feathers, leaves, sponge,



Arlene Nash Ferguson in a Junkanoo costume. (Photo by Guilden Gilbert for The Bahamas National Portrait Gallery)

wood, straw, shells. And musical instruments were items that were used on the plantations such as cowbells, drums made from goat skin, conch shells, metal graters. Today, costumes are much more elaborate along with contemporary instruments like horns and whistles.

Burma Road Riot

Asked about her personal journey with Junkanoo, Ferguson recounted her intimate involvement with the tradition from an early age.

"My Junkanoo story actually began before I was born," Ferguson explained. "In 1942, the Burma Road Riot occurred in New Providence, resulting in all street

parading being banned. It was in 1947 that my maternal uncle was part of a group of friends who formed themselves into what they called The Citizens Masquerade Committee, and petitioned the government to have Junkanoo return to Bay Street. They were given permission for a trial parade on New Year's Day 1948, and with few exceptions, Junkanoo has been on Bay Street ever since."

"Living in the same house as my uncle, I was witness to grateful Junkanoos 'rushing' to our house every Junkanoo morning to escort my uncle to the parades, and at the age of four years, I asked if I could 'rush'! I was enthralled from then on - by the music, people dancing in the street in the middle of the night, the whole experience," she added.

Ferguson would participate in Junkanoo festivals throughout the years, and in fact, still does today, noting that she celebrated 70 years 'on Bay' last Boxing Day 2024! As an avid proponent of Bahamian culture and her intimate knowledge of the tradition she served more than 20 years on the National Junkanoo Committee, an advisory board to the government.

Pitchy Patchy

Ferguson acknowledged that the tradition took on their own unique elements in the various islands: "Although the John Canoe Festivals in the Western Hemisphere have a common West African root, it has manifested itself in different ways in different territories."

Jamaica is one such territory. In that island Jonkonnu characters are a key element, each with its own personality.

Pitchy Patchy is perhaps the best-known character who is always dressed in tatters and keeps order by cracking his whip. The King and Queen are prominent characters representing European royalty. Horse Head wears a horse or skull costume, while Cow Head dons a cow head with long horns. The Devil, as implied, epitomizes evil and is known for the pitchfork he wields. House Head, a character with a house headdress symbolizes hope for a better future.

The Bahamian Junkanoo festival did not take place in 2019 due to the devastating effects of Hurricane Dorian that year. COVID-19 disrupted all such gatherings across the region in 2020 and 2021. And the most recent natural disaster, Hurricane Melissa, that lashed the island of Jamaica just two months ago, may have an effect on the island's celebrations this year. But we in the Caribbean always bounce back!

By taking on the rituals and celebrations our African ancestors left for us, we not only celebrate our unique cultural voices, but we also salute our strength, our tenacity, and our ability to rise out of adversity.

Book your trip for Junkanoo this year or learn more at bahamas.com/events/junkanoo



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FEATURE



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A Culinary Journey Around the Caribbean

BY DAWN A. DAVIS

Much more than a cookbook, *Belly Full* celebrates Caribbean culture, stories, lifestyle, languages, and of course, our cuisine. Trinidadian Canadian author Lesley Enston deftly mixes Caribbean foods and the nuances that makes us one people.

Indeed, a poignant example of our oneness could be seen and felt through the voices that came together from across the region and amongst the diaspora in solidarity after the devastating impact of hurricane Melissa. So, marking our unique culinary arts is just another way of saying ‘we deh ya, we strang, we full a flayva’!

Art Of Cookery

Enston’s story is one of lush green tranquility. Immersed in Caribbean culture on the twin-island republic of Trinidad and Tobago, she learned the art of cookery from her parents, Merle and Ken Enston, both culinary artists.

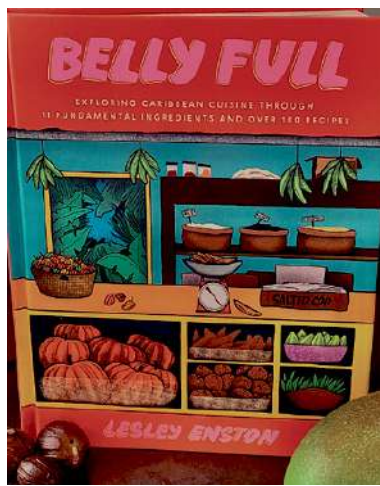
In this sumptuously photographed book, the author focuses on 11 staple ingredients from across the region that are essential in Caribbean cuisine - beans, calabaza, cassava, chayote, coconut, cornmeal, okra, plantains,

rice, salted cod, Scotch bonnet pepper. But not only are they ingredients, they each have a story, a cultural idiosyncrasy, a history that Enston artfully explores in *Belly Full*.

Divided into sections based on each fundamental food element and the particular island known for them, Enston begins her journey through the region with her own story. A tribute to her Trinidadian upbringing, she weaves her food and family experiences so seamlessly through the book, readers become personally connected to the 100-plus recipes that follow. Even as a youngster in Canada and New York, this writer was drawn to the sights, sounds, and tastes of the Caribbean through Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Haitian cuisine that felt “comfortable and understood.”

The author does not shy away from the painful origins of some of our foods. The Atlantic slave trade orchestrated by European colonial powers - England, France, Portugal, Spain - was indeed a catalyst for the cultivation of items such as cassava, plantain, and much of the culinary traditions the enslaved brought with them from West Africa.

And the all important seasonings is a major key to Caribbean



Belly Full. (Photo By Dawn A. Davis)

cooking, Enston explains in the book. She also salutes the region’s original inhabitants, the Taíno, Carib, Arawak peoples whose food practices melded with West African and even Asian cultures from Chinese and Indian indentured servants after the abolition of slavery. All of these influences is what makes Caribbean cuisine so unique.

Vibrant Caribbean Cuisine

Enston decries the fact that the region is “culturally fractured,” where differences are criticized instead of celebrated noting:

“We are all children of those who had to learn to adapt to new surroundings, trying to hold on to tradition while forging a new path with limited means.”

And those limited means have become key elements underpinning our multicultural traditional, contemporary, and experimental foods today. So, let’s create something that honours our vibrant Caribbean cuisine. Why not take a culinary journey around the region with recipes from a different island every week.

Yuca Con Mojo (pg.76) from Cuba is a boiled cassava dish garnished with almost raw garlic, citrus, olive oil, red onion, and a touch of fresh black pepper that’s packed full of flavor. It is thanks to the Taíno who brought this tuber to the region that this tuber is part of the Caribbean staple diet. In fact, enslaved Africans learned how to prepare this root food from the native people says Enston. Haiti’s Mayi Moulén Ak Aransò (pg. 118) is a cornmeal with smoked herring dish similar to the kind of meal the enslaved would have had to sustain themselves after a brutal day of labor.

A spicy salted cod and avocado paté dish called Féroce D’avocat which translates to ferocious avocado (pg. 216) from

Martinique will bring a fiery but flavorful zing to your mouth from its chopped Scotch bonnet pepper, parsley, and garlic. Jamaica’s Rundown (pg.106), somewhat similar to Grenada’s Oil Down (pg. 98), is a creative way of cooking down coconut milk with the addition of salted mackerel and of course spices such as thyme, Scotch bonnet pepper, onion to create a creamy, slightly sweet dish that is perfect with bammy, white rice, or coconut bake all included in the book.

Indeed, Caribbean cuisine is all about tradition, staple elements, flavor, and celebration. And most importantly, it showcases the love we bring to it.

“We all cook with love, and we all eat with joy. ‘Me belly full’ is a phrase you’ll hear throughout the English-speaking Caribbean. It has an obvious meaning - a full and satisfied stomach - but can also mean a full and satisfied heart and soul,” says Enston.

BOOK: *Belly Full*
AUTHOR: Lesley Enston
PUBLISHER: Ten Speed Press, an imprint of Random House
AVAILABILITY: Amazon and most bookstores



Practical Gifts That Inspire Creativity And Confidence

Holiday gifting shouldn’t mean giving objects that sit in the corner and gather dust. Consider these gift ideas that will inspire

growth, learning, creativity and confidence - and which will actually get used:

Musical possibilities:

Open the door to a world of creative possibilities for your gift recipient with the CT-S1-76 keyboard from Casio, which is designed for anyone who’s ready to spread their musical wings. Its 13-watt bass-ported stereo speaker system delivers punch and clarity at all volumes, but it can also be played quietly with a good set of headphones. With 76 full-size keys with touch response and more than 60 tones, including stereo grand piano, it’s a versatile, customizable instrument, and one built to accommodate many types of use. It’s sleek and portable design is well-suited for on-the-go music-making; its built-in metronome keeps the beat; and its one-button recorder makes it easy to capture one’s compositions and performances.

Handwritten inspiration: Whether your gift recipient is a poet, lyricist, doodler or big thinker, a digital notebook is a must-have for getting creative juices flowing. This handy, stylish tool for the workplace, classroom, or on-the-go, combines the digital benefits of being able to save, organize and search for one’s work, with the distraction-free experience of writing on paper by hand.

Mathematical fun: Students and recreational math enthusiasts alike should be armed with the best scientific calculator to support their



studies. The fx-991CW ClassWiz from Casio comes with a new quadruple graded LCD display, so that users can easily find their cursor while writing and modifying expressions. With the ability to store and recall up to nine variables, which can contain integers, computations and functions, and to recall variables between sessions, the ClassWiz is a powerful learning tool. All of its functions can be accessed through the Math Catalog, which hosts 47 scientific constants and 40 measurement conversions. By partnering the calculator with an internet-capable mobile device, solutions can be graphed and visualized through ClassPad.net.

Fitness that keeps on giving: For the fitness enthusiast

in your life, or someone who aspires to be, consider a subscription box aimed at supporting them on their athletic journey. Some subscriptions are categorized by sport to appeal to yogis, hikers, weight lifters, marathoners and more, and others are tailored by type of product, such as apparel, healthy snacks or recovery gear. With so many options to choose from, you’ll be sure to find a subscription that will inspire your fit friend or family member.

This holiday season, make the season merry and bright by using gift-giving as an opportunity to support your loved ones’ talents and passions.

- StatePoint



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Caribbean Today

Jamaica's World Cup Dreams Still Alive After Loss And Coaching Shake-Up

The Jamaica Football Federation (JFF), has appointed Rudolph Speid as interim head coach of the Reggae Boyz, following the sudden resignation of Steve McClaren earlier this week.

The decision was announced after an emergency JFF meeting to address the vacancy following the resignation of interim head coach after Steve McClaren after the team's loss to Curacao on November 19th.

Speid, who has served as the team's technical advisor for the past four months, will officially take charge on December 15, 2025, under a contract running through March 31, 2026 - covering Jamaica's final push to qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. The federation also confirmed that talks are ongoing with Miguel Coley, a former assistant coach now based in Iraq, to return in the same role.

Speid, currently head coach of Cavalier FC, has guided the



Rudolph Speid has been appointed interim coach of the Reggae Boyz to lead them in their battle for another World Cup spot.

club to three Jamaica Premier League titles in four years and the 2024 Concacaf Caribbean Cup. His immediate focus will be to prepare the national team for the Inter-Confederation Playoffs next March in Mexico, where Jamaica will face New

Caledonia in the semi-finals.

A victory would advance the Reggae Boyz to a final against DR Congo, with a coveted World Cup berth at stake. The draw for the playoffs, conducted in Zurich last month, confirmed both matches will be single-leg encounters during the March 2026 FIFA window in Monterrey or Guadalajara.

Jamaica secured their playoff spot after finishing second in Concacaf Group B, narrowly missing direct qualification with a goalless draw against Curaçao in Kingston. Despite recent challenges, optimism remains high that the Reggae Boyz can still make history by qualifying for their first World Cup since France 1998.

- Rewritten from CMC and NewsAmericasNow.com



Reggae Girlz Smash Records With Stunning 18-0 Victory Over Dominica

Jamaica's Reggae Girlz delivered a historic and utterly dominant performance on Nov. 29th, storming to an unprecedented 18-0 victory over Dominica in the 2025/26 Concacaf W Qualifiers at the Daren Sammy Cricket Stadium.

The win marks the largest margin of victory in Jamaica's football history and one of the most lopsided results ever recorded in the regional competition.

The goal fest began almost instantly. Konya Plummer opened the scoring in the 2nd minute, with captain Khadija "Bunny" Shaw doubling the lead two minutes later. From there, the floodgates burst wide open.

By the 30-minute mark, Jamaica led 7-0, thanks to strikes from Kiki Van Zanten, Atlanta Primus, and an own goal from Dominica's Rosalinda Paul. Shaw and Jodi Brown each added their second of



Jamaica's Reggae Girlz delivered a historic and utterly dominant performance on Nov. 29th.

the afternoon, before Shaw completed her first-half hat-trick just before halftime.

The second half brought no reprieve for Dominica. Deneisha Blackwood, Shaneil Buckley, and Natasha Thomas all scored twice, while Brown completed her own hat-trick. Shania Hayles added a late goal in stoppage

time before Buckley closed out the rout in the 92nd minute.

Elsewhere in the qualifiers, Mexico crushed St. Vincent and the Grenadines 14-0, while Costa Rica edged Grenada 2-1.

- Rewritten from CMC



Jamaica, T&T Finish 9th And 10th At FIBA 3x3 Americup

Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago wrapped up their campaigns in ninth and 10th place respectively as the 2025 FIBA 3x3 AmeriCup concluded over the weekend.

Jamaica's team - Nicholai Brown, Malik Lawrence-Anderson, Jabulani Newby and Durand Scott - narrowly missed out on advancing after two close losses on Saturday.

The previously unbeaten squad fell 21-20 to Puerto Rico in their opening Pool B matchup, then suffered another tight 17-15 defeat to the Dominican Republic.

T&T's quartet of Chike Augustine, Ahkeem Boyd, Ahkeel Boyd and Tyrik Singh also impressed with a competitive showing but were

beaten 21-16 by Canada and 21-17 by Argentina in Pool C.

The United States dominated the tournament, capturing both the men's and women's titles without losing a game.

- Rewritten from CMC



Windies Handed Favorable Group in 2026 T20 World Cup



The West Indies will be going after their third T20 World Cup title. (CMC image)

The West Indies have been handed a favorable draw for the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup and will back themselves to reach the Super Eight stage of the tournament.

The two-time champions have been placed in Group C alongside England, Bangladesh, Nepal and Italy. The ICC released the full fixtures and groupings on Nov. 25th for the 20-team event, which runs from February 7th to March 8th, and will be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

With the top two teams advancing, the Windies' biggest tests are expected to come against England and Bangladesh. However, they will be mindful of Nepal, who stunned the regional side 2-1 in a T20I series earlier this year.

The West Indies open their campaign against Bangladesh on February 7th, before a high-

stakes clash with England four days later - two matches likely to determine their path to the Super Eights. They round out the group stage against Nepal on February 15th and Italy on February 19th.

Group A features defending champions India, Pakistan, the USA, Netherlands and Namibia, while Australia, Sri Lanka, Ireland, Zimbabwe and Oman make up Group B. Group D - New Zealand, South Africa, Afghanistan, Canada and the UAE - has been dubbed the tournament's "group of death."

Forty group matches will be played from February 7-20, 2026. The Super Eights begin on February 21, followed by semi-finals in Kolkata/Colombo and Mumbai. The final is scheduled for March 8th in either Ahmedabad or Colombo.

- Rewritten from CMC



Iran To Boycott FIFA World Cup Draw In Washington Over U.S. Visa Dispute

Iran's Football Federation says it will boycott next week's FIFA World Cup draw in Washington, D.C., after accusing the United States of denying visas to several members of its delegation.

"We have informed FIFA that the decisions taken have nothing to do with sports, and the members of the Iranian delegation will not participate in the World Cup draw," a federation spokesperson told state television, according to Al Jazeera.

Tehran is now calling on FIFA President Gianni Infantino to intervene. Infantino has been in close talks with U.S. President Donald Trump as preparations ramp up for the 2026 Men's World Cup, co-hosted by the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.

FIFA has not commented publicly on the dispute.

The controversy comes as the U.S. continues its strict visa protocols. Secretary of State Marco Rubio recently stressed that match tickets alone do not guarantee entry into the country, and the administration has already ruled out special visa accommodations for fans from Haiti, which has qualified for the World Cup for the first time since 1974.

Iran secured its spot in the 2026 tournament after defeating Pakistan in March, marking its fourth straight World Cup appearance. The two countries have not had diplomatic relations for more than 45 years, and their last World Cup meeting in 2022 ended in a narrow 1-0 win for the United States.

- Rewritten from Al Jazeera



SPORTS NEWS



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An Island Erupts As The Numbers Crumble

Curaçao has fewer people than a mid-sized European suburb - just 185,000 residents suspended between sea and sky. Yet, when the final whistle blew inside Jamaica's National Stadium on Nov. 18th, it felt as if half the island had somehow squeezed into that concrete cauldron in spirit. A pocket of blue supporters roared against a vast wave of Jamaican yellow, willing their team through every second of a tense, nervy draw. That draw did more than end a qualifying group. It broke a record that once felt immovable. Iceland's 2018 World Cup run - long considered the benchmark for the smallest nation ever to qualify - has now been eclipsed. Curaçao, smaller still, has rewritten football history.

Ninety Minutes Of Nerve

For much of the night, it did not feel like a fairy tale. Jamaica battered the woodwork three times. Set pieces curled into Curaçao's penalty area like guided missiles. Every clearance felt borrowed from luck. In one corner, roughly two chartered planes' worth of Curaçaoan supporters - "the ultras," as captain Leandro Bacuna fondly called them - sang until their voices broke.



Curaçao fans celebrate their team's historic win. (Photo: EFE/EPA/Marco van der Caaij)

"We started with something like a dream to qualify for the World Cup," Bacuna told The Athletic. Dreams, however, are fragile.

In stoppage time, with Jamaica desperate for a winner, referee Ivan Barton pointed to the penalty spot. The stadium exploded - then VAR intervened. Barton reversed the call. Euphoria turned to stunned silence, and moments later, the final whistle set off a flood of emotion: players collapsing, staff embracing, phones buzzing across Willemstad. Curaçao had resisted not just Jamaica, but

history itself.

The Phone Call That Changed Everything

None of this happens without a phone call that should have gone to voicemail. Gilbert Martina, president of the Curaçao Football Federation, still sounds amazed retelling it. "I received a call from Dick," he recalled. "I heard Curaçao is looking for a head coach. I'm available."

Martina had already tried - and failed - to lure Dutch giants Bert van Marwijk and Louis van Gaal. Van Marwijk politely declined. Van Gaal, famously bluntly, told him: "If I coach again, it will be with a team that can become world champions." Dick Advocaat, however, offered something else entirely: his name, his legacy and his willingness to take on a small, improbable project.

Martina asked for one thing: "Can I use your name to acquire sponsors? Because a big name attracts sponsors... it gives hope." Advocaat agreed. Suddenly, doors opened. Money followed. Travel, training camps and match preparation became structured rather than improvised.

Though absent from

Jamaica due to his wife's illness, Advocaat remained locked in via assistant Dean Gorré and a trusted staff. After qualification, he sent a message that captured the surreal joy of the moment: "Congrats. Incredible, fantastic, so good! What an adventure."

His influence, players say, exceeds tactics. "Everyone knows Dick, he is a good coach," Juninho Bacuna said. "It changed a lot outside the pitch - more professionalism. And on the pitch, it's: if we don't win, make sure we don't lose." That mantra became the backbone of Curaçao's campaign.

Dutch Roots, Caribbean Heartbeat

Curaçao's rise is the product of twenty years of deliberate work - and a unique bond with the Netherlands.

Only one player on this qualifying squad, Tahith Chong, was born on the island. The rest - born in Dutch cities to Curaçaoan families - were recruited through years of outreach. Former federation leader Jean Francisco recognized early that the island alone could not supply the required talent pool. The Diaspora had to be woven in.

The result is a team that blends Dutch structure with Caribbean rhythm. "We have one big family," Juninho Bacuna said.

A Caribbean Night For The Ages

The final match in Kingston was not a tactical masterpiece. Curaçao survived on heart, counterattacks, and the kind of collective belief that makes small nations dangerous. Jamaica's coach Steve McClaren resigned minutes after full-time, despite having a playoff path. Curaçao, meanwhile, qualified directly.

"In qualification, every game is a final," Martina said. "You need a coach who can

prepare a team to play based on results... Dick Advocaat is a master in doing that."

Bacuna admitted he had willed the moment into existence. "Two or three weeks ago, I dreamed about it... I wanted it done and dusted."

Now, it is real. Curaçao is the smallest nation in history to reach a World Cup.

A Night Of Wider Caribbean Triumph

Remarkably, Haiti clinched qualification on Curaçaoan soil - forced to play home matches abroad due to violent instability and gang control in Port-au-Prince. The moment carried enormous emotional weight for Haitian fans and players who have lived through years of displacement and national trauma.

Elsewhere in the region:

- Panama grabbed the final automatic spot with a commanding 3-0 win over El Salvador.
- Suriname secured a dramatic intercontinental play-off spot on goal difference.

A Historic Caribbean Qualifying Cycle

For the first time ever, the Caribbean can celebrate a landmark achievement:

- Curaçao — World Cup debut
- Haiti — first appearance in 52 years
- Jamaica — into the playoffs
- Suriname — into the playoffs
- Panama — second qualification in three tournaments.

For Curaçao and Haiti, it will forever be remembered as the night Caribbean football announced itself on the world stage - defiant, united, and unforgettable.

- Rewritten from
LatinAmerican Post and
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South Florida Motorcycle Club Rallies Relief For Hurricane-Hit Jamaica

South Florida's Caribbean community is once again mobilizing after disaster - this time with help arriving on two wheels.

Last weekend, members of the Heavy Breathers Motorcycle Club rolled into the Broward County Library's Miramar branch with boxes of water, diapers, wipes, canned goods, and other essential supplies for families in Jamaica still struggling after Hurricane Melissa.

Club president Brad "Timeless" Blackman said the devastation across the island

moved him to take action.

"I was devastated by the amount they lost," Blackman said. "People lost homes. I felt more than obligated to give back."

Though born in the United States, Blackman has Jamaican roots. He and his fellow riders coordinated through the Motorcycle Federation Presidents Council in Miami and partnered with groups including Least the Saints MC to gather donations.

"We rallied together, brought it to our clubhouse and the rest is history," he said.

"There is power in unity within the motorcycle culture. We just want to bring a positive light to club culture."

Broward County Commissioner Alexandra P. Davis welcomed the riders on arrival. She stressed that long-term support for Jamaica remains critical.

"Broward County has opened up its libraries and its parks so wherever you are, there should be a location near you where we continue to collect items because the need is great," Davis said. She added that with so many Caribbean

families living in South Florida, keeping the relief effort active is essential. "We really want to make sure we do our part and not let the story die."

To make donating easier, Broward County has opened several drop-off sites for residents:

South Regional/Broward College Library
7300 Pines Blvd., Pembroke Pines
Mon-Wed: 10 a.m.-8 p.m.;
Thurs-Sun: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Miramar Branch Library & Education Center
2050 Civic Center Pl., Miramar

Wed: 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Thurs-Sat: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Beginning Nov. 3: Mon-Fri: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

West Regional Library

8601 W. Broward Blvd., Plantation
Mon-Wed: 10 a.m.-8 p.m.;
Thurs-Sun: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Southwest Regional Library
16835 Sheridan St., Pembroke Pines
Mon-Wed: 10 a.m.-8 p.m.;
Thurs-Sun: 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Joel "Big Bird" Garner Awarded Barbados' Highest National Honor



West Indies cricket legend, Joel "Big Bird" Garner, was one of only three Barbadians to receive the Order of Freedom of Barbados this year.

West Indies cricket legend, Joel "Big Bird" Garner, has been conferred with the Order of Freedom of Barbados, the country's highest national honor, during the 2025 Independence

and Republic celebrations. Garner, 72, was one of only three Barbadians to receive the award this year, honored alongside Central Bank Governor Dr. Kevin Greenidge and healthcare

leader Dr. Kurt Lambert for "distinguished and extraordinary service."

The citation praised Garner for his "outstanding leadership as a distinguished sports administrator, sterling service to national cricket development, and extraordinary contribution to West Indies and Barbados cricket as one of the greatest fast bowlers in history."

The former West Indies star - renowned for his towering 6'8" presence, lethal yorkers, and role in the fearsome pace attack

of the 1970s and 80s - accepted the accolade with characteristic humility.

"I'm thankful, humbled," Garner said. "I want to remember all those people who were with me along the journey... I'm sharing the award with them because we didn't do it alone."

He added, "They were with us in the trenches doing all the work, bringing some joy and happiness to the people around us."

Garner also paid tribute to the woman who kept him

grounded despite global fame:

"I'm a grandmother's boy... she's the one who kept my feet to the ground."

Reflecting simply on his career, the fast bowling great said, "When I was playing, all I was doing was enjoying what I was doing and trying to perform. It was a profession, so I tried to do the best that I could."

- Rewritten from CMC



FIFA World Cup 2026 Draw: What Fans Need To Know



The road to the 2026 FIFA World Cup becomes clearer on Friday, December 5th, when the official draw takes place in Washington, D.C. The ceremony will sort the expanded 48-team field into 12 groups of four ahead of the tournament, which runs from June 11 to July 19 across the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Fans can watch the draw live at 12 p.m. ET on FOX, Telemundo, TSN and FIFA.com. Forty-two nations have already

qualified, including hosts USA, Canada and Mexico, along with global powers such as Argentina, France, England, Spain, Brazil, Germany and Portugal. Six spots remain open and will be decided in March through UEFA and inter-confederation playoffs.

Teams are seeded into four pots based on the November 2025 FIFA Men's World Rankings. Pot 1 includes the host nations and top-ranked sides, while Pot 4 contains lower-ranked qualifiers, UEFA playoff placeholders and two inter-confederation playoff entrants. FIFA rules ensure each group contains at least one European team and no more than two.

The 2026 tournament will be the biggest in history, featuring 104 matches across 16 venues, with 78 games played in the United States. The group stage runs from June 11-27, followed by knockout rounds leading up to the July 19 final.



Spring Health



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

With a proven track record now in our 35th year of service to readers in the United States and the Caribbean Basin, Caribbean Today reaches an audience of over 112,000 highly qualified readers. They have median household income of \$63,000 and enjoy a higher disposable income. 19% have a college degree, 32% have some college. In today's economy,

our readers are highly esteemed. 59.6% own their own homes. 76% are between 25-54 years of age (readership study conducted by Circulation Verification Council).

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Organized by the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau, Art Of Black Miami showcases the rich artistic diversity of Miami and Miami Beach through its art program and acts as a destination driver creating a thriving business ecosystem for our arts community. Join us in celebrating this initiative's 10th anniversary of fostering economic growth, cultural exchange, and appreciation among visitors and residents alike.



For more information on Art of Black Miami events and exhibitions
visit www.ArtofBlackMiami.com