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Dr. Geralde Gabeau wipes away a tear after speaking at a press conference held in the wake of the Supreme Court decision to overturn TPS for Haitians and Syrians on June 25, 2026, in Boston, MA. (Photo by Jessica Rinaldi/The Boston Globe via Getty Images)

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Here Are Some Of The Top Headlines Making Caribbean News:

REGIONAL

The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States has praised Cuba for maintaining decades of cooperation with the subregional grouping despite continuing economic pressure from the United States.

OECS Director General Dr. Didacus Jules made the remarks while receiving credentials from Cuba's new ambassador, Yenielys Vilma Regueiferos Linares.

Jules said Cuba has consistently supported the Eastern Caribbean through medical services, scholarships, literacy programs, disaster recovery assistance and initiatives such as Operation Miracle, which restored sight to thousands across the region. He said the OECS intends to deepen cooperation with Havana in health, education, agriculture, disaster resilience and ocean governance.

Regueiferos Linares thanked OECS members for their solidarity, particularly as Cuba faces severe fuel shortages

and wider economic challenges. The OECS includes six independent Eastern Caribbean countries and the associate members Montserrat, Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands.

GUYANA

Guyana President Irfaan Ali has appointed a five-member international Commission of Inquiry to investigate the sinking of the MV Barima, one of the country's deadliest maritime disasters.

The commission will be chaired by Belizean jurist Justice Godfrey Smith and includes maritime experts from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Poland. Its members will examine the circumstances surrounding the ferry's capsizing, including passenger loading,

the vessel's seaworthiness, crew performance and compliance with maritime safety regulations. The inquiry will also review the effectiveness of the search-and-rescue operation and determine whether negligence, misconduct, or institutional failures contributed to the tragedy.



Husband and father Nathaniel Matabheek buried his wife, Rachel Wells Matabheek, 30, and their three children - Nathaniel Jr., 8, Natalia, 5, and Ezekiel, 3, following a heartbreaking funeral on July 24, 2026. All four died when the ferry sank on July 19th. Nathaniel Matabheek survived.

President Ali said the commission will recommend legislative, regulatory and operational reforms aimed at strengthening maritime safety and preventing similar disasters in the future. The MV Barima disaster claimed dozens of lives and prompted widespread calls for an independent investigation.

JAMAICA

Residents of Troy, Trelawny, staged protests and blocked roads following the killing of 10-year-old Shani Coke and the arrest of a community member accused in a retaliatory mob attack. Shani was found dead in bushes on July 21st with injuries suggesting she had been sexually assaulted and murdered. Her death triggered outrage in the rural community.

Residents later attacked 37-year-old Delroy Coke, a convicted sex offender whom they suspected of involvement in the child's killing. Coke was beaten and chopped to death, while his father was seriously injured. Police said there was

no confirmed evidence that Coke had committed the child's murder.

More than 100 residents subsequently demonstrated, demanding the release of Maxwell Henry, known as "Max," who was detained in connection with Coke's death. Police have increased their presence in the area as separate investigations continue into Shani's murder, the mob killing and the assault on Coke's father.

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Trinidad and Tobago businessman Dominic Hadeed and his wife, Genevieve Hadeed, have been released after spending nearly a month in detention without being charged over allegations of a plot to assassinate Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and other senior government officials.

The couple, arrested under emergency powers introduced during the country's state of emergency, denied the allegations and argued that their detention was politically motivated.

Their release came after Homeland Security Minister Roger Alexander accepted a tribunal's recommendation that it was no longer in the public interest to continue holding them.

Hadeed, owner of the Blue Waters bottled water company, is one of Trinidad and Tobago's best-known businessmen. The case has sparked debate over the government's use of emergency powers and civil liberties during the ongoing state of emergency.

Meanwhile, the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago has condemned the firebombing of a vehicle belonging to Tobago-based journalist Elizabeth Williams and called for a swift police investigation.

The incident occurred early Friday morning. Williams, a multimedia journalist with TV6, and her daughter were able to extinguish the flames and were not injured.

Police responded and processed the scene but had not publicly commented on the investigation.

MATT said there is currently no evidence linking the attack to Williams' work but stressed that the possibility should not be dismissed.

"Journalists must be able to carry out their duties without fear, and any attack of this nature should have no place in our society," the association said.

MATT urged police to determine who was responsible and the motive behind the attack, warning that violence or intimidation involving journalists raises serious concerns about press freedom.

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DHS Says Haiti Is Safe Enough for Deportations Even as U.S. State Department Warns Americans Against Travel



Immigrant rights advocates rally in support of Haitians following the expiration of Temporary Protected Status, which leaves more than 350,000 people vulnerable to deportation.

BY CT STAFF WRITER

More than 350,000 Haitians living in the United States lost Temporary Protected Status (TPS) at 11:59 p.m. Monday, clearing the way for expanded deportations to a country that the U.S. government itself continues to warn Americans not to visit because of widespread gang violence, kidnappings and civil unrest.

The termination follows months of legal battles over the Trump administration's decision to end TPS for Haiti, a humanitarian program that had allowed eligible Haitians to live and work legally in the United States since the devastating 2010 earthquake.

The legal fight culminated in a June 25 U.S. Supreme Court ruling clearing the way for the administration to terminate the protections after lower court decisions had temporarily delayed the move.

While the Department of Homeland Security defended its decision, saying conditions in Haiti had improved enough to justify ending the program, another branch of the U.S. government continues to issue one of its strongest travel warnings.

HAITI CONDITIONS

In a statement to NPR, DHS said: "conditions in Haiti have improved sufficiently to support the return of Haitian nationals." The agency also argued that TPS "was never intended to be a de facto asylum program" and that temporary protections "cannot become permanent by default."

Yet the U.S. State Department continues to maintain Haiti under its highest Level 4: Do Not Travel advisory, warning Americans against visiting the country because of kidnappings, armed gang activity, violent crime, terrorism and civil unrest. The advisory also notes that the U.S. government's ability to provide emergency assistance in Haiti is severely limited.

Yet, fresh from a visit to Haiti, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz painted a grim picture before the UN Security Council, describing parts of Port-au-Prince as a "kill zone" where Haitian police officers had reportedly been brutally murdered and their bodies desecrated by armed gangs. Despite those warnings,

communities - could become a major focus of enforcement efforts.

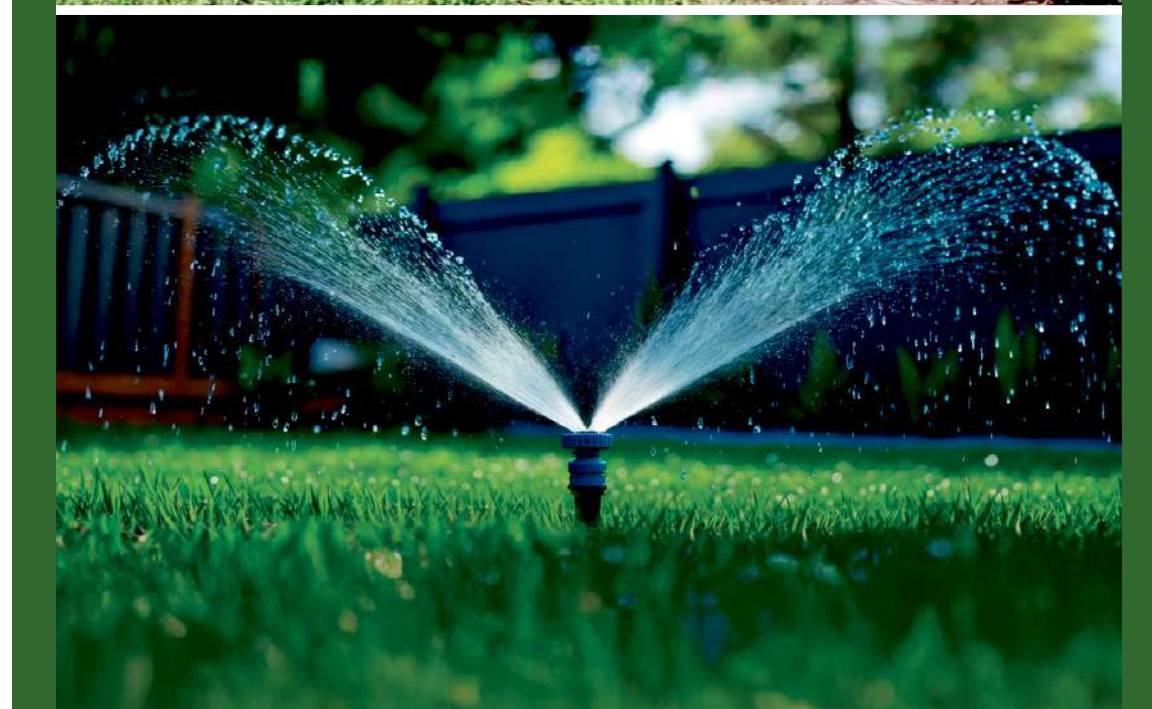
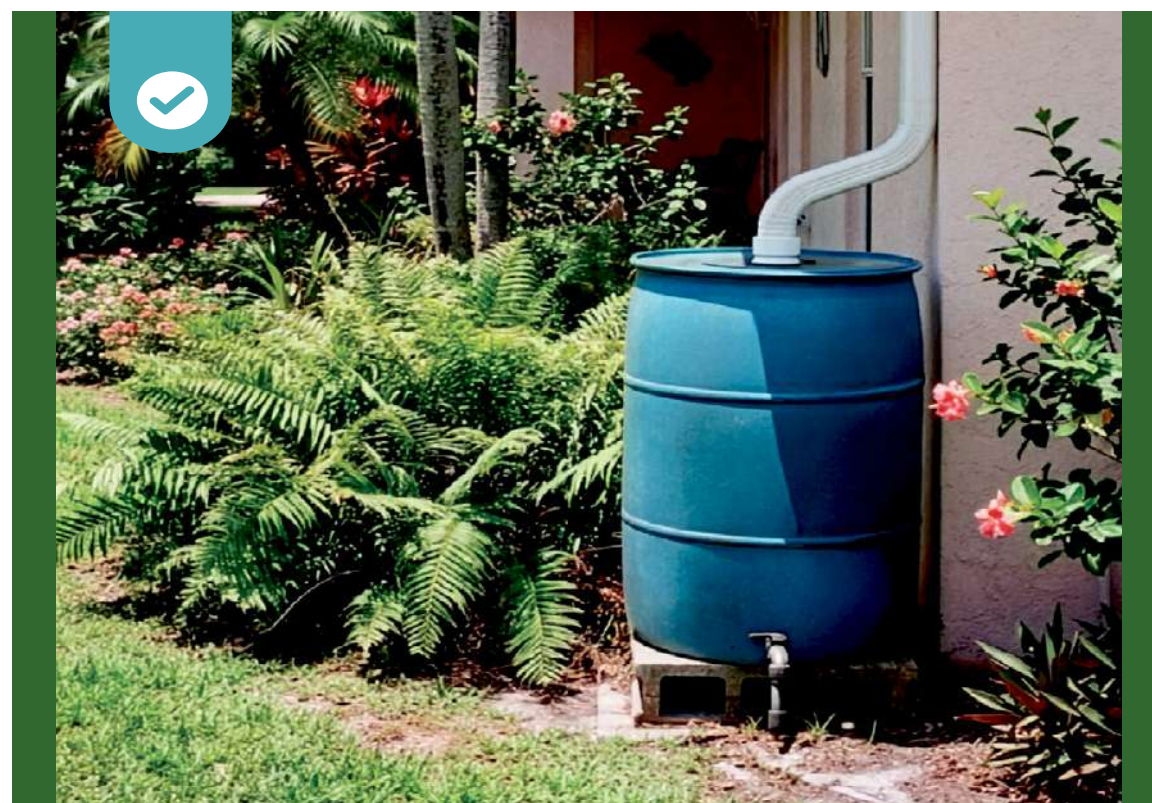
For hundreds of thousands of Haitian families who have built lives, careers and businesses in the United States over the past 16 years, the expiration of TPS means the loss of work authorization and protection from deportation unless they qualify for another lawful immigration status.

Immigrant rights groups

continue to urge the administration to suspend deportations, restore TPS protections and support legislation that would provide Haitians with an additional period of humanitarian relief. The House of Representatives has already voted to extend Haitian TPS for three additional years. The bill now sits awaiting action in the Senate. Meanwhile, thousands of Haitian families are living in uncertainty. Many are reporting to

mandatory immigration check-ins wearing ankle monitors while wondering whether they will be allowed to remain in the only country their children truly know.

For now, however, the end of TPS marks the beginning of a new chapter of uncertainty for one of America's largest Caribbean immigrant communities.



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Guyana's MV Barima Disaster Is Worst In Caribbean Since 1970

With 73 bodies recovered and 30 people still missing and presumed dead, Guyana's MV Barima ferry disaster has become the Caribbean's deadliest maritime tragedy in more than five decades, reviving painful memories of the 1970 sinking of the MV Christena off St. Kitts and Nevis that claimed 233 lives.

As search and recovery operations continue off Guyana's Essequibo coast and many families turn to burying the dead, the scale of the tragedy has prompted questions that extend well beyond this single disaster. They are questions about aging infrastructure, passenger safety, government oversight, and whether the region has learned the lessons of past maritime catastrophes.

Prime Minister Mark Phillips said 76 people were rescued after the ferry capsized on July 19th, while recovery crews continue searching for those still missing. Authorities have acknowledged discrepancies between the vessel's official passenger manifest and the number of people believed to have been aboard, an issue that echoes one of the principal findings of the Commission of Inquiry into the Christena disaster more than half a century ago.

The comparison is striking. The MV Christena, which sank between St. Kitts and Nevis on Aug. 1, 1970, was found to have been carrying far more passengers than could be accurately accounted for. Today, Guyana faces similar questions after officials confirmed that dozens of survivors were not listed on the ferry's manifest.



Some of the victims of Guyana's MV Barima, which sank on July 19th, leaving over 100 presumed dead. It is now the worst Caribbean maritime disaster since 1970.

Guyana has already announced an independent Commission of Inquiry to examine the circumstances surrounding the sinking, including loading procedures, passenger records and crew conduct. The investigation is also expected to examine why the nearly 90-year-old MV Barima remained in active service despite plans to replace it with a newer vessel that has yet to assume the route for which it was purchased.

For many across the Caribbean, however, the tragedy represents more than a national disaster. It is a reminder that ferry transportation remains a lifeline for many island and coastal communities, making investment in modern vessels, reliable infrastructure and rigorous safety standards essential.

As families continue burying their loved ones, the MV Barima disaster has become not only Guyana's greatest maritime tragedy in generations, but also a sobering call for the Caribbean to

ensure that history is not allowed to repeat itself.

The most troubling question may be why the Barima was still operating at all. In April 2023, President Irfaan Ali commissioned the G\$2.5 billion (approximately US\$12.7 million) MV Ma Lisha as the vessel to replace the aging ferry on the Port Kaituma route. More than three years later, however, the newer ferry had still not taken over that service, reportedly because structural problems delayed completion of the Port Kaituma wharf. The nearly 90-year-old Barima therefore remained on the route it was supposed to leave behind.

The international response has also drawn scrutiny. France, Trinidad and Tobago and Brazil reportedly provided personnel, vessels or diving assistance, while the United States offered condolences but no publicly reported operational support. That contrast is particularly striking given Washington's recent promises of deeper cooperation

with Guyana in energy and infrastructure. For grieving families, the absence of visible U.S. assistance has raised difficult questions about what strategic partnership means during a

national emergency.

- *Rewritten from NewsAmericasNow.com*



Trump's New Tariffs Hit These Four Caribbean Countries

US President Trump is imposing new tariffs on dozens of U.S. trading partners, including four Caribbean nations, after determining they have failed to adequately enforce bans on imports made with forced labor. The Bahamas, the Dominican Republic and Guyana will face a 12.5% tariff, while Trinidad and Tobago will face a 10% tariff, under action U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer announced Thursday. The new tariffs apply to 60 economies in total, accounting for 99% of U.S. imports, and take effect as temporary 10% worldwide tariffs Trump had imposed under a separate authority expire at 12:01 a.m. Friday.

"The United States has had a forced labor import ban for nearly a century and rigorously enforces it; it's well past time for our trading partners to do the same," Greer said in a statement. "Today's action will begin to correct what is both a human rights abuse and a distortive trade practice to improve the welfare of workers everywhere."

Ironically, all four countries have signed on to Trump's Shield of the Americas, and Trinidad and Tobago in particular has been front and center in its support of the US amid angst with other CARICOM nations. Guyana last week saw the US State Department host an investment forum to push American businesses to invest there.

Why These Tariffs, And Why Now

The administration is invoking Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, a more durable legal authority than the emergency powers Trump previously used to justify sweeping global tariffs. The Supreme Court struck down those earlier tariffs earlier this year, ruling that the International Emergency Economic Powers Act did not authorize them and forcing the administration to refund duties already collected. Trump had then relied on temporary Section 122 tariffs, which are capped at 150 days by law and expire Friday. Section 301, by contrast, allows the president to impose tariffs against countries found to engage in "unjustifiable," "unreasonable" or "discriminatory" trade practices, and has previously survived legal challenges when used against China. The forced labor investigation began in March, when USTR opened probes into the enforcement of import bans on goods made with forced labor by 60 economies. Following two rounds of public hearings and more than 2,100 public comments,



USTR determined 54 of those economies, including all four Caribbean nations named, have failed to impose and effectively enforce such a ban. A separate group of six economies, including Canada, Mexico and the European Union, were found to have failed to effectively enforce a ban they do have in place.

Oil, gas, fertilizer and goods qualifying for duty-free status under the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement are exempt from the new tariffs.

What It Means For The Caribbean

The tariffs add a new layer of economic pressure on four Caribbean economies already navigating a complex relationship with Washington on trade, security and investment. Guyana in particular has been the subject of an intensifying US commercial courtship in recent months, with American officials publicly pushing to position US companies to lead the country's energy and infrastructure sectors even as this new tariff adds friction to its broader trade relationship with Washington.

Human rights advocates offered mixed reactions to the broader tariff action. Martina Vandenberg, founder and president of the Human Trafficking Legal Center, said import bans can be "a potentially effective tool in combating forced labor across the globe," but urged a phased approach so countries have time to build enforcement mechanisms, warning that without it, "the import bans will be thin slips of paper with no enforcement." Isabelle Glimcher, a senior research scientist for global labor at the NYU Stern Center for Human Rights, noted the tariffs are structured around what countries import rather than what they produce domestically, though she said the threat of tariffs has already pushed some countries to strengthen their own forced labor import policies.

Tariffs are ultimately paid by the US companies importing the goods, costs that are often passed on to American consumers, and the administration is rolling out the new levies just months ahead of the November midterm elections.

- *NewsAmericasNow.com*



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South Florida Man To Spend 20 Years In Jail For Laundering COVID Relief Money That Helped Kill Haiti President

A Coral Springs man will spend the next 20 years in federal prison for laundering fraudulently obtained pandemic relief funds that helped finance the 2021 assassination of Haiti President Jovenel Moïse. U.S. District Judge Jacqueline Becerra handed down the sentence on July 23rd in Miami federal court after Keegan Harricharan, 42, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit money laundering, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida announced.

How The Money Moved

Prosecutors said Harricharan and a co-conspirator, Jacob Israel, fraudulently obtained roughly \$840,827 in Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loan funds issued under the CARES Act, beginning in June 2020, with Israel and associates pocketing about \$126,124 in kickbacks. Harricharan ran a Coral Springs company called TNR Holding Group Inc., which prosecutors say he used to move the fraud proceeds toward the assassination plot.



Convicted Coral Springs resident Keegan Harricharan, 42, will spend the next 20 years of his life in jail.

During the spring of 2021, Harricharan met repeatedly with members of the conspiracy in South Florida, where the group discussed funding, weapons, ammunition and personnel for the operation, according to court records. Between May 18 and May 28, 2021, about \$175,000 in fraud proceeds landed in the TNR Holding bank account; Harricharan quickly wired the money to co-defendant Walter Veintemilla for distribution to other plotters. Weeks later, in early June, he wired another

\$80,000, including EIDL funds, through the same pipeline.

U.S. Attorney Jason A. Reding Quiñones for the Southern District of Florida said the case shows how financial crime can fuel far more dangerous plots, saying Harricharan helped funnel stolen taxpayer money into a conspiracy that ultimately ended in bloodshed and political violence.

The Assassination

On July 7, 2021, a team of Colombian mercenaries entered Moïse's private residence in Port-au-Prince and exchanged gunfire with security guards. The attackers shot and killed Moïse, 53, and wounded First Lady Martine Moïse, while the couple's children hid inside the home during the attack. The killing plunged Haiti into what has become years of continued political and security turmoil.

Part Of A Broader Prosecution

Harricharan's sentencing is the latest in a yearslong prosecution spanning Miami federal court. Four other defendants in the case

were convicted at trial in May. A fifth defendant is scheduled for trial later this year, and a sixth, who pleaded guilty, awaits sentencing in December. Previous sentences in the broader case have included life imprisonment for former Haitian

Sen. John Joel Joseph, Haitian-Chilean national Rodolphe Jaar, and Colombian ex-army officer Germán Alejandro Rivera García, all convicted or pleaded guilty to roles in the plot to kidnap or kill Moïse.



South Florida Woman Arrested In Jamaica In \$34 Million COVID Fraud Case

A South Florida woman accused of participating in a \$34 million COVID-19 relief fraud scheme has been arrested in Jamaica and returned to Florida to face federal charges.

Elaine Angene Escoe, 41, had been placed on the FBI's "Most Wanted Fraudsters" list after failing to appear in court in June 2025. The FBI had offered a reward of up to \$150,000 for information leading to her arrest and conviction.

Federal prosecutors allege Escoe and others submitted more than 90 fraudulent applications for Paycheck Protection Program

loans and other pandemic relief funds between 2020 and 2021. The applications allegedly included false payroll, employee and revenue information.

Investigators said the scheme obtained approximately \$29.1 million in PPP funds and millions more through other federal programs.

Escoe faces wire fraud, money laundering and conspiracy charges. Other defendants in the case have been convicted or pleaded guilty and received prison sentences.



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CARICOM Steps Up Reparations Campaign With Revised Action Plan

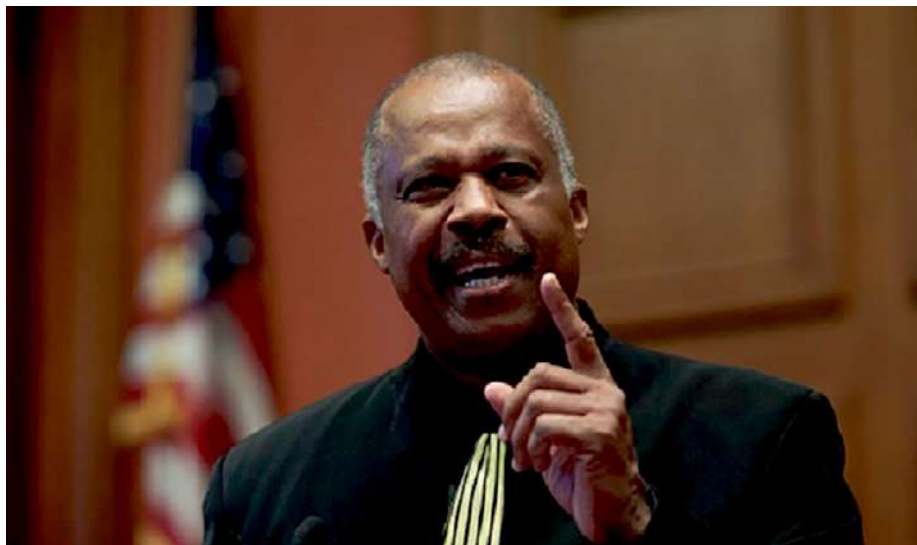
BY DAVID L. SNELLING
Edited By Felicia J. Persaud

Caribbean governments are intensifying their campaign for reparatory justice, adopting a revised regional action plan and expanding diplomatic efforts to engage Britain and other former European colonial powers.

CARICOM leaders approved an updated Ten-Point Plan for Reparatory Justice during their July 5-8 summit in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia. The plan seeks redress for the lasting consequences of the transatlantic slave trade, the enslavement of Africans and the genocide of Indigenous peoples across the region.

The renewed strategy includes closer collaboration with the African Union, a coordinated Caribbean presence at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November and participation in the Third Regional Conference on Reparations in Barbados.

Saint Lucia Prime Minister Philip J. Pierre, CARICOM's chairman, said the initiative forms part of a broader effort to improve the lives of Caribbean people and address historical



Sir Hilary Beckles, chairman of the CARICOM Reparations Commission, said the Caribbean remains among the world's most heavily colonized regions. (CARICOM image)

injustices that continue to affect the region.

A Caribbean delegation also traveled to Britain from July 13-16 for meetings aimed at advancing discussions on reparations and the constitutional future of the remaining British Overseas Territories.

Sir Hilary Beckles, chairman of the CARICOM Reparations Commission, said the Caribbean remains among the world's most heavily colonized regions. British

Overseas Territories in the Caribbean include Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The regional campaign has gained additional momentum following a United Nations resolution adopted in March that recognized the trafficking and enslavement of Africans as among history's gravest crimes against humanity.

Barbados Ambassador to CARICOM David Comissiong

said apologies, museums and memorials offered by some European governments were appreciated but could not replace formal negotiations.

"Those gestures are not negotiations," Comissiong said, arguing that the social and economic damage caused by slavery and colonialism remains deeply embedded in Caribbean societies.

Jamaica has also indicated that it intends to submit a petition asking King Charles

III to refer legal questions surrounding reparations to the Privy Council, its final court of appeal.

Although King Charles has previously expressed personal sorrow over the suffering caused by slavery, the British government has resisted calls for direct financial reparations.

CARICOM's campaign is based on the position that reparatory justice should extend beyond monetary compensation to include debt relief, development assistance, public-health investment, education, technology transfer and programs addressing the continuing economic effects of colonialism.



Bob Marley Family Teams With Cannabis Company On New Strains

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL

A major American cannabis company has teamed up with Bob Marley's family to produce two strains. "One Love" and "Redemption" are the names of the products, which were released in June.

The Humboldt Seed Company, California's largest licensed cannabis seed provider, announced its collaboration with the Marleys, which they said resulted from "a joint pheno hunt with the Rasta community and Dr. Machel Emanuel, a botanist at the University of the West Indies (Mona)."

Benjamin Lind, co-founder and Chief Science Officer at Humboldt Seed Company, said the strains took five years to develop. They are geared towards smokers with different tastes.

"Redemption, an Indica-dominant cultivar, delivers a calming, grounded experience. Whereas One Love, a sativa-dominant cultivar, gives more uplifting effects. Both are aesthetically striking, but give effects at opposite ends of the spectrum," he said.

Lind noted that the strains pay tribute to Bob Marley's "legacy of unity, resilience, and cultural impact." They are

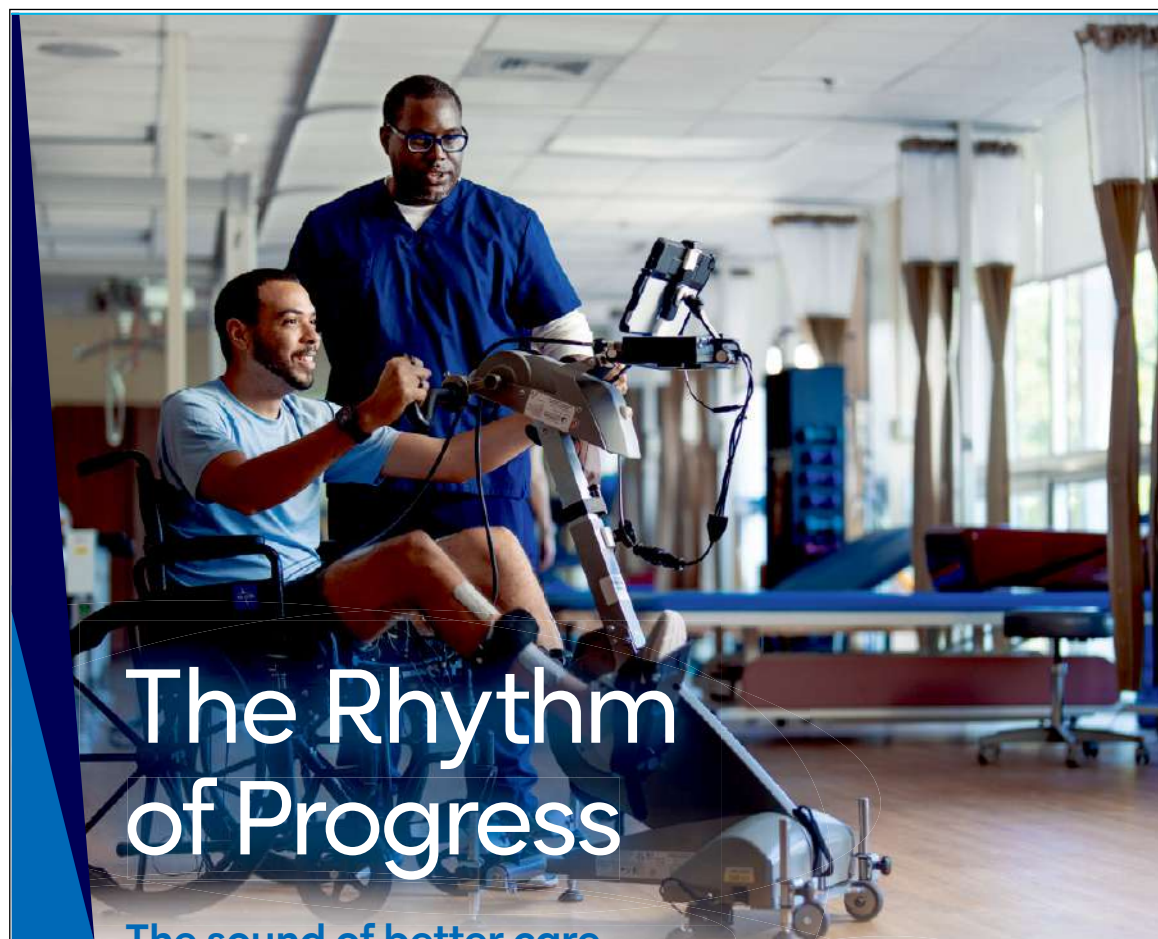
available in the United States and Europe, which are the Humboldt Seed Company's biggest markets.

They have released approximately 80 seeds since it was established in 2001. For the past nine years, Lind said the company has worked on several cannabis projects in Jamaica.

This is their second venture with the Marleys. In 2022, they provided genetics for a California ganja farm owned by Grammy winner Damian "Junior Gong" Marley.

The Humboldt Seed Company is one of 3,659 licensed cannabis companies in California. According to the California Cannabis Operators Association, they reported \$3.9 billion in sales in 2025.

Bob Marley - who died in 1981 at age 36 - is not only synonymous with reggae and the Rastafarian movement. He openly smoked ganja (as cannabis is known in Jamaica) and called for its legalization. Some of Marley's songs, including Kaya, addressed his love for the weed, which has been decriminalized in Jamaica since 2015. There are several ganja dispensaries in the Caribbean country.



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Queens, NY Soldier Killed In Iranian Attack In Jordan Was Born In Trinidad

U.S. Army Sgt. Angel Sarah Rampersad, who was killed in action on July 17 during an Iranian ballistic missile and drone attack on Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan, was an immigrant from Trinidad and Tobago.

Rampersad, 28, of Ozone Park, Queens, was reportedly killed during an Iranian ballistic missile and drone attack on the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan, according to the Department of War. She was born in Trinidad and Tobago and moved to New York at age 5 with her mother, an American citizen, and an older sister. Her Trinidad-born father remained in Trinidad.

She grew up in Ozone Park, NY, and taught herself to play drums, sang in her church choir, and ran track and played softball at Forest Hills High School. An uncle who served in the military inspired her toward the Army, though her mother, Carol Acevedo, initially asked her to attend college first. Rampersad enrolled at CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice before enlisting at 21, around 2019, and re-enlisted last year. Her awards included the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal and the Army Service Ribbon.

Remembered In Ozone Park

An American flag now flies at half-staff outside her family's home in Queens, NY. Rampersad was one of four American service members killed in the attack, alongside Army 1st Lt. Tyler James Feehan, 25, of Hawaii, and Army Pvt. Isabella



U.S. Army Sgt. Angel Sarah Rampersad was born in Trinidad before moving to the US and joining the Army.

Gonzales, 19, of Texas. A fourth soldier, Sgt. Michael Emmanuel Swinton of North Carolina, died separately while attempting to disarm a downed Iranian drone in Iraq. Their deaths bring the total number of American service members killed since the war with Iran escalated to 18.

Sgt. Rampersad was assigned to 1st Battalion, 57th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 52nd Air Defense Artillery Brigade, 10th Army Air & Missile Defense Command, Ansbach, Germany.

The government of Trinidad and Tobago said Rampersad's heritage gave her death "a particular resonance" for the nation, extending sympathies to her family, fellow service members and all those whose lives she touched.

In a statement released by her family, Rampersad was remembered as "a gentle giant" who "stood up for those who couldn't fight for themselves – a defender, a friend," and who "loved her family fiercely and

will live on in the hearts of everyone she touched."

"Today, we mourn the loss of Sgt. Angel Rampersad," said Brig. Gen. Glenn Henke, commanding general of the 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command, in a statement.

Rampersad's family traveled to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware on Wednesday for the dignified transfer of her remains alongside those of the three other fallen service members, a ceremony attended by President Trump and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and other officials also offered condolences, with Hochul saying, "New York, and our nation, are safer because of brave Americans like her who answer the call to serve" while New York City's Mayor Zohran Kwame Mamdani stated: "Sgt. Rampersad's courage and sacrifice will be remembered not just in Queens, but across all five boroughs. My deepest condolences are with her family, loved ones, and all those grieving this profound loss."

Sergeant Rampersad was assigned to the 52nd Air Defense Artillery Brigade, 10th Army Air & Missile Defense Command, in Ansbach, Germany. Her father is a national of Trinidad and Tobago, while her mother is an American citizen.

"Her passing is therefore mourned with particular sorrow in Trinidad and Tobago. Though she served under the United States flag, Sergeant Rampersad also shared a meaningful connection with our nation through her Trinidad and Tobago heritage," said Trinidad & Tobago Prime

Minister Kamala Persad-Bissessar. On Tuesday July 21st, a team from the Consulate General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in New York visited Sergeant Rampersad's family to express the nation's sympathies and offer support.

The Ozone Park Residents Block Association planned

a candlelight vigil outside Rampersad's family home this week, with neighbors describing her as someone whose sense of duty and warmth touched the wider community well beyond her own family.



Oliver Mair To Replace The Late Alson Roach Wilson As Jamaica's Next Consul General In New York

Jamaica's Foreign Affairs Minister Kamina Johnson Smith has appointed Roderick Oliver Mair, the country's current consul general in Miami, as the next consul general in New York.

Mair will succeed the late Alson Roach Wilson and is expected to assume office within the coming weeks. He will also hold concurrent accreditation to Bermuda and Puerto Rico.

Johnson Smith said Mair's more than seven years of consular leadership, strong diaspora relationships and ability to mobilize partnerships had prepared him to oversee the New York consulate, which serves Jamaicans across 33 U.S. states.

During his tenure in Miami, Mair led initiatives in diaspora engagement, trade and investment promotion, healthcare, education and consular services. He also established the annual Jamaica Hi-5 Reggae Run/Walk, which has helped support 17 rural



Jamaica's Miami Consul General Oliver Mair named as new consul general of New York.

health facilities.

Mair played a coordinating role in Jamaica's hurricane relief efforts, helping mobilize thousands of volunteers, collection sites and humanitarian partnerships across South Florida.



Island SPACE HERS Celebration Returns Aug. 29 To Honor Caribbean Women

Caribbean women making an impact in business, public service, the arts and community leadership will be celebrated when Island SPACE Caribbean Museum presents its fourth annual HERS - Honoring Exceptionally Regal Sisters event on Saturday, Aug. 29th.

The celebration will take place from 1 to 6 p.m. at the Tamarac Community Center, 8601 W. Commercial Blvd., and is expected to bring together hundreds of guests for an afternoon of recognition, culture, conversation and connection.

The centerpiece will be the HERS Honoree Recognition Ceremony, highlighting accomplished women of Caribbean heritage and the stories behind their contributions to South Florida and the wider diaspora.

"HERS gives Caribbean women a celebration that matches the scale of their influence," said Island SPACE Executive Director Calibe Thompson.

Guests will also enjoy steelpan music, live entertainment, an artisan marketplace, networking and the fireside conversation, "Same Author, New Chapter," focused on choices, boundaries and renewed purpose in women's lives.

New this year is the Caribbean Culinary Café, featuring small plates inspired by several Caribbean islands, and the premium Queen's Court experience, which will offer beauty, wellness and hospitality amenities.

Early-bird tickets are \$20, advance tickets are \$30, and admission at the door is \$40. The Queen's Court package is \$65 and includes general admission.

Proceeds will support Island SPACE Caribbean Museum's exhibitions, educational programs, collections and cultural events. Tickets are available at islandspacefl.org/hers2026.







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FEATURE



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First Jamaican-American Woman Judge Jackie Powell Honored For Judicial And Community Services

BY DAVID L. SNELLING

Judge Jackie Powell, who made history as the first Jamaican American woman elected to the Broward County 17th Judicial Circuit Court, was recently honored for her work on the bench and in the community.

Powell, who was first elected in 2018, was one of two recipients honored by the T.J. Reddick Bar Association last month for her commitment to justice, mentorship and community service.

She received the Judge Zebedee Wright Judicial Award, which recognizes a member of the judiciary who demonstrates fairness, integrity, intellectual

rigor and a strong commitment to justice.

Circuit Court Judge N. Hunter Davis was also honored, receiving the Rising Jurist Award for newer members of the judiciary who demonstrate exceptional promise, judicial temperament and dedication to the principles of the bench.

Powell currently serves as a County Court judge in the civil division, presiding over cases in Broward County's largest judicial circuit, which includes Ft. Lauderdale and the surrounding areas.

Born in Jamaica, Judge Powell moved to the United States and developed an early work ethic, working full-time

while attending college. She earned her bachelor's degree in English from Florida Atlantic University and her law degree from Nova Southeastern Law Center.

Before she enrolled in law school, Powell worked as a paralegal for a local law firm while raising two young children. Her law career spans 18 years, working for the Broward County Public Defender's Office, private practice handling civil cases, and launching her own law firm, which specialized in family law.

Beyond the courtroom, Powell has been a mentor to young people through her church and community organization. "My passion is youth. I seize



Judge Jackie Powell received the Judge Zebedee Wright Judicial Award, which recognizes a member of the judiciary who demonstrates fairness, integrity, intellectual rigor, and a strong commitment to justice.

every opportunity to encourage young people to reach for their dreams. What we do for others remains in the world," she said.

She has served as a volunteer Guardian Ad Litem, attorney for Broward County Legal Aid, and board member of Voices for the Children of Broward County.

Powell is also active in the Jamaican Women of Florida initiative. She also has been recognized for judicial and community services including 100 Outstanding Women of Broward County, Women of Distinction, Legacy of Justice Award, and Black America's Best Professionals.



Book Review - The Crown's Silence: Rewriting The History Of Britain's Monarchy And Slavery

BY DAWN A. DAVIS

Edited By Felicia J. Persaud

For centuries, Britain's royal family has been portrayed as largely removed from the machinery of slavery - an enduring national institution standing above the merchants, plantation owners and colonial officials who profited from human bondage.

In *The Crown's Silence: The Hidden History of Slavery and the British Monarchy*, historian and



Professor Brooke N. Newman, author of *The Crown's Silence* (Photo by Julie Adams)

US professor Brooke N. Newman challenges that carefully preserved narrative.

Drawing on extensive archival research, Newman argues that the British Crown was not merely a passive observer of the transatlantic slave trade. Successive monarchs authorized, supported, and benefited from the commercial and imperial systems that transported enslaved Africans across the Atlantic and forced them to labor throughout Britain's colonies. Her central argument is both clear and consequential: slavery was not separate from the development of the British monarchy and empire. It was embedded within them.

Following The Documentary Record

One of the book's greatest strengths is Newman's reliance on surviving historical evidence. Royal records, financial accounts, government papers, correspondence and commercial documents allow her to trace the monarchy's involvement across generations.

Rather than treating "the Crown" as an abstract symbol,

Newman identifies the monarchs, royal relatives and institutions connected to the expansion of English and later British slave trading.

The story begins during the reign of Elizabeth I, when the monarch supported some of England's earliest slave-trading voyages. It expands significantly under the Stuart monarchy, particularly through the creation and royal backing of companies granted monopolies over trade with Africa.

The Royal African Company, closely associated with Charles II and his brother James, Duke of York - later James II - became one of the most significant English institutions involved in trafficking enslaved Africans. Between 1672 and 1688, Newman records that approximately 100,000 Africans were transported by the company, with tens of thousands dying before reaching the Americas.

These numbers matter, but Newman does more than present statistics. She follows the financial relationships, royal permissions and political decisions that made the trade possible.

Her research dismantles the idea that the monarchy's connection to slavery was distant, accidental or purely ceremonial. The Crown granted charters, protected commercial interests, supported colonial expansion and benefited from the wealth those systems generated.

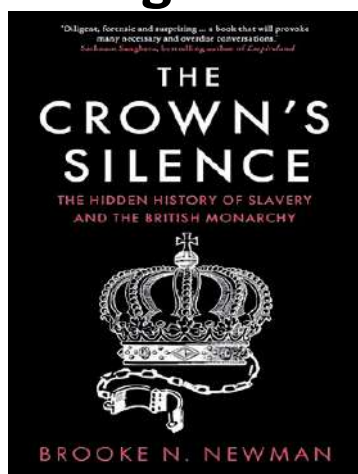
The Caribbean At The Center

The Caribbean occupies a central place in Newman's account because colonies such as Jamaica and Barbados became enormously valuable to Britain's imperial economy.

Sugar production generated extraordinary profits, but that wealth depended upon the forced labor of enslaved Africans working under violent and deadly conditions. Royal authority helped create and maintain the political, military and commercial structures supporting that plantation economy.

Newman therefore asks readers to reconsider how Britain's national wealth, imperial power and royal prestige were built.

The book does not suggest that every monarch participated in



The Crown's Silence: The Hidden History of Slavery and the British Monarchy

precisely the same way. Instead, it traces how royal involvement changed over time—from direct investment and commercial patronage to the defense of an imperial system whose wealth flowed through slavery, plantation production and colonial exploitation.

Even as opposition to slavery grew in Britain, the monarchy remained entangled with institutions and families that had benefited from the system.

That complexity is among the book's most important contributions. Newman does not reduce the history to a handful of immoral individuals. She demonstrates how slavery became institutionalized within Britain's political and economic order - and how the monarchy helped legitimize that order.

A History That Reaches The Present

Newman also examines the connections between earlier monarchs and the modern royal family, including King Charles III. Her purpose is not to argue that descendants bear personal responsibility for every action committed by their ancestors. Rather, she asks what obligations arise when a continuing institution still enjoys the prestige, property and authority accumulated across generations, while declining to fully acknowledge the systems that contributed to its power.

That question gives *The Crown's Silence* particular relevance today. Across the Caribbean, demands

for reparatory justice have moved beyond academic discussion. Governments, scholars and the CARICOM Reparations Commission continue to call for formal apologies, institutional accountability and material repair from former colonial powers.

The publication of Newman's book therefore arrives at an important moment. Its archival findings provide historical substance for a debate too often dismissed as emotional, symbolic or disconnected from documentary evidence.

By tracing decisions, profits and institutional relationships, Newman strengthens the argument that the monarchy's involvement in slavery was neither incidental nor unknowable. The records exist. The connections can be followed. The silence, the book suggests, has been a choice.

More History Than Manifesto Readers seeking a detailed policy prescription for reparations may not find one here. *The Crown's Silence* is primarily a work of history rather than a political manifesto. Its power comes from documenting the past with enough precision to reshape the present conversation.

Newman's research is extensive, but the book's importance extends beyond academia. It invites Caribbean readers in particular to view familiar histories of sugar, slavery and empire from a different perspective - one in which the monarchy is no longer positioned above colonial exploitation but placed within the system that enabled it.

The result is a compelling reassessment of an institution that has carefully cultivated an image of continuity, service and national unity while remaining reluctant to confront the full historical origins of its wealth and global influence.

Whether readers support reparations, institutional reform or neither, *The Crown's Silence* makes one conclusion increasingly difficult to dismiss: the British monarchy was not simply present during the expansion of slavery and empire. It helped authorize, protect and benefit from that expansion.

Newman has placed the evidence before the public. The

question now is not whether the history exists, but whether the Crown is prepared to acknowledge it.

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When Another Immigrant Dies, Do We Even Notice Anymore?

Another immigrant was shot dead by a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent. Another was struck and killed by a tractor-trailer after fleeing federal immigration officers. Another died inside immigration detention.

Three deaths in roughly one week. Yet, these headlines no longer seem to shock America's conscience. They appear with disturbing regularity, briefly making the news before disappearing beneath the next raid, political argument or deportation statistic.

The first was Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, a 52-year-old Mexican construction worker who had lived in the United States for 35 years and reportedly had a work-permit application pending. ICE says an officer shot him in self-defense during an operation in Houston. His family disputes the government's account and says it first learned of his death through videos on social media.

Days later, Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero, a Colombian immigrant who advocates say was legally authorized to

work in the United States, was fatally shot by an ICE agent in Biddeford, Maine. Federal officers had reportedly been searching for someone else.

Then came the death of Juan Jairo Coronilla Durán, a 28-year-old Mexican man who, according to his widow and Mexican officials, was vacationing in the United States on a valid tourist visa. Authorities say he ran during an encounter with immigration officers at a St. Augustine gas station and was struck by a tractor-trailer while crossing a busy road. He leaves behind a seven-year-old son and a seven-month-old daughter. These deaths followed Mexico's announcement that it intends to pursue criminal and civil action in the United States over the deaths of Mexican nationals during ICE operations and in immigration detention.

After sending 11 diplomatic notes to Washington without receiving what it considers satisfactory accountability, Mexico says it will seek criminal investigations by U.S. prosecutors and the Department of Justice, pursue civil action against private detention companies, and appeal to international human rights bodies.

That is extraordinary. Not because governments

protest mistreatment of their citizens abroad. They do. What is remarkable is that one of America's closest neighbors has concluded that diplomatic protests are no longer enough.

According to Mexico's Foreign Ministry, 17 Mexican nationals have died in connection with ICE enforcement since the current crackdown began - 14 in detention and three during enforcement operations.

But numbers can obscure what they are supposed to reveal. Every statistic was once a person. Every person had a name. Since January 2025, according to ICE's own published records, those who have died in its custody include: Serawit Gezahegn Dejene; Maksym Chernyak; Juan Alexis Tineo Martinez; Brayan Rayo-Garzon; Nhon Ngoc Nguyen; Marie Ange Blaise; Abelardo Avelleneda-Delgado; Jesus Molina-Veya; Johnny Noviello; Isidro Perez; Tien Xuan Phan; Chaofeng Ge; Lorenzo Antonio Batres Vargas; Oscar Duarte Rascon; Silverio Villegas Gonzalez; Banegas Reyes; Ismael Ayala Uribe; Norlan Guzman Fuentes; Huabing Xie; Miguel Angel Garcia Hernandez; Leo Cruz-Silva; Hasan Ali Moh'd Saleh; Jose Castro Rivera; Gabriel Garcia-Aviles; Kai Yin Wong;

Francisco Gaspar-Andres; Pete Sumalo Montejo; Shiraz Fateh Ali Sachiwani; Jean Wilson Brutus; Fouad Saeed Abdulkadir; Delvin Francisco Rodriguez; Nenko Stanev Gantchev; Geraldo Lunas Campos; Luis Nunez Caceres; Luis Yanez Cruz; Parady La; Victor Manuel Diaz; Heber Sanchez Dominguez; Lorth Sim; Jairo Garcia Hernandez; Alberto Gutierrez Reyes; Pejman Karshenas Najafabadi; Emmanuel Damas; Mohammad Nazeer Paktiawal; Royer Perez Jimenez; Jose Guadalupe Ramos Solano; Tuan Van Bui; Alejandro Cabrera Clemente; Aled Carbonell Betancourt; Denny Adan Gonzalez; and Mamuka Artmeladze.

Each had a family. Each had friends. Each had plans for a tomorrow that never came. Before we debate borders, raids and deportation quotas, perhaps we should acknowledge something more basic: every one of these deaths deserves to matter.

Every nation has the sovereign authority to enforce its immigration laws. But every democracy also has a duty to account for deaths that occur while exercising that power. Transparency, independent investigations and public accountability are not obstacles to enforcement. They are what

distinguish the rule of law from unchecked government power.

Perhaps that is why Mexico's decision resonates so deeply. It is not simply asking questions about individual deaths. It is asking whether America is still willing to ask those questions itself.

Something dangerous happens when a society becomes accustomed to tragedy. The extraordinary becomes routine. Names become statistics. Families become footnotes. Eventually, another death no longer changes the conversation. It becomes another headline, and another grieving family left searching for answers.

The families deserve answers. The public deserves transparency. And those whose lives ended in government custody or during immigration enforcement deserve something even more basic: to be remembered.

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



Women are equal to men and should be treated as such. And yes, many women have been clamoring for equality of the sexes after centuries of being perceived as less than men and treated as second class, or even no class at all.

I daresay, women are not the weaker sex but use that ruse to pull the wool over the eyes of men, and as they say, play the fool to catch the wise. Okay now, women have been advocating for equality for many years, from the time of Adult Suffrage, then they got the right to vote, then the Women's Liberation Movement, then they started to burn bras and petitioned for equal rights and justice, which included equal pay as men, then fast forward to the 'Me Too' Movement.

After all that and more, the pendulum has swung, the wheel has come full circle, the tables have turned, and women are more than equal to men, often earning far more than them and holding positions of power. Women have more rights than men, and it's often their male counterparts who are now feeling stressed and oppressed by the system that protects women.

Women are loved just for existing; they get attention, protection, compliments, doors opened for them, and free drinks.

A woman walks into a room, and men will look at her with great desire. Compliments will flow like honey, and if he manages to break down her defenses, or so he thinks, he'll take her out and buy her food and drinks.

A man, on the other hand, is not equal, but basically invisible until he can prove himself to be an earner, a provider, a protector. If he can't do all those things and more, he has no chance.

A woman decides whether to have a child; the choice is entirely hers. She can then choose whether to keep the baby, a decision the man has no say in. After she keeps the child, the man is legally bound to support it until age 18, sometimes longer, and in some situations, it's the woman who decides whether the man



**TONY
ROBINSON**

Balance The Scale



can see the child. Many women weaponize childbearing and use it as leverage against men. "I don't care what the courts say, you will not see this child." If he approaches her, she shouts for help, and he's in trouble. And if the poor jackass forces her against her will, she can cry assault, and that's the end of him, for even if she consents

and then changes her mind, she can have him arrested.

It's now up to the man to prove otherwise, which can be a difficult and expensive road to travel. And even if he's found to be innocent, that cloud will hang over his head like a dark cumulus that accompanies a storm, and he'll be known forever as the man who beat the

assault charge.

But after all that emotional and financial trauma, if the man is found to be innocent, nothing happens to the woman, not even a slap on the wrist for destroying his life.

It's very easy for the woman to claim abuse and assault, as very few people will accept the fact that it was she who assaulted the man first. She can slap him and pummel him until the cows come home; if he dares to retaliate, he's in trouble.

If the man cheats, he's trash; but if she cheats, she was unhappy and neglected, and he drove her to it. I am so happy that it was a woman who pointed out the balancing of the scales for women when, in reality, they really have so many privileges in their favor. If it was a man who revealed those issues, you would hear that he's a chauvinist.

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.



VIEWPOINT



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The Congressional Seat That Black History Built - Florida's 20th District

BY CONGRESSWOMAN
FREDERICA S. WILSON

History has a way of disappearing if no one is willing to tell it. Too often, we celebrate milestones without remembering the struggle that made them possible. We inherit rights without understanding who fought for them. We walk through doors without knowing who had to break them open. That is why I believe every generation has a responsibility to remember, because when history fades, so does our appreciation for what it took to change it.

This is not an endorsement of any candidate. It is a civics lesson. It is a history lesson. Before you cast your ballot, know the story of District 20. District 20 is more than a congressional district. It is a civil rights victory.

Its story begins with Josiah Thomas Walls, the first Black Congressman from the State of Florida. His election during Reconstruction represented one of the nation's earliest promises that democracy could become broader, fairer, and more representative. For a brief moment, Black Floridians saw themselves reflected in the halls of Congress.

That promise did not

last. Across the South, white supremacist violence sought to erase the gains of Reconstruction. Terror replaced hope. Intimidation replaced participation. Organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan worked to drive Black Americans from public life and dismantle the political power they had only just begun to build. Josiah Walls was forced from Congress on April 19, 1876, and with his departure, Florida entered one of the darkest chapters in its democratic history.

For the next 117 years, Florida did not elect another Black Member of Congress.

That is longer than any lifetime. Entire generations were born, raised, and buried without ever seeing Black representation from Florida in the United States Congress. Families taught their children to keep believing even when history gave them every reason to lose hope. Churches became organizing centers. Neighborhoods became movements. Ordinary citizens carried extraordinary burdens because they refused to accept that exclusion would be permanent.

The story of District 20 is, in many ways, the story of America itself. It is a story of extraordinary progress born from extraordinary



Congresswoman Frederica S. Wilson

sacrifice. It is also a reminder that progress has never followed a straight line. Every advance has been met by resistance. Every victory requires vigilance.

Then, in 1993, history turned. Corrine Brown, Carrie Meek, and Alcee Hastings were elected to Congress, ending a silence that had lasted 117 years. Their elections did more than fill three seats. They restored a voice that had been absent from Florida's congressional delegation for more than a century. They reminded the nation that the arc bends towards justice.

Congressman Alcee Hastings would go on to represent what is now Congressional District 20 for

many years, carrying forward that legacy of service and advocacy. District 20 is the legacy of those who refuse to be erased. It is a seat paid for by generations of Black sacrifice. It exists because countless Black people challenged barriers that once seemed impossible to overcome. Black people organized when organizing carried real risks. Black people marched when marching invited retaliation. Black people voted when others worked tirelessly to deny them that right. Black people understood that democracy is strongest when every community has an opportunity to be represented and every citizen has a voice.

White nationalists marched through our nation's capital carrying Confederate flags on the Fourth of July just to remind us that Black people cannot be comfortable. Even after more than 400 years of slavery, we still have to continue the fight. The fight for our freedom did not end. It simply became our generation's responsibility.

That is why the history of District 20 matters. If Black lives matter, then the history of Black representation matters too.

Representation is not merely symbolic. It shapes conversations and brings lived experiences into the rooms where decisions are made. A representative cannot erase history, but a representative can ensure that history is remembered.

The story of District 20 is also the story of America's promise and its failures. It reminds us how difficult it has been to expand democracy and how much determination it has taken to make our institutions more representative of the people they serve. It teaches us that

progress is not inevitable. It is built, protected, and renewed by each generation.

That is why history deserves our attention. As the highest-ranking Black elected official in the State of Florida, I have a responsibility to tell you the truth. I know what our ancestors endured to earn a voice in these halls of power, and I know how quickly that voice can be taken away. I know what it costs to lose representation because our history has already lived through that pain.

That is why I am imploring you to vote like your future depends on it, because it does. We deserve a seat at every table where decisions about our lives, our children, our communities, and our future are made. That seat was not given to us. It was earned through generations of Black sacrifice.

At a time when President Trump and many Republicans are working to undo decades of hard-fought progress, we need a fighter in Congress who understands the lived experiences of Black communities, who knows the history that brought us here, who recognizes what is at stake, and who will never hesitate to defend our right to be heard, represented, and included wherever decisions about our future are made.

So, I am asking you to do more than vote. I am asking you to honor those who never lived to see this moment because freedom has always demanded participation. That future is now in your hands. Every generation must choose whether it will preserve it or surrender it.

When you enter that voting booth, remember that you are carrying the hopes and voices of those who were denied one. You are carrying the prayers of those who never stopped believing that America could live up to its promise.

Do not leave that legacy behind. Because District 20 is more than a seat in the United States Congress. It is the seat that Black history built. Now it is our responsibility to make sure history never has to build it again.

EDITOR'S NOTE:
Congresswoman Frederica S. Wilson represents Florida's 24th Congressional District and is retiring at the end of her current term.



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CORRECTION

In the July edition of Caribbean Today, the photograph accompanying the story "Lauderdale Lakes Honors Reggae Star Tarrus Riley With Official Day" on Page 12 was incorrectly captioned as: "Roger Steffens, c., with actor Leonardo DiCaprio, l., and model Gisele Bündchen, r."

The photograph was, in fact, of Tarrus Riley being honored by the City of Lauderdale Lakes.

We regret the error and apologize to Tarrus Riley and our readers.

Roger Steffens Hopes Reggae Archives Can Still Find A Home In Jamaica

By Howard Campbell

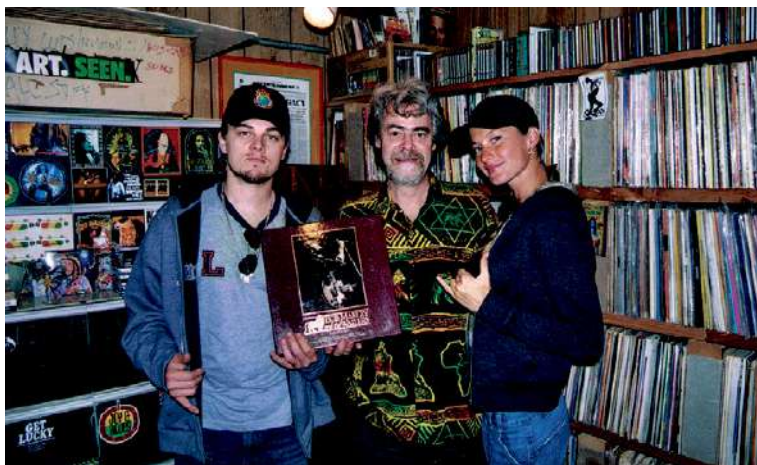
Respected reggae historian Roger Steffens says he is fielding bids to purchase his world-famous archives after negotiations with Jamaican interests fell through.

Josef Bogdanovich, the Jamaica-based American businessman who expressed interest in purchasing the vast collection, ended negotiations in 2025. Steffens, who lives in Los Angeles, told Caribbean Today that he is considering selling the archives to parties in the United States or “overseas.”

In an interview with Caribbean Today, he said he would rather it have a permanent home in Jamaica.

“I’m deeply disappointed that the deal for my reggae archives with Joe Bogdanovich fell through. It was kept off the market for seven years, but he was unable to secure land on which to build our National Museum of Reggae Music,” Steffens disclosed. “The last time we spoke was March 22, 2025, when we mutually agreed to the cancellation of the deal which he entered into in 2018.”

The archives occupy seven rooms of Steffens’ home. It comprises countless Bob Marley and The Wailers artifacts,



Reggae historian Roger Steffens, center, with actor Leonardo DiCaprio and model Gisele Bündchen in Los Angeles. (Contributed image)

photographs, artwork, festival posters, rare first-print vinyl versions of classic reggae songs, as well as interviews with reggae legends like Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer.

In 2024, the Jamaica Observer reported that Bogdanovich, owner of the annual Reggae Sumfest, confirmed a report in Variety Magazine that he purchased the impressive cache. Steffens began amassing what became memorabilia in 1973 when he discovered Jamaican music.

Variety estimated the value of the archives at \$3 million, but in an interview with the Observer, Steffens said he would be getting nothing close to that

amount.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Steffens served in the United States Army in the Vietnam War. Returning to the US, he settled in California, where he worked in radio and founded The Beat magazine.

He is globally recognized as an authority on Marley and The Wailers, writing a series of well-received books on them, including ‘So Much Things to Say: The Oral History of Bob Marley,’ released in 2017. In 1979, two years before Marley’s death, Steffens interviewed the singer/songwriter for his radio show.



Buju Banton Releases First VP Records Album In 23 Years

Grammy Award-winning reggae star Buju Banton has released “Too Too Bad,” his 13th studio album and his first project with VP Records in more than two decades.

The 13-track album features collaborations with DJ Khaled, Ari Lennox and Gramps Morgan, while the CD edition includes two exclusive bonus tracks, one featuring Jamaican singer Jaz Elise.

The album follows the success of the lead single, “Butterflies,” which has surpassed one million streams and received praise from Billboard. To support the release, Banton appeared on NBC’s The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon and TODAY with Jenna & Sheinelle.

The release also coincides with the Roots and Rhymes U.S. Summer Tour, which opened July 18 and marks the first co-headlining tour by Buju Banton and Stephen Marley. The tour concluded on July 25th in Atlanta, with a portion of ticket sales supporting the Buju Banton Foundation and the Ghetto Youths Foundation.



Grammy Award-winning reggae star Buju Banton has released “Too Too Bad,” his 13th studio album.

A Grammy winner for “Before the Dawn,” Banton is widely regarded as one of reggae’s most influential artists, with a career spanning more than three decades. His return to VP Records reunites him with the label that helped distribute many of reggae and dancehall’s biggest releases.



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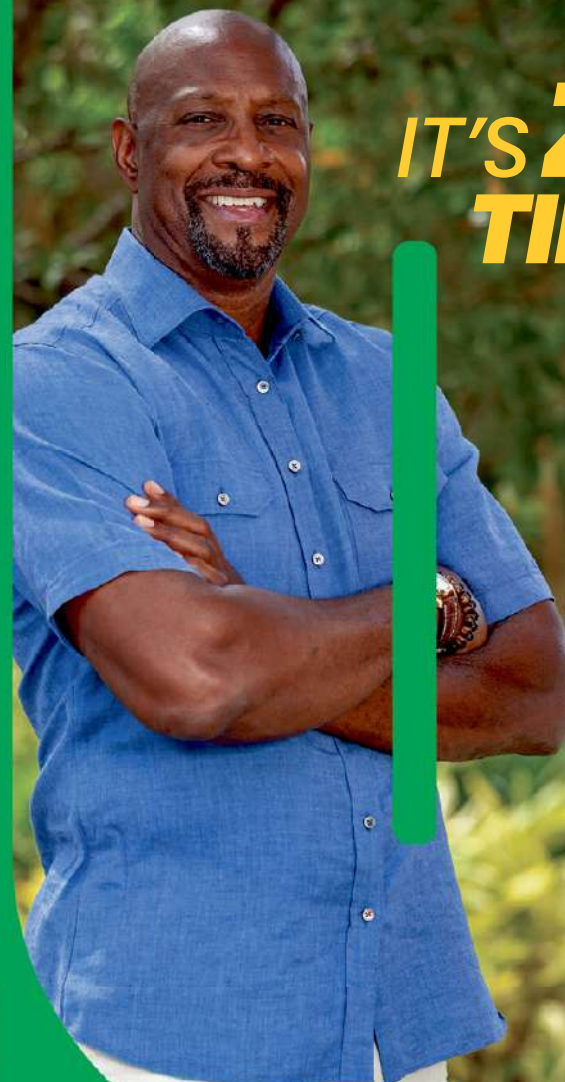
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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT NEWS



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St. Ann's Kemar Harrison Set For Runway Debut At Inaugural Jamaica Fashion Week

BY LYNDON TAYLOR

For 26-year-old Kemar Harrison of Golden Grove, St. Ann, what began as an unexpected opportunity has quickly become the realization of a dream. The emerging model is preparing to make his runway debut at the inaugural staging of Jamaica Fashion Week, scheduled for November 19-22 at Island Village in Ocho Rios.

Harrison, who was recently scouted by Gag Management, described the experience as both surreal and deeply rewarding. "I'm honestly grateful. It still feels a little surreal, but more than anything I feel motivated. Being scouted has given me confidence that I'm moving in the right direction, and I'm looking forward to making the most of this opportunity," he shared.

The young videographer and photographer revealed that he only learned about the audition a few days beforehand. Despite not being familiar with the area, he took the initiative to

research the location and plan his journey, determined not to let the opportunity slip away.

That determination paid off when, following the audition, it was confirmed he had been selected to walk during Jamaica Fashion Week. "It was a moment I'll always remember. I was excited, but also deeply thankful because it felt like the beginning of something I had been working toward. It reminded me that opportunities can come when you stay committed to your goals and are prepared when they arrive," Harrison said with a smile.

For the aspiring model, the upcoming showcase represents much more than a walk down the runway. "It's a chance to grow, learn from experienced professionals, and challenge myself at a higher level. I hope it's the foundation of a long career in fashion and an opportunity to represent Jamaica with pride," he explained.

The opportunity holds special significance for Harrison, who is proud to represent his hometown of Golden Grove.



Model Kemar Harrison (Contributed image)

"Representing my hometown makes this experience even more meaningful. Walking in front of people who have watched me grow is something I'll never take for granted. I hope it shows others that opportunities can come from home and that it's possible to pursue your

dreams with dedication and perseverance," he emphasized.

Outside of modeling, Harrison is equally committed to personal and professional growth. An avid reader, he balances his work as a videographer and photographer with a disciplined fitness routine and continuous self-development. "I enjoy challenging myself to become better each day. I value discipline, humility, and consistency, and I try to carry those qualities into everything I do," he said.

As he prepares for Jamaica Fashion Week, Harrison sees the event as an important stepping stone in his career. "I hope this experience helps me gain valuable industry knowledge, build meaningful relationships, and continue developing my confidence and professionalism. Every opportunity is a chance to learn, and I want to keep growing into the best model I can become," he shared.

Grounded in his faith, Harrison credits God for guiding his journey and opening doors at

the right time. "This opportunity is truly life-changing, and I don't take it for granted. I'd also like to thank everyone who has encouraged and believed in me along the way. This is only the beginning, and I'm committed to working hard, staying humble, and making the most of every opportunity that comes my way," he said.

With his runway debut fast approaching, Harrison also hopes his story will inspire other young Jamaicans chasing their own ambitions. "I hope my journey encourages others to believe in themselves, remain persistent, and keep pursuing their dreams, even when the path isn't always easy," he said.

As the countdown to the inaugural Jamaica Fashion Week begins, Harrison is ready to step confidently onto the runway, carrying not only his own aspirations, but the pride of his community and the promise of a bright future in the fashion industry.



Jamaica-Filmed 'Squatta' Eyes Miami Carnival Premiere

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL

'Squatta,' a movie filmed in Jamaica and the United States, is scheduled to premiere during Miami Carnival in early October. John G. Beckford, a spokesperson for the annual event, gave October 8th as a tentative launch date for the independently-funded drama.

'Squatta' is directed by American James Williams. It wrapped production in Jamaica in July. Although there were production challenges in Jamaica, Williams says things are looking good for the film's launch in October.

"We are on track for the film to be completed before our goal to premiere in October," Williams told Caribbean Today. "We've started speaking with distributors, and we are exploring the best timing for distribution. However, we have post-production to get through before the path is clearly defined."

Production on Squatta



Braata Singer during a recent performance. (Photo credit: Robert Russell)

started in early 2025 in Williams' hometown of Warrenton, Georgia. Last September, he and his Twilight Ebb crew visited Kingston for four days for additional filming. It is the most ambitious project for the Howard University graduate, who served 21 years in the United States military. He is responsible for most of the \$250,000 it cost to film the movie.

Squatta features several Jamaican actors, including

Christopher Daley, Kadeem Wilson, and Stokley Brown, as well as dancehall deejay Mr. Easy. The Maryland-born Williams is an admirer of gritty Jamaican movies such as Third World Cop and Shottas. He earned a bachelor's degree in radio, television and film at Howard.

Williams says he began jotting a script for Squatta in 2008 after seeing a communal settlement while visiting Trinidad. That draft was updated while he was in Kingston several years later, and he observed similar urban trends.

Miami Carnival, which marks its 42nd staging in 2026, is a fixture on the calendar for South Florida's Caribbean community. Like Caribana in Toronto, Canada, and the West Indian Day Parade in Brooklyn, New York, it showcases Caribbean culture in the United States.

'The Evolution' is the theme for Miami Carnival 2026.



More Than 20,000 Attend Martinique's Reggae Therapy Festival

More than 20,000 reggae fans from the Caribbean, Europe and North America attended the fourth annual Reggae Therapy Festival in Martinique, organizers said.

Held over two days at Louis-Achille Stadium, the festival featured performances by an international lineup that included Julian Marley, Barrington Levy, Alborosie, Tarrus Riley, Papa Tank, Skanky, Loy Sonjah, Lieutenant and Reemah.

One of the festival's highlights was Julian Marley's first performance in Martinique. Supported by the Martinique



Taurus Riley performing at the fourth annual Reggae Therapy Festival in Martinique. (Photo Credit: Kamson)

Tourism Authority, the festival has grown into one of the island's signature cultural events since its launch four years ago. It was founded by Martinican entrepreneurs Josué Charles-Hélène and Michel Almon to showcase reggae music while promoting Martinique's cultural identity.

Organizers said the festival continues to attract international visitors and reinforce the island's reputation as a destination for major cultural and music events.



Braata Singers Celebrate Caribbean Unity In 'All We A One'



Braata Singer during a recent performance. (Photo credit: Robert Russell)

Braata Productions recently concluded its 2026 concert season following the successful Off-Broadway staging of "All We A One" at the Mezzanine Theatre at A.R.T./New York Theatres. Presented over one weekend in late June, the production celebrated Caribbean music, culture and shared identity through song, storytelling and energetic performances.

This year's concert honored major Independence milestones, including the 60th anniversaries of Guyana and Barbados, the 45th anniversaries of Antigua and Barbuda and Belize, and Panama's 205th anniversary. The season also featured the largest number of new songs introduced by the Braata Singers in a single production, blending traditional Caribbean influences with fresh

musical arrangements.

Audience members praised the show as lively, nostalgic and uplifting, with many singing and dancing throughout the performances. Braata Productions founder and Executive Director Andrew Clarke said the organization was grateful for the strong response. "Our goal has always been to celebrate the beauty, diversity and resilience of Caribbean culture through music and performance," Clarke said.

Founded in 2009, Braata Productions provides a platform for Caribbean-born, Afro-Caribbean and Caribbean-American artists while offering performances, festivals and educational programming throughout New York City.



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FOOD NEWS

Jamaican 'Next Level Chef' Winner Opens Luxury Steakhouse

Jamaican-born chef Darian Bryan, who in May won Season 5 of Gordon Ramsay's "Next Level Chef" has opened his new upscale steakhouse in Buffalo.

Bryan, who earned \$250,000 and a year-long mentorship from celebrity chefs Gordon Ramsay, Richard Blais and Nyesha Arrington, opened the doors to his latest culinary creation, Reserve Steakhouse at 703 Seneca St Buffalo, NY 14210.

Known for his popular Jamaican restaurants The Jerk Hut and Bratts Hill, Bryan said Reserve Steakhouse reflects his desire to demonstrate his versatility beyond Caribbean cuisine. "I just want to show people that I'm not just a Jamaican chef," Bryan said. "I can cook any cuisine and make it great."

Located in Buffalo's Larkinville district, the restaurant offers a fine-dining menu featuring dry-aged steaks, seafood, caviar and wagyu beef, along with private dining spaces



Jamaican-born chef Darian Bryan has opened his steak house after winning Season 5 of Gordon Ramsay's "Next Level Chef."

designed to attract celebrity guests. Bryan said the opening marks another step in his long-term vision, with plans already underway for a more casual Back of House Burger concept at the same location later this year.

The chef's success has been widely celebrated in Buffalo, where his latest venture is drawing strong early demand

following his national television victory. Menu items include a range of steaks of course, wagyu burger, roasted half chicken, tuna crudo, dry-aged pork chop, rigatoni alla vodka, caramelized miso sea bass, lobster mac & cheese, and a dessert list.

- NewsAmericasnow.com



Nevis Mango Festival Draws Record Crowd With Food, Music and Island Flavor



Celebrity Chef Eric Adjepong at the Nevis Mango Festival, 2026. (Credit: REFIIC STUDIO x Nevis Tourism Authority)

The 2026 Nevis Mango Festival concluded with four days of culinary events, music and cultural celebrations, attracting more than 5,000 attendees from July 2-5.

Food Network personality and celebrity chef Eric Adjepong headlined the festival, leading a sold-out supper club at the Four Seasons Resort Nevis and a cooking masterclass featuring mango-inspired dishes.

The festival also included



Mango Mania, a mixology competition, beach bar crawl, island-wide food tour and the signature For the Love of Mangoes celebration at Malcolm Guishard Recreational Park.

According to the Nevis Tourism Authority, the closing event drew approximately 5,200 patrons, up from 4,100 the previous year.

"This year's festival was a true reflection of what Nevis has to offer — authentic hospitality,

world-class culinary talent and a community that comes together to celebrate our island's identity," said NTA Chief Executive Officer Andia Ravariere.

Nevis is home to more than 44 varieties of mangoes, many of which are featured throughout the annual festival in food, drinks and cultural programming.

The 2027 Nevis Mango Festival is scheduled for July 1-4.



Caribbean Culinary Community Mourns Chef Dom Taylor

Award-winning Caribbean chef Dom Taylor, whose modern interpretations of Jamaican and St. Lucian cuisine earned national recognition in Britain, has died suddenly at age 44.

Taylor was the founder of The Good Front Room in East London and the 2023 winner of Netflix's "Five Star Chef." His cause of death was not immediately disclosed.

His restaurant described him as a visionary whose joyful and contemporary approach to the Caribbean food of his childhood brought a fresh voice to London's dining scene.

Taylor first gained widespread attention after winning the Netflix competition, which gave chefs the opportunity to develop a fine-dining concept at The Langham hotel in London. The popularity of The Good Front Room later led him to establish the restaurant there permanently.

The concept was inspired by the formal room in Taylor's great-aunt Myrtle's home, traditionally reserved for honored guests and



Late Caribbean heritage Chef Dom Taylor

special occasions.

Tributes from across the culinary community praised Taylor for presenting Caribbean cuisine with refinement while preserving its cultural identity.

Chef and television judge Mike Reid said Taylor placed his Jamaican and St. Lucian heritage at the center of his food and helped take Caribbean cuisine to new heights in Britain.

The Good Front Room said Taylor's legacy would continue through the restaurant, which will remain open in his honor.



Caribbean Food Delights Expands New York Production Facility With \$17M Investment

Caribbean Food Delights (CFD), one of the world's largest manufacturers of Jamaican-style patties and Caribbean food products, has officially opened a newly expanded US\$17 million production facility at its headquarters in Tappan, New York.

The expansion adds state-of-the-art robotics technology, a third production line and upgraded workspaces aimed at boosting efficiency and meeting growing consumer demand for the company's products across North America.

According to Caribbean Food Delights CEO Sabrina HoSang Jordan, the investment marks a major milestone in the company's growth.

"This expansion is a testament to the vision, perseverance and commitment that have guided Caribbean Food Delights from the very beginning," HoSang Jordan said. "The additional production line has increased output of our flagship Jamaican patties by 15 percent, allowing us to produce up to 40,000 patties per hour."

The project expands the company's operating space by 1,750 square feet, bringing its total manufacturing footprint to nearly 104,000 square feet, while increasing its workforce to 175 employees. The expansion was supported by a US\$2.75 million grant from Empire State Development and the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Council, recognizing the project's contribution to job creation and economic development in New York State.

Founded by Jamaican entrepreneur Vincent HoSang, Caribbean Food Delights has grown from a family business into a leading Caribbean food manufacturer, with its Jamaican patties and frozen products distributed throughout the United States, Canada and other international markets.

The latest investment positions the company to meet rising demand while strengthening its role as one of the Caribbean diaspora's most successful food manufacturing enterprises in North America.



Most of us try to attract other people by the friends we keep and the way we carry ourselves.
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TRAVEL NEWS



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Search Intensifies For North Carolina Woman Missing In Grenada

Authorities in Grenada have launched an extensive search for a North Carolina woman who disappeared while vacationing on the Caribbean island.

Elizabeth “Liz” Waddell, 44, was last seen on July 22nd near Grand Anse Beach in St. George’s, according to the Royal Grenada Police Force. She had reportedly left the Airbnb where she was staying while a traveling companion attended an online course.

Waddell’s towel was later found on a pier, raising concerns that she may have gone swimming. She reportedly did not have her cellphone with her.

The Raleigh-area physical therapist, wife and mother is described as 5 feet 5 inches tall with short blonde hair. Police also released a photograph showing her with pink hair.

Officers, divers, students



Elizabeth “Liz” Waddell, 44, was last seen on July 22nd near Grand Anse Beach in St. George’s, Grenada.

from St. George’s University and members of the public have joined the search. Authorities have appealed specifically to fishermen, boat operators and residents along Grenada’s southern coastline for assistance.

Waddell’s husband traveled to Grenada to help with the

search and described her as a loving, free-spirited person who easily made friends.

Anyone with information is urged to contact Grenadian police at 911 or the nearest police station.



Antigua Seeks New Air Service After JetBlue Ends Route

The Antigua and Barbuda government says it is in talks with several U.S. airlines to replace JetBlue Airways’ service after the carrier announced it would discontinue flights to the destination.

Leader of Government Business in the Senate, Shenella Govia, said JetBlue’s decision was based on the airline’s internal commercial strategy and was made without advance notice to the government. According to Govia, JetBlue cited aircraft redeployment, rising fuel prices and higher

operating costs as reasons for ending the route.

She said the Ministry of Tourism is already negotiating with American Airlines, while also holding discussions with Delta Air Lines and United Airlines as part of efforts to maintain and expand the country’s airlift.

“Our Ministry of Tourism officials have been working tirelessly to ensure that it does not impact us at all,” Govia told legislators.

She added that Tourism Minister Charles Fernandez

and representatives of the Antigua and Barbuda Hotels and Tourism Association recently met with JetBlue officials, who reiterated that the decision was based solely on commercial considerations and not on Antigua and Barbuda’s tourism market.

Government officials said they expect the lost air service to be replaced in time for the 2026-27 tourism season.

- *Rewritten From CMC*



Jamaica Launches ‘Summer Vibes’ Campaign Through Aug. 31



Visitors were treated to a spectacular fireworks show at Dream Weekend in Jamaica.

The Antigua and Barbuda The Jamaica Tourist Board has launched its Jamaica Summer Vibes 2026 campaign, inviting travelers to experience the island’s festivals, sporting events, cultural celebrations, cuisine and entertainment through Aug. 31.

The destination-wide initiative promotes Jamaica as more than a backdrop for individual events, encouraging visitors to explore the island’s beaches, attractions, nightlife and local communities as part of a

broader summer vacation.

“Summer in Jamaica is unlike anywhere else in the world,” Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett said. “From world-class sporting events and internationally renowned festivals to our rich cultural celebrations and culinary traditions, Jamaica offers travelers an opportunity to experience the very best of the Caribbean.”

The campaign highlights a packed calendar that includes Dream Weekend in Montego

Bay, Emancipation and Independence celebrations, Best Weekend Ever in Ocho Rios, Caribbean Premier League cricket in Kingston, the MoBay Jerk & Food Festival and the Pan American Men’s Lacrosse Championship.

Other featured events include AnimeCom Fest, Amalgamation: The Global Gala and the Lover’s Leap Lighthouse Series on the South Coast.

At the center of the campaign is a destination film titled “This Could Be Your Summer,” showcasing Jamaica’s people, landscapes and experiences.

Tourism Director Donovan White said the campaign aims to capture the island’s summer energy, whether visitors are attending a music festival, cheering at a sporting event, sampling Jamaican cuisine or relaxing on the beach.

Travelers can find event information and special offers at visitjamaica.com/summervibes.



Contour Airlines Expands Caribbean Network With Three New Routes



Contour Airlines expands Caribbean routes.

Contour Airlines is expanding its Caribbean network with the launch of new nonstop routes linking St. Thomas and St. Maarten as well as Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago, beginning Oct. 5, 2026.

The airline said the expansion is designed to strengthen regional connectivity, boost tourism and business travel, and improve access between key Caribbean destinations.

The new twice-weekly nonstop service between Cyril E. King Airport (STT) in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Princess Juliana International Airport (SXM) in St. Maarten will operate on Mondays and Fridays.

Contour will also introduce twice-weekly nonstop flights between Douglas-Charles Airport (DOM) in Dominica and Piarco International Airport (POS) in Trinidad and Tobago. In addition, travelers will have one-stop, same-plane service linking San Juan, Puerto Rico, and St. Thomas with Port of Spain.

“We are proud to continue expanding air service throughout the Caribbean with meaningful

routes that connect communities, support tourism, and improve access between islands,” said Contour Airlines President Ben Munson.

U.S. Virgin Islands Tourism Commissioner Jennifer Matarangas-King welcomed the St. Thomas-St. Maarten route, saying it strengthens longstanding family, cultural and business ties across the northeastern Caribbean.

Dominica Tourism Minister Denise Charles-Pemberton said the new Trinidad service will provide greater comfort, speed and reliability while supporting tourism, commerce and easier onward connections through Piarco International Airport.

Flights will be operated aboard Contour’s 30-seat regional jets, featuring expanded legroom and complimentary onboard snacks and beverages.

Contour also partners with Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, JetBlue, United Airlines and Winair, allowing passengers to connect to destinations throughout the Caribbean and beyond.



Antigua Seeks Removal From U.S. Visa Restrictions

The Antigua and Barbuda government has formally asked the Trump administration to remove the country from recently imposed U.S. visa restrictions and the new Visa Bond Programme.

Prime Minister Gaston Browne has written to President Donald Trump, while Antigua and Barbuda’s Embassy in Washington has submitted a diplomatic note to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, requesting a review of the measures.

The government argues that Antigua and Barbuda has already addressed U.S. security concerns through tougher Citizenship by Investment (CBI) residency requirements, biometric cooperation with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, continued collaboration

with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and stronger identity verification procedures.

Officials also highlighted the country’s low visa overstay rate of just over one percent, noting that no Antiguan and Barbudan citizen has sought refugee status in the United States.

Browne said the request is intended to ensure U.S. decisions are based on “accurate information” and the significant reforms implemented by his government, while reaffirming Antigua and Barbuda’s commitment to maintaining strong security and diplomatic ties with the United States.

- *Rewritten from CMC*



Florida Primary Voters Prepare For Aug. 18 Primary Election

Florida voters will head to the polls Tuesday, Aug. 18, to choose party nominees for federal, state and local offices ahead of the Nov. 3 general election.

Florida is a closed-primary state, meaning voters generally may cast ballots only in the primary of the political party with which they are registered. All registered voters may participate in non-partisan contests and races in which all candidates belong to the same party and the winner will face no opposition in the general election.

The deadline to register or change party affiliation was July 20th. The deadline to request that a vote-by-mail ballot be mailed is Aug. 6th, while the statewide mandatory early-voting period runs from Aug. 8th through Aug. 15th. Dates, hours and available locations may vary by county.

Among the major races are contests for governor, U.S. Senate, the U.S. House, attorney general, chief financial officer and agriculture commissioner.

Two of the most closely watched contests are the Democratic primaries in South Florida's Congressional Districts 20 and 24.

In District 20, voters will choose among U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz; former U.S. Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick, a Haitian American;



former Broward County Mayor Dale Holness, a Jamaican American; educator and activist Elijah Manley; and entertainer and community activist Luther Campbell.

The race comes after Cherfilus-McCormick's resignation and the redrawing of the historically Black, Democratic-leaning district. District 20 has been represented by a Black member of Congress since its creation in the early 1990s. Redistricting reduced its Black majority and brought Wasserman Schultz into the contest after her previous district was substantially altered.

Wasserman Schultz has opened a commanding financial lead in Florida's closely watched Democratic primary for Congressional District 20, with newly filed campaign finance reports showing she has more than \$2.8 million in campaign cash heading into the final weeks before the Aug. 18 primary.

The veteran lawmaker, seeking another term after Florida's congressional

redistricting dramatically reshaped her district, reported raising more than \$643,000 during the latest fundraising quarter while spending about \$348,000, leaving her with a war chest that exceeds the combined cash on hand of her four Democratic rivals.

Another major contest is Florida's 24th Congressional District, where a crowded field is seeking to succeed retiring U.S. Rep. Frederica Wilson. Democratic candidates include State Sen. Shevrin Jones, Miami Gardens Mayor Oliver Gilbert, former Miami-Dade County Commissioner Jean Monestime, Haitian American physician Rudolph "Rudy" Moise and several others.

With the district strongly favoring Democrats, the Aug. 18 primary could effectively determine its next representative.

Wilson's retirement has also triggered a broader political reshuffling, as state and local elected officials compete for vacancies created further down the ballot. The race has renewed debate about Black political representation in Florida, where critics say redistricting has concentrated Black voters in a limited number of districts while weakening their influence elsewhere.

The Democratic Progressive

Caucus of Florida has endorsed Manley in District 20 and state Rep. Angie Nixon in the U.S. Senate primary. Nixon is competing against retired Army Lt. Col. Alex Vindman for the Democratic nomination, while incumbent Sen. Ashley Moody

faces Republican primary challengers.

Voters should consult their county supervisor of elections for personalized sample ballots, voting locations and vote-by-mail instructions.



What To Know Before You Vote

Study Your Ballot

Take time to review your ballot before heading to the polls. Research candidates and ballot measures so you're prepared to vote on every race and issue. Nonpartisan voter guides and election resources can help you make informed decisions.

Vote Early

Florida's mandatory early voting period runs Aug. 8-15, giving voters the opportunity to cast their ballots before Election Day. Check with your county Supervisor of Elections for early voting locations and hours, as some counties offer additional days.

Vote By Mail

The deadline to request a vote-by-mail ballot is Aug. 6. Voting by mail allows you to complete your ballot at your own pace, but completed ballots must be received by Election Day to be counted.

If you prefer, you may bring your vote-by-mail ballot to an early voting site, surrender it to an election worker, and vote in

person instead. Voters who forget or lose their mailed ballot may be required to cast a provisional ballot.

Election Day Voting

If you don't vote early, Election Day is Tuesday, Aug. 18. Voters must cast their ballots at their assigned polling location. If you requested a vote-by-mail ballot but decide to vote in person, remember to bring the ballot with you.

Track Your Ballot

Florida counties provide online ballot tracking so voters can confirm their vote-by-mail ballot has been received and counted. Many counties also offer text and email updates throughout the process.

Encourage Others To Vote

Every vote matters. Remind family members, friends and neighbors to make a plan to vote before the Aug. 18 primary and participate in shaping Florida's future.



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IMMIGRATION NEWS


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Report Highlights Allegations Of Sexual Misconduct By U.S. Immigration Agents

A new investigative report has raised concerns about allegations of sexual misconduct involving employees of U.S. immigration agencies, citing dozens of arrests and convictions over the past two decades.

The report, published by Prism, says it reviewed research compiled by the Pacific Antifascist Collective and found that at least 81 current or former employees of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) have been arrested or, in some cases, convicted of offenses involving sexual or physical abuse.

According to the report, many of the allegations involve crimes against women and children, including child sexual abuse, sexual assault and domestic violence. The report also cites Associated Press reporting that at least two dozen ICE employees and contractors



have faced criminal charges since 2020.

ICE and CBP told Prism that the overwhelming majority of their employees serve honourably and said both agencies are committed to holding personnel to high professional standards. ICE also said its vetting process is ongoing to prevent unsuitable candidates from serving in law enforcement.

The report calls for stronger oversight, improved vetting and greater accountability within federal immigration agencies.



Jamaican Southwest Flight Attendant Reportedly Detained By ICE

A Jamaican flight attendant employed by Southwest Airlines was reportedly detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents while working in Nashville, Tennessee, on July 14.

The flight attendant has been identified as Lorenzo Thompson, who reportedly moved to the United States from Jamaica in 2021 and has been pursuing permanent legal status.

A GoFundMe campaign

has since been established to help cover his legal expenses. Organizers of the fundraiser said Thompson entered the United States legally, holds valid employment authorization, and has a pending asylum application.

They also described him as having no criminal record and said he was detained after returning to his work base.

The precise circumstances surrounding Thompson's detention and his current

immigration status have not been independently confirmed. ICE and Southwest Airlines had not publicly commented on the reported incident.

Supporters are seeking financial assistance to retain immigration counsel and challenge his detention.

- *Rewritten from the Jamaica Observer*



New Directory Connects Haitian Creole Speakers With Florida Attorneys

BY DAVID L. SNELLING
Edited By Felicia J. Persaud

A new bilingual legal directory has launched to help Haitian Creole speakers in Florida find attorneys who can communicate in their language and understand their cultural needs.

The Haitian Lawyers Network said the online directory allows users to search for attorneys by location and practice area, including immigration, family, civil and criminal law. Lawyers and firms listed on

the platform are identified through categories indicating whether they speak Haitian Creole, employ Creole-speaking staff or regularly serve the Haitian community.

"Too many people in our community put off getting legal help because they weren't sure they could find a lawyer who understood their language or their situation," the organization said.

The network said the initiative was launched first in Florida because the state is home to the nation's largest Haitian diaspora population, with

significant communities in Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Orlando.

Organizers said they hope to expand the directory nationally in 2027.

The platform also allows Florida attorneys who serve Haitian clients to claim profiles and become listed in its searchable database.



Jamaica Records Sharp Rise In Deportee Returns In 2025

The number of Jamaicans deported to the island more than doubled in 2025, according to new data from the Planning Institute of Jamaica.

The 2025 Economic and Social Survey Jamaica reported that 1,317 involuntary returned migrants were sent back to Jamaica last year, up more than 140 percent from the 547 recorded in 2024.

Most of the deportees were returned from the United States. The number of Jamaicans who returned voluntarily also increased. The survey recorded 852 voluntary returned migrants in 2025, a 52.1 percent rise from 560 the previous year.

Voluntary returnees include people who move home for personal, family or economic reasons, while involuntary returnees are generally repatriated because of immigration violations, criminal matters or other legal issues.

The report also found that 3,491 Commonwealth citizens migrated to Jamaica in 2025, a 3.8 percent decline from the previous year.

Meanwhile, the number of registered foreign nationals rose 8.7 percent to 11,029. Asians accounted for the largest share of people seeking to remain in Jamaica beyond six months, followed by Caribbean and African nationals.



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Supervisor of Elections
Miami-Dade County, FL

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It's Another CPL 2026 Season

It's another CPL season as the 2026 Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League gets underway with 9 matches across the region - from Aug. 7 to Sept. 20.

The 2026 Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League features 39 matches from Aug. 7 through Sept. 20, with St. Vincent and the Grenadines hosting CPL matches for the first time and Barbados staging the finals for the first time. The expanded tournament also marks the return of a Jamaica-based franchise, the Jamaica Kingsmen, bringing the competition to seven teams.

For the first time, the tournament will feature seven teams, including the Antigua and Barbuda Falcons, Barbados Royals, Jamaica Kingsmen, Guyana Amazon Warriors, Saint Lucia Kings, St. Kitts and Nevis Patriots and defending champions Trinbago Knight Riders.

The season will open at Arnos Vale Stadium as St. Vincent and the Grenadines hosts CPL cricket for the first time. Barbados will also make history by staging the tournament's finals for the first time, including the Sept. 20th championship



The 2026 Republic Bank Caribbean Premier League gets underway with 9 matches across the region - from Aug. 7 to Sept. 20.

match.

Antigua and Barbuda will welcome "The Biggest Party in Sport" from Aug. 20-25, with the Falcons playing four home matches at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

The Falcons will face the St. Kitts and Nevis Patriots on Aug. 20, the Trinbago Knight Riders on Aug. 22, the Guyana Amazon Warriors on Aug. 23, and the Barbados Royals on Aug. 25. All matches begin at 7 p.m. local time.

The destination's 2026 campaign, "Come for the Fete, Stay for the Match," will combine cricket with carnival-

style entertainment, hospitality and cultural experiences.

Antigua and Barbuda Tourism Authority Chief Marketing Officer Charmaine Spencer said sports tourism remains an important part of the country's strategy to expand visitor experiences, encourage group travel and strengthen year-round demand.

CPL Chief Executive Officer Pete Russell said the expanded tournament and new host locations could make the 2026 edition the competition's most memorable season yet.



Funeral For Coach Stephen Francis Set For Aug. 15

A thanksgiving service for legendary Jamaican track and field coach Stephen "Franno" Francis will be held on Aug. 15 at the National Indoor Sports Centre in Kingston.

The announcement was made by Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport Olivia Grange, who described Francis as a transformative figure in Jamaican athletics. "Franno was not just a coach; he was a master architect of human potential who redefined the boundaries of what Jamaican athletes could achieve on the global stage," Grange said.

Francis, co-founder and



Jamaican track icon Stephen 'Franno' Francis will be funeralized on August 15th.

technical director of MVP Track Club, died on July 4 at the age of 64, one day after his birthday.

Widely regarded as one of the greatest sprint coaches in history, he guided the careers of numerous Olympic and World Championship medalists, including Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Elaine Thompson-Herah, Shericka Jackson, Asafa Powell and Kishane Thompson.

Francis was credited with helping establish Jamaica as a global sprinting powerhouse by developing elite athletes locally. In recognition of his contributions to sport, he was awarded the Order of Jamaica in 2017.



Olympic Medalist Rajindra Campbell Signs With Nike

Jamaican Olympic bronze medalist Rajindra Campbell has signed a sponsorship deal with Nike, marking a major milestone for the shot put star after years of competing without a major apparel sponsor.

Campbell, who won bronze in the men's shot put at the 2024 Paris Olympics, announced the partnership on social media.

"The work behind the scenes is paying off, and I'm still building," Campbell wrote. "Happy to announce I will be continuing my journey as part of the Nike family."

The 30-year-old has been outspoken about the financial challenges faced by Jamaican field athletes. In 2024, he criticized the lack of sponsorship opportunities and support for non-

sprinters.

Last year, Campbell was among a group of Jamaican athletes who sought to switch allegiance to Turkey, citing financial concerns. The applications were later rejected by World Athletics.

Campbell continues to compete internationally as Jamaica prepares for future global championships.

- Rewritten from Jamaica Observer



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State Funeral Held For Sir Gary Sobers

West Indies cricket legend Sir Gary Sobers made the entire cricketing world watch a small Caribbean island produce genius, decades before the United States ever paid the sport any attention. He died on July 17th at the age of 89 at his home in Barbados and was laid to rest on July 29th following a state funeral.

Ironically, his death came one day before Major League Cricket in the US wrapped its fourth season - the most successful yet, with a defending champion built largely around West Indian talent playing in front of American crowds that didn't exist a decade ago.

For cricket's biggest institutions, Sir Gary's death has produced the tributes the moment demanded, but for the Caribbean-American diaspora - and especially the tens of thousands of Bajans, Trinidadians, Guyanese and Jamaicans who built cricket culture into the fabric of Brooklyn and Queens over the past half-century - his passing lands differently. It closes a chapter just as a new one, on American soil, is finally opening.

A Brooklyn Inheritance

Long before Major League Cricket existed, Caribbean immigrants carried the sport with them to New York the way they carried food, music, and faith. Grassroots leagues like the Commonwealth Cricket League, the New York National Cricket League, and clubs such as the Cambridge Sports Club - celebrating its 60th anniversary next year - have kept cricket alive across Brooklyn and Queens parks every summer for generations, long stretches of it powered by immigrants who grew up idolizing Sobers on transistor radios back home.

That grassroots inheritance is now colliding with real institutional investment. MLC has signaled plans for a permanent stadium in Brooklyn, aiming to plant a professional home for the sport directly inside one of its most cricket-obsessed Caribbean communities in North America. The league's 2026 season, which concluded the day after Sir Gary's



Fans lined up to pay tribute to Sir Gary, who was laid to rest on July 29th in Barbados, his homeland. (Barbados GIS image)

death, was won by MI New York - a franchise built in no small part around West Indian talent, including Trinidadian batsman Nicholas Pooran, whose fast-scoring brilliance has made him one of the league's signature draws since its inaugural 2023 season.

Sobers, born Garfield St Aubrun Sobers in colonial Bridgetown, Barbados in 1936, built his legend in an era when cricket's global spotlight ran through London, Melbourne and Kingston - anywhere but the United States. His 365 not out against Pakistan in 1958 and his six sixes in an over in 1968 became legend everywhere except the one country now spending real money trying to make the sport matter. The 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup, co-hosted by the U.S. for the first time, drew a 370% surge in digital engagement and included a stunning USA upset over Pakistan - a result that, a generation ago, would have seemed as improbable as a boy from Bay Land, Barbados, becoming the standard by which all cricketing greatness would be measured.

That a genius entirely uninterested in American approval is being mourned just as America finally builds the infrastructure to produce its own is not really a coincidence. It's the closing of a loop the Caribbean diaspora in places like Brooklyn has been quietly waiting on for fifty years: a moment where the culture they carried across the water might finally take root in the ground beneath their adopted home.



LOST TITLE APPLICATION NO.: 2582552 OFFICE OF TITLES

NOTICE PURSUANT TO SECTION 82 OF THE
REGISTRATION OF TITLES ACT (RTA)

WHEREAS the applicant(s) in the above stated application has/have declared that the following duplicate Certificate of Title has been lost, I HEREBY GIVE NOTICE that I intend to cancel the said Certificate of Title and issue a new one in duplicate fourteen days after the last publication of this advertisement.

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Florida Colleges To Receive Incoming Students' Disciplinary Records

Florida school districts will be required to send certain disciplinary and behavioral records to colleges and universities when students enroll under a new school-safety policy approved by the State Board of Education.

The rule implements part of HB 757, legislation adopted following the 2025 shootings at Florida State University that left two people dead and several others injured.

Transferred records may include verified reports of serious or repeated misconduct, documented threats or troubling communications, threat assessments and related behavioral information. The policy also allows the transfer of psychological evaluations and treatment records created or maintained by district or charter school employees.

Board Chairman Ryan Petty said the goal is to help colleges identify and address potential threats, not to punish students for past behavior. Petty's daughter, Alaina, was killed in the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas



State Board of Education Chairman Ryan Petty said the goal is to help colleges identify and address potential threats.

High School in Parkland.

However, board member Layla Collins raised concerns that childhood disciplinary or mental-health records could follow students into adulthood and potentially affect college admission or treatment on campus.

Petty acknowledged that institutions might use the

information when making enrollment decisions, though he said the policy is intended primarily to improve campus safety.

Florida law already requires threat-assessment records to follow students who transfer between K-12 schools.



Henry Mack Confirmed As Florida Education Commissioner

The Florida Board of Education has unanimously approved Henry Mack as the state's new education commissioner. Mack, who most recently served as assistant secretary for the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, was recommended for the post by Gov. Ron DeSantis. He previously served as a senior chancellor at the Florida Department of Education, where he oversaw career and technical education initiatives.

"It is an honor beyond words to be entrusted with stewarding Florida schools at this pivotal moment," Mack told board members following Wednesday's vote.

Mack succeeds Anastasios Kamoutsas, who recently became president of Polk State College. Paul Burns, who served as interim commissioner, will return to his role as a senior chancellor at the Department of Education.

DeSantis said Mack would



Henry Mack is Florida's new education commissioner.

build on Florida's education policies, citing his support for parental rights, school choice and workforce development. Mack holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the Catholic University of America and a doctorate in education from the University of Miami. He has also taught at the University of Miami and Florida International University.



B R O W A R D S H E R I F F ' S O F F I C E

School Safety is Our Priority

The Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO) is committed to maintaining safe, secure learning environments where students can focus on their education, educators can teach with confidence and families can have peace of mind. Through proactive policing, specialized training, strong partnerships and enhanced intelligence gathering, BSO continues to strengthen school safety across Broward County.

Scan here to learn more about how you can stay safe.

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Florida Back-To-School Tax Holiday Runs Through Aug. 20

Florida families can purchase many school-related items without paying state sales tax through Aug. 20 under the state's annual Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday.

Qualifying purchases include clothing, footwear, and accessories priced at \$100 or less per item, as well as school supplies priced at \$50 or less. Learning aids and jigsaw puzzles costing no more than \$30 also qualify.

Personal computers and certain computer accessories priced at \$1,500 or less are tax-free when purchased for personal use. Eligible products include laptops, desktop computers, tablets, monitors, keyboards, printers and computer mice.

The exemption also applies to qualifying online purchases shipped to a Florida address



during the holiday period.

Items that remain taxable include smartphones, gaming consoles, watches, jewelry, sporting equipment, suitcases and many books. Purchases made at airports, theme parks,

entertainment complexes and some hotels also do not qualify.

Consumers can find a complete list of eligible items and exclusions on the Florida Department of Revenue website.



South Miami Senior High Opens New Medical Assisting Lab

Miami-Dade County Public Schools has opened a new Medical Assisting Lab at South Miami Senior High School through a partnership with South Dade Technical College.

The Career Dual Enrollment program will allow students to earn industry certifications while gaining hands-on healthcare experience before graduating from high school.

Approximately 80 students are expected to enroll when the school year begins. Participants will receive training in clinical procedures, medical administration and the use of modern equipment.

Students will practice skills including taking

vital signs, drawing blood, performing electrocardiograms, administering injections and assisting with wound care and other medical procedures.

"This partnership will give these students the skills and opportunities to become certified and to work in healthcare, an industry not only in demand but critical to our community," said Assistant Superintendent René Mantilla.

Students may take a state examination at the end of the school year to earn their medical assisting certification, preparing them to enter the workforce as medical assistants.



Miami-Dade County Public Schools Remains Committed To Feeding Every Student

BY LUIS E. DIAZ

Every school day, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) serves thousands of breakfasts and lunches that help students learn, grow, and succeed. For many children, a healthy meal is more than nutrition. It is an essential part of their ability to focus in class, participate in activities, and reach their full academic potential. That is why providing access to nutritious meals remains one of our most important responsibilities.

As we prepare for the 2026-2027 school year, families will notice an important change to our school meal program.

At the July 22 meeting, the School Board approved new meal pricing with the goal of serving free meals to as many students as possible. Under federal guidelines, 121 of our schools qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), a USDA program with specific eligibility requirements that allows all students at qualifying schools to receive free breakfast and lunch without submitting a meal application. Schools qualify based on the number of students who are directly certified.

Students at qualifying schools will continue to eat at no charge, while students at other schools will transition to a program where households may apply for free and reduced-price meals based on eligibility.

Most importantly, no student will be expected to begin the school year without access to meals. Consistent with federal guidelines, all students attending non-CEP schools will be able to receive free breakfast and lunch during the first 30 days of the school year while eligibility determinations are completed and families have an opportunity to submit meal applications. This transition period will allow schools and District staff to provide support and ensure that eligible students continue

receiving the benefits available to them.

The meal application for free and reduced meals will be available starting Monday, August 10, at mdcpsnutrition.net. The application is quick, completely confidential, and only one application is needed per household.

Most students whose households receive state assistance, such as SNAP or TANF, or who are identified as participating in Head Start, or who are classified as foster, homeless, runaway, or migrant are automatically approved for free breakfast and lunch regardless of the school they attend. This change is driven by federal requirements and eligibility calculations, not by a change in our commitment to students and families. For four years, M-DCPS was able to provide free meals to every student districtwide through CEP. Today, changing demographics, fewer newcomer students enrolling in our schools, and other enrollment trends have altered the federal eligibility calculations used to determine participation in the program.

But we want to assure all of our students and families that our approach reflects the values that guide Miami-Dade County Public Schools every day.

First, it reflects our commitment to excellence. Every student, regardless of school or eligibility status, will continue to receive the same high-quality, USDA-compliant meals prepared by the dedicated professionals of our Department of Food and Nutrition. The quality of our meals is not changing. Our commitment to student achievement is not changing. And our belief that well-nourished students are better learners is certainly not changing.

Second, this process reflects choice. Families whose children attend non-CEP schools will have the opportunity to apply for free or reduced-price meals through a confidential application process.

We encourage every eligible family to take advantage of those benefits. Our goal is to ensure that every family understands the options available and can access the support they need.

Third, this transition highlights our commitment to innovation. Many parents have not completed a meal application in years. To make the process as easy as possible, M-DCPS is utilizing multilingual communications, mobile-friendly applications, Parent Portal outreach, Parent Academy resources, and school-based support teams. Families will be able to complete the process online, and schools will be ready to provide assistance every step of the way.

Finally, this effort supports safety and student well-being. Access to nutritious meals remains a critical component of a healthy learning environment. Students

who are healthy, focused, and ready to learn are better equipped to succeed inside and outside the classroom. Nutrition is an investment in student success, and M-DCPS remains fully committed to that investment.

I understand that some families may be concerned, especially because many students have not had to navigate the meal application process since the pandemic and the District's CEP participation began. That is why we are launching an extensive outreach effort before and during the start of the school year.

If you have any questions or need help finding your school's category, please visit mdcpsnutrition.net or call 786-275-0400, extension 5000.

Our schools will work directly with families to answer questions, explain eligibility requirements, and help parents and

guardians complete applications when needed. As I shared recently, we are trying to use every angle possible to minimize the impact on families while maximizing the number of students who can continue receiving free breakfasts and lunches.

The federal requirements may have changed, but our mission has not. Miami-Dade County Public Schools remains committed to feeding students, supporting families, and providing every child with the resources needed to thrive. Together, we will continue ensuring that our students arrive at school ready to learn, ready to succeed, and ready for the future.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Luis E. Diaz is the Chief Operations Officer of Miami-Dade County Public Schools.



South Florida School Districts Compete For Students As Enrollment Falls

DAVID L. SNELLING
Edited By Felicia J. Persaud

South Florida's three largest public-school districts are stepping up efforts to recruit students from neighboring counties as declining enrollment leaves classrooms empty and strains district budgets.

Broward County Public Schools expects to lose approximately 9,000 students during the 2026-27 school year, while Miami-Dade County Public Schools projects a decline of about 8,000. Palm Beach County schools anticipate losing more than 3,300 students.

The enrollment losses have prompted the districts to market their schools beyond county lines under Florida's Controlled Open Enrollment program, which permits students to attend public schools outside their home

districts when space is available.

Palm Beach County began sending recruitment postcards to Broward families in April. Broward later mailed promotional materials to about 24,000 households in southern Palm Beach and northern Miami-Dade counties.

"We're not at capacity as a school district, and we need to do our due diligence and compete and market ourselves," Broward Superintendent Dr. Howard Hepburn said.

Miami-Dade has also launched recruitment efforts, although Superintendent Dr. Jose Dotres said districts should focus primarily on winning back students who have moved to charter and private schools.

Declining enrollment has already resulted in school closures and consolidations. Broward closed or reconfigured

six campuses this year as part of a broader restructuring plan, while Miami-Dade closed nine schools. Palm Beach County has announced the closure of Lincoln Elementary School in Riviera Beach.

District officials have attributed the declines partly to population changes and increased competition from charter schools, private schools and Florida's expanded school-voucher program.

Despite the enrollment challenges, all three districts received an A rating from the state for the coming academic year. Miami-Dade has earned the rating for seven consecutive years, while Broward and Palm Beach have each received it for three straight years.



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Three diverse children are sitting on a bench in a school hallway. A girl with curly hair is on the left, looking towards the camera. A boy with glasses is in the middle, looking excited with his mouth open. Another child is partially visible behind him. They are all smiling and appear to be having fun.

The logo for The Children's Trust, featuring three stylized figures holding hands above the text 'THE CHILDREN'S TRUST'. Below this, it says 'NURTURING GREATNESS' in a smaller font.

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