
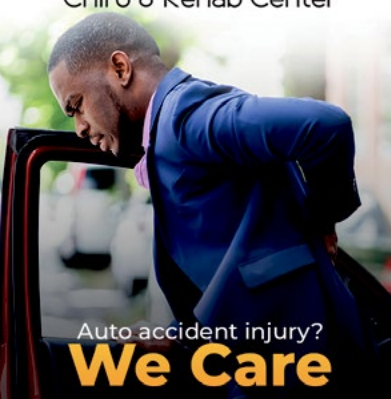


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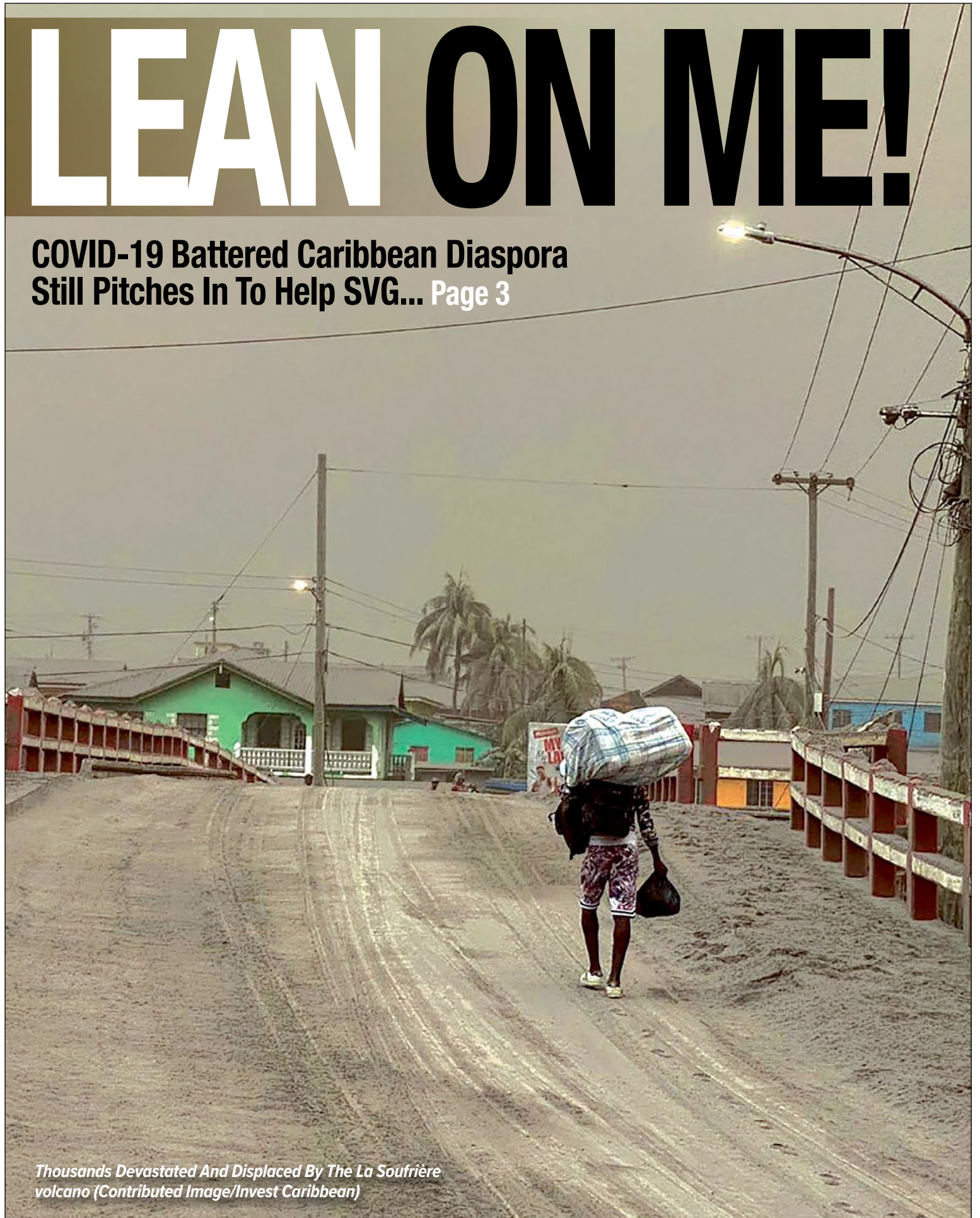
**In The Heat Of The Volcano – This Man Stayed Put – Page 6**  
(iwn image)



**Holness Stands By His Man Runcie ... Page 14**

# LEAN ON ME!

**COVID-19 Battered Caribbean Diaspora Still Pitches In To Help SVG... Page 3**



Thousands Devastated And Displaced By The La Soufrière volcano (Contributed Image/Invest Caribbean)

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## Regional Caribbean News Round Up

Here's a synopsis of all the major Caribbean news from the region you can use:

### SAINT VINCENT & THE GRENADINES

In response to Prime Minister Dr Ralph Gonsalves' international call for humanitarian assistance, the Government of Canada has pledged CAD\$440,000 (US\$354,794) in immediate aid to assist Vincentians in their immediate response to the volcanic eruptions at La Soufrière.

A statement from the Bridgetown-based High Commission of Canada in Barbados said the disaster relief funding, provided through Global Affairs Canada, will focus on the basic needs of displaced persons, including those in shelters, with a contribution of CAD\$50,000 (US\$40,317) to support the work of Rapid Relief Team SVG and the health needs of displaced women and children through a contribution of CAD\$50,000 (US\$40,317) to the World Pediatric Project Caribbean.

Canada has provided CAD\$90,000 (US\$72,571) to the St Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross via the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to support shelters for evacuees and to provide relief supplies and first aid services.

Canada has also mobilized a CAD\$250,000 (US\$201,587) contribution to the World Food Program (WFP) following the UN Flash Appeal for assistance to St Vincent and the Grenadines. This funding will allow WFP to scale-up its life-saving operations for the next three months to provide food security, logistics, and emergency telecommunications.

We will have to wait and see as the global agency launched an US\$29.2 million for humanitarian assistance and recovery for volcano-ravaged St. Vincent & Grenadines on April 20th.

AN UN appeal for USD 29.2 million was also recently launched by the UN Resident Coordinator in the Caribbean, Didier Trebucq, alongside St. Vincent & Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves; Regis Chapman, Head of Caribbean Sub-regional Office for WFP and Aloys Kamuragiye,

Representative of UNICEF Barbados and Eastern Caribbean.

The move comes as the ongoing eruption of the La Soufrière volcano is expected to displace close to 20,000 persons or one fifth of the population. Over 12,700 evacuees are now registered in public shelters and in private homes as entire villages have been covered in ashes, buildings damaged, schools and businesses closed, crops, livestock destroyed, and residents left with limited access to clean drinking water. Further eruptions are expected in the coming weeks.

"We are in a dire situation... the midnight hour of our need," said the prime minister. "We need a lot of money for social protection and feeding people. We're not out of the woods. This may be 6-7 months dealing with lives and livelihoods."

He added that damage is going to run into hundreds of millions of dollars as the country also deals with ash cleanup.

### BARBADOS

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley has warned the international community that many middle income countries risk being "pauperized" if they do not have access to concessional funding.

Addressing a special meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on Small island Developing States (SIDS) recently, Mottley, who currently co-chairs the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Development Committee, expressed the view that there must be a Multi-dimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), for all countries.

"If we don't have it for all countries, then we can't have an understanding of the relativity and the needs of individual countries. You have to be able to have that comparison," she said.

Prime Minister Mottley added that the MVI was needed, and said she was hopeful the global community would initially use such criteria and ultimately develop the Index.

### JAMAICA

The Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ), and the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce (JCC), has called for the resignation of embattled



Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, said the country is "in the midnight hour of our need" at the UN fund launch. (Screen Grab)

government legislator, George Wright, who has taken leave from the ruling Jamaica Labor Party (JLP), following allegations of assault against a woman.

Earlier this month, the police said they ended investigations into a physical altercation between Wright and businesswoman, Tannisha Singh.

"The sheer and sustained brutality that was on display was outrageous at first sight; that outrage was exacerbated by the allegation that the perpetrator was a member of the nation's Parliament."

It said that "the unwillingness of the parties involved and potential witnesses to participate in the investigation, as well as the poor quality of the video alleged to capture the incident" led it to taking the position to end the probe.

In a joint statement, the two private sector organizations "the violent and disgusting viral video recording showing a man assaulting a woman with his hands and with a stool that was circulated in early April is forever seared into the minds of countless Jamaicans. The two groups said that it is their "understanding that the alleged perpetrator, a Member of Parliament, has neither confirmed nor denied his involvement to either the police or his parliamentary colleagues."

### GUYANA

The High Court in Guyana has dismissed an appeal that had sought to indicate that the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) had acted wrongly by formulating a recount order because of the difficulties that had plagued the March 2, 2020

general and regional elections.

Chief Justice Roxane George-Wiltshire in a new one hour ruling on April 26, 2021, said that GECOM has to be in control of the elections and that it had to ensure "the lawful and proper interpretation of the Representation of the People's Act (RPA) in Section 22."

She said that in order to exercise general direction and supervision and have administrative conduct of elections "GECOM had to ensure the lawful and implementation of the RPA in Section 22. This was done lawfully by GECOM via Order 60 enabling it to issue instructions and take actions as appeared necessary and expedient to resolve the controversies as part of its responsibility to complete the election process by delivering the results."

"There was no breach or violation or non-compliance by GECOM of the Constitution or the law governing elections such as to make the elections a sham or a travesty as claimed by the petitioners," she said, adding that "in a case such as this one has to look to the Constitution for the raison d'être of the ordinary or subsidiary legislation."

### CAYMAN ISLANDS

After a week of uncertainty following elections in the Cayman Islands, the British overseas territory finally has a new premier.

Attorney Wayne Panton was elected unopposed as Premier and sworn in on April 21, 2021. He said the event would not have been possible without the voters "coming out by the thousands to exercise your democratic

franchise and for that all of us who contested the general election are very thankful for your participation."

Former premier Alden McLaughlin had asked Governor Martyn Roper to dissolve Parliament on February 14th to avoid a no-confidence motion against Speaker McKeeva Bush, who had received a two-month suspended jail sentence in December 2020 for assaulting a woman in February that year.

Bush was, however, ironically re-elected to the post of Speaker on Wednesday. He praised the election of Panton as head of the government, describing him as a "capable lawyer and businessman" and vowed to help him "control us for the betterment of our people." Of the 19 elected members of the new Parliament, seven are chosen to serve as government ministers in a cabinet headed by the Governor, who also appoints the Premier.

### GRENADA

President of the Grenada Union of Teachers (GUT), Jude Bartholomew, says he will not be intimidated after he was released from a police station on April 23rd.

"This is the proudest moment in my life...we have to stay firm," he told cheering supporters including Andre Lewis of the Technical & Allied Workers Union (TAWU), George Mason of the Commercial & Industrial Workers Union (CIWU) and Brian Grimes of the Public Workers Union (PWU).

In a statement, the GUT said that Bartholomew was taken to the St. David's Police Station where he was questioned for more than three hours.

"GUT views this move as harassment and intimidation because of the ongoing industrial actions taken in recent times," the union said in its statement.

The teachers took to the streets in support of "social and economic justice" recently, calling on the Keith Mitchell administration to pay the four per cent increase in salary as agreed upon in the 2018 collective bargaining agreement.

~ *Rewritten from CMC and NewsAmericasNow.com*



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Peter A. Webley  
Publisher



# COVID-19 Battered Caribbean Diaspora Still Pitches In To Help SVG

BY STAFF WRITER

Despite being battered by the COVID-19 pandemic over more than a year, Caribbean Diaspora nationals are dropping everything to help nationals in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, displaced and devastated by the ongoing La Soufrière volcanic eruptions.

AWith close to 20,000 persons displaced and over 12,700 evacuees struggling to get water and necessities amid the ongoing volcanic eruption in the Caribbean island of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), two leading private Caribbean investment agencies have pitched in to help.

Executives at Invest Caribbean (ICN) and The Ritzury Group, distraught by the explosive volcanic eruption of the La Soufrière volcano on April 9th, immediately got to work, launching a global fundraising and donations campaign to deliver aid and support to the most vulnerable on the island.

The “Saint Vincent Volcano Disaster Relief” GoFundMe page has raised nearly 50 percent of its goal to date and took in donations of water tanks, PPE, water, towels, helmets, torchlights, and more directly into the island on April 29th by boat from Barbados. The companies also took in a media crew from News Americas to cover the damage on the ground and get a clearer assessment on the needs there. Donations were handed over to Pastor Nelson Samuel who is running five shelters there and to local media on the island.

“A modern-day Pompeii is occurring right now in our US backyard in the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, so of course Invest Caribbean has dropped everything to rush to help the people of this amazing island. While there’s not been loss of life, many thousands have been devastated and displaced. The eruptions have left the entire northern third of the island completely desolate, decimating houses, agriculture and livestock, and fouling the water,” she added. “We are so proud to have a partner in The Ritzury Group that also shares our heart to help others, and we will be getting critical supplies on the ground this week and into the hands of people who need them the most. We also invite everyone to partner with us by supporting the Saint Vincent Volcano Disaster Relief on GoFundMe to help us be a blessing, not just for the short term, but for the medium and long-term, as we build back better.”

In the UK, H.E. Cenio Lewis, High Commissioner of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, working closely with the UK-SVG FRIENDSHIP TRUST, had raised over £200,000 for relief efforts as of last night.

Nationals of St. Vincent and the Grenadines residing in the United States have called for “all hands-on deck” to rush urgent relief aid to their homeland.

Vaughan P. A. Toney, the chief executive officer and president of the Friends of Crown Heights Educational Centers, who is also a

member of the Brooklyn-based St. Vincent and the Grenadines Relief, Inc., has announced the Friends of Crown Heights Educational Center will be accepting deliveries of emergency relief supplies.

Toney said the committee has prepared a list of the most needed supplies to assist thousands of displaced Vincentian nationals who have been forced to evacuate their homes and are now housed in emergency shelters.

He said the eventual economic cost of rebuilding thousands of homes and restoring vital infrastructure crippled by the eruptions will, no doubt, amount to billions of dollars.

“And the long-term cost to survivors – especially our children — may be incalculable, as they struggle to cope with a combination of physical and mental traumas arising from this catastrophe. But our immediate need is for food,

water and the essential items needed to preserve the health and safety of our people.

“We know that giving is a very personal decision; and so, on behalf of our entire Relief Committee, I thank you in advance for your generous support,” Toney. Verna Arthur, chairperson of SVG Relief, Inc., said since the group was formed in 2013, it has mobilized and donated relief aid to St. Vincent and the Grenadines

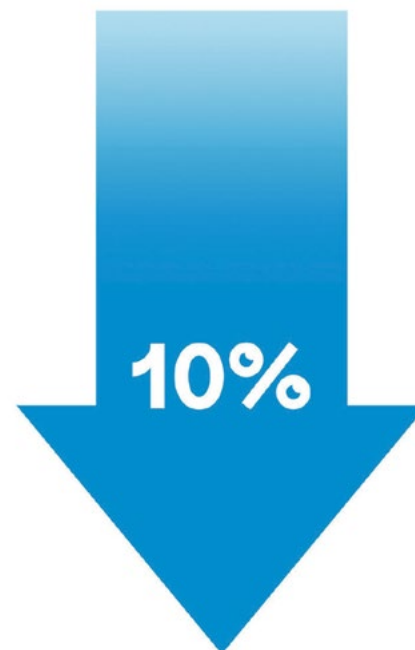
and other Caribbean countries and organizations.

“Our current initiative is assisting NEMO with its request to help SVG fight COVID-19, dengue fever and the eruptions of La Soufrière volcano,” she said. “And now, 2021, we are here once again, without hesitation, responding to the call of our beloved country.”

Laverne McDowald-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

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**The St. Vincent And The Grenadines Volcano In Pictures**

The devastation from the La Soufrière volcano in St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been estimated at hundreds of millions by the country's prime minister, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves.

This as the volcano continues to erupt and the United Nations launched a USD 29.2 million global funding just to help in the interim with

humanitarian needs.

The volcano has displaced close to 20,000 persons or one fifth of the population. Over 12,700 evacuees are now registered in public shelters and in private homes as entire villages have been covered in ashes, buildings damaged, schools and businesses closed, crops, livestock destroyed, and

residents left with limited access to clean drinking water.

Further eruptions are expected in the coming weeks and months. Here's what it looks like on the ground now, thanks to these images from the UN as well as from the UWI Seismic Research Unit and images sent to us by Jevorne Frederick.

**Geologist Says No Link Between Geothermal Drilling And La Soufriere Eruption**

Linking geothermal energy exploration to the eruption of La Soufriere is like expecting a skin-deep injection to puncture one's heart, geologist Professor Richard Robertson has said in response to questions about whether the drilling on the volcano's slopes last year could have resulted in the current eruptions.

"In the case of geothermal, both at this volcano and other volcanoes, there is no indication scientifically that they should affect each other in terms of getting a volcano going. And certainly, in this case, we don't think it did," he said.

In 2019, the government dug three wells as part of the geothermal energy project, but each failed to produce the required permeability. Then, in December 2020, after almost 42 years of inactivity, La Soufriere began erupting effusively, then exploded on April 9th – an eruption that continues to date.

In one of his daily updates on the state-owned NBC Radio, Robertson was asked if there was any link between the geothermal drilling and the eruption of the volcano.

"I think even before the Soufriere was active we were being asked about it and I have made the analogy that the geothermal – I look at it in the context of the human body and the source for the volcanism – is like deep beneath



**A view from the UWI Seismic Research Center of the La Soufriere volcanic eruptions. (UWI Seismic Research Center images)**

the surface of your body, sort of your heart, right inside the core of your structure while the way in which you were tapping into geothermal is really tapping into the hot rocks that is heating fluids that is above that.

"So, it is a bit like sticking a needle into your skin and thinking that that needle sticking into your skin is somehow going to touch your heart. That's how the dimensions are," he explained.

Robertson further explained that during the geothermal activity, the deepest well "went down less than 3 kilometres (1.86 miles), 3,000 metres (9,842 feet)", while "the thing" that is driving the eruptions is at least 10 kilometres (6 miles) beneath the surface of the earth.

"Geothermal has been successfully applied in areas that have ongoing volcanic eruptions," he added, naming Iceland as an example. "Icelandic volcanoes

erupt all the time, you have seen that...and they have serious geothermal operations and they don't affect each other. Because they just operate at different levels. They operate at different depths and they interact with different kinds of materials than the magma.

"The magma chamber is deep beneath the surface and it's operating based on time scales that have to do with plate tectonics, that have to do with the movement of tectonic plates on a larger scale than the geothermal is operating.

"I can't see scientifically how it could have affected it. It's not like you are drilling into the magma chamber. If you were doing that, I suggest to you that the drill would have been burnt and destroyed long before it gets anywhere close to the chamber. It would have been destroyed at the hot rock stage, not even the chamber," the geologist added.

Professor Robertson said that he understood the concern that there could be a connection. But he stressed that "there are lots of things that happen together that are coincidental and not causative."





# Saint Vincent And The Grenadines Agriculture Loss Put At \$150 Million

The agricultural loss due to the continuously erupting volcano in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been put at \$150 million.

That's according to the Minister of Agriculture of the Eastern Caribbean nation, Saboto Caesar, who was quoted by news784.com/.

"We are facing a catastrophe

in agriculture, fishing, road infrastructure and other areas. We have problems that affect food security and sovereignty; the affordability, accessibility and availability of food is at risk", stated Saboto Caesar when speaking before the Special Advisory Commission on Management Issues (SACMI) of the Inter-American

Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

The eruption of the Islands lone active volcano La Soufriere went explosive on April 9th left not only residents displaced but animals at the mercy of nature's fury.

Agricultural producers located in the communities of the country's "red zone" had to relocate livestock

to ensure its survival.

Preliminary assessments reveal that in the Red Zone, 100% of vegetable crops and 60% of the arrowroot have been lost. The weight of the heavy ashfall has caused the leaves and branches of many tree crops to snap.

Livestock left to roam freely is now without forage as the ash and

dust have totally destroyed their pastures in the Red Zone.

St. Vincent's Ministry of Agriculture is bringing water and feed to the animals in the red zone daily that have survived the disaster.

~ NewsAmericasNow.com



## COVID-19 Battered Caribbean Diaspora Still Pitches In To Help SVG



Aerial Photo of the Disaster. (UN Image)

organizations of Vincentian origin collecting donations to be sent to the island," said SPOONY president Stephen "Scombo" John, a former unsuccessful electoral candidate in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in an appeal to supporters and friends.

"One hundred percent of our collections would be sent to help relieve the pain and suffer of our brothers and sisters. If you are able, we ask that you join us in this effort."

Second Vice District Governor of The Lions of District 20-K Lion, Ingrid Andrews-Campbell, a Vincentian national residing in Brooklyn, told the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC) that she will be coordinating "this continuous effort" on behalf of District Governor Jackie Phillips from the Lions of Brooklyn and Queens.

Andrews-Campbell said she will also work closely in this initiative with Junior Bacchus, local coordinator of Lions of SVG Disaster Response.

Brooklyn Borough President and New York City Mayoral Candidate, Eric Adams, has joined the Caribbean community in New York in offering, and appealing for, assistance to volcano-ravaged St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Adams joined Prince and a group of Brooklyn-based Vincentian community organizers recently in appealing for desperately needed aid.

"The Caribbean community has been there for us time and time again, including many of our frontline workers," Adams said. "We need to be there for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in their time of need."

The Caribbean Diaspora Disaster Relief and Recovery Coalition has also once again mobilized for Caribbean Days of Giving (CDOG). This humanitarian initiative will support the centralized relief efforts coordinated by the Consulate General of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the USA, SVG Relief Inc. and SVG Disaster Relief Initiative Platform (DRIP).

"Unfortunately, our brothers

office has been mandated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate and accept relief on behalf of the country.

"Because the Consulate General has been asked to coordinate these efforts, we're asking all organizations to contact the Consulate, so we can point you in the right direction," said Prince, noting that he had had preliminary discussions with Brooklyn Democratic congressional representatives Yvette D. Clarke, the daughter of Jamaican immigrants, and Hakeem Jeffries, and Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, for the use of a military aircraft to ship relief aid to St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

"I'm grateful for the assistance of the organizations, and we'll work together hand-in-hand," he added.

### NEEDS

The National Emergency

Management Organization (NEMO) has issued a list of supplies needed including 30,000 blankets, 10,000 folding cots, 25,000 goggles and 1000 respirator masks with filters.

In addition to the urgent request for water the following items are also needed:

- Water tanks (800 and 1000 gallons)
- Buckets
- Folding cots
- Portable potties
- Blankets
- Field tents
- Field kitchens
- Sleeping mats
- Respiratory masks
- Reflective vests
- Caution tapes
- Hygiene kits
- Disinfectants
- Liquid soap.

~ CMC Contributed To This Story



(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

Thompson, president of the umbrella Vincentian group in the United States, Council of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Organizations, USA, Inc. (COSAGO), said her organization is working with other Vincentian groups to conduct relief efforts.

"I'm here to join with all on this platform today to make a special appeal to the Vincentian community to lend a hand to our brothers and sisters at home," she said. "We stand in a state of readiness to respond to our country's needs. Let's all join hand. Let's stand united for the benefit of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Together, we can help to meet the needs of our people."

Sherrill-Ann Mason-Haywood, coordinator of the Brooklyn-based SVG Disaster Relief Initiative Platform (SVG-DRIP), said the new dynamic platform is "designed to bring together Vincentians across the globe to rally around collective initiatives that increase the impact and reach of localized efforts to support SVG before and after major disasters and crises."

Through constructive dialogue and cooperation, Mason-Haywood said SVG-DRIP has mobilized persons and groups throughout the Diaspora in the US, United Kingdom, Canada and US Virgin Islands to work together "to kick-start a major, joint relief initiative" that was launched on February 20th, on the virtual platform of VC3 television in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and on other major social media platforms.

"This SVG-DRIP approach is designed to scale up the scope of outreach and to ensure that Vincentians across the globe, of all generations, can have an opportunity to be a part of relief initiatives to help SVG," she told the conference.

The Orlando-based St. Vincent and the Grenadines Central Florida Organization (SVGCFPO) has also asked nationals in the area to help in the massive relief effort.

Public relations officer, Lydia Daniel, said the group is accepting cash donations, as well as food, bed sheets, towels, toiletries, mask, kids items (pampers, baby food, wipes), cough, flu, allergy medicine, cots, portable potties, blankets, and goggles, among other items.

The Brooklyn-based St. Vincent and the Grenadines Progressive Organization of New York, Inc. (SPOONY), the New York arm of the main opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is also urging nationals to chip in in the massive relief effort.

"SPOONY is one of several

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\*Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network/United Network for Organ Sharing (OPTN/UNOS), January 2021.



# These Vincentians Rode Out The Volcanic Eruption

BY KENTON CHANCE

Thaddeus Bowens, 65, of Fancy Village, St. Vincent, refused to evacuate his home despite an order and the eruption of the La Soufrière volcano. Bowens, 65, told the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC) that he stayed put, having experienced the effusive eruption of 1971 and the explosive eruption of 1979.

"And I know the consequences of it. So, I say I have to end my mission to face it; that I could experience it more," said Bowens, the only person in Fancy who did not heed the call to evacuate.

"The experience was really fine to me," he said, adding that the Monday after the April 9th eruption, he heard something rolling, but it was the river."

"The river was rolling coming down with a whole set of big trees inside of it," he said, adding that, for him, the heavy deposit of volcanic ash was the only problem.

"[It] sounded like when thunder rolling when that start to spit out, just so it rolling," he said, describing the sound of the eruption," Bowens said, adding he was not scared at all.

"I wasn't even thinking about it. I know my God go protect me," he said.

Told that God also gives

wisdom to make wise choices, Bowens said that staying during the eruption was his choice.

"I want to see how much faith I have in Him," he said, adding that after the initial eruption, five persons had stayed."

"But the other four of them run off after the first [explosion]," he said. "I chose to stay alone because I have a work to do and I want to do my work - to face the judgment and to see how strong I am in faith. I have a big belief in my God."

Bowens said that the ashes had burned all of his root crops and he estimates the damage to be "couple thousand dollars well."

"It will be a hard start over again," Bowens said, adding that he is willing to do so "once I get a little help from whosoever".

Bowens has downplayed the report by volcanologist, Professor Richard Robertson, the lead scientist monitoring the volcano, that the eruptions are not over as yet.

"I'm sticking up. As I told you, I have a work to do and I want to finish my work," Bowens said, adding that his family evacuated. "I know they will feel funny about it (me staying behind), think about me, but after the first eruptions, some people came up here, so I told them to tell my people I am safe."



**Dale Medica stayed in Owia for the duration of the eruption and has no intention of leaving. (iwn photo)**

Meanwhile, in Owia, Dale Medica, a mechanic and technician, stayed for the entire eruption.

"I am here from day one since all the activities began taking place at La Soufriere. I always said to myself I am not moving; I am sticking around," he told CMC, adding that his main motivation was to protect his property from the volcanic ash.

Medica said he had done some sandblasting the night before and was priming the vehicle the morning of April 9th when the volcano erupted.

"I just heard the explosion and when I watched up towards the mountain, I saw a lot of ash going up into the sky. So I continued to

sift my sand and get my children out of harm's way," he said, noting that his family had already decided that on April 9, the other members of the household would move to Bequia, an island in the northern Grenadines.

"I had my driver already, on standby, and then they moved out. I just stick around; saw the ash going toward St. Lucia and Barbados," he said, adding that he had stored up the sand to prevent contamination and also began covering up the vehicles.

"When I was covering up the vehicles, stone started to lash (fall on) me," Medica told CMC, adding that he ran for his whole-face respirator and helmet.

Medica said he also gathered up some of the volcanic stone and the ash and then went to check on other people.

The explosion sounded like a huge bomb, akin to what one would hear in a movie in a theatre, Medica said, adding that he had to calm down some people, telling them that the explosion might only last a day.

But it is now going on two weeks since the first eruption.

"I know at some point it is going to stop," Medica said, noting that the volcano became really "rampant" on April 10th, from almost 3.00 p.m.

"And it continued until during the night. And up to about after 1.00 am, my generator just shut down on me, so I had to come outside with my respirator," he said.

Medica, however, said that minutes after coming outside, he felt as if he could not breathe because the respirator was getting clogged by the thick ash.

"I had to run back inside the house and after a time, I said, 'I can't go with this thing,' he said, recalling going to another friend's, where they had set up another generator.

"We started his generator and within about seven minutes, his generator shut down as well. I had to go back outside and prepare, get ply board and so because the whole intake filter blocked up with ash," he said.

Medica said he had to go back inside again, because he was having breathing problems. He said it was also pitch dark and even with a flashlight, he was running into objects.

Medica said he was able to restart the generator and went back into his house and "listen for all the explosions — which one buss the hardest and me and my partner we there kicking (joking) and thing and we drinking something soft."

Medica said they decided that if fire came, they would move.

"If I ain't see fire. I'm sticking around," he said, adding that on the second day of the eruption, an incident also cracked him up.

"At that point, I wanted to give up, but I said, no. This is going to clear up. So, I watched towards St. Lucia, I watched the sky and saw a little round hole open up off St. Lucia so I was just monitoring that and about half an hour after, it kind of cleared

up," he said, adding that during that time, the eruptions were continuing.

He said that his count showed that 16 persons had remained in the village after the eruption began. However, on April 12, the Coast Guard came, and 11 persons left.

Fred Anderson, a retiree and farmer, who had stayed after the eruption began, told CMC that he was one of the 11 who left, but that he did so unwillingly.

"They come up here with army man with gun and thing, so I go," Anderson said on Wednesday, having returned to the village to tend to his animals.

However, Medica did not leave on the Coast Guard vessel, having gone into hiding when the law enforcement officers arrived.

"I went and hide. I say I ain't moving. They have to come for me in handcuffs. I have my investment set up and I can't move," he said, adding that in addition to sandblasting, he also wires vehicles.

"I can't just leave them to go down the drain like that. So even if I had to struggle with the volcano to secure them."

He did not consider it as risking life to save his property.

"I know what happened to me a few years ago, like the December Flood [of 2013], wherein water went through my property, damaged some walls and so for me, and then two persons came from the government, I gave them an estimate, they took it and they never gave me anything.

"So, I just say, if my place break down, government is not going to give me because I am a full (Opposition) NDP supporter. Everybody knows. So, I just say I want to stick around to take care of my things. "So, who wants to say bad about me, this is just me. I am in these things a long time," he said, adding that during the Rock Gutter tragedy of 2015, he drove his daughter to the hospital and returned and helped to retrieve a body from the sea.

"I am just 'Toad,' he said, referring to his nickname.

Medica said that the five persons who remained in the community have been working together to clean roofs, in an effort to prevent them from collapsing.

"I started on my roof the Saturday morning from around after 9 the day after the eruption. They joined in and they helped us. We go on a lot of people's houses, which were to the point of dropping in. We tried to save some. "Some we could not save; they collapsed. Sunday (April 11), again, we up again on top [of] houses and so and then we just watched the blasting.

"But from that, nothing serious again happened to Owia. So, I say this was its first doom, Owia get it, so I just believe nothing [else would happen]. The biggest explosion was Sunday afternoon. I hear noises like a vacuum sucking back."

~ Rewritten from CMC



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## Shaggy To Share Thoughts On Monetizing Jamaica's Culture

Grammy winning international reggae artiste, Shaggy, is set to share his thoughts on how Jamaica can monetize its culture later this month.

The singer, born Orville Burrell, is set to join Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States,

Audrey Marks, on the monthly chat series, 'Let's Connect with Ambassador Marks,' on Thursday May 6, 2021 at 7 p.m. EDT.

In announcing Shaggy as her special guest, Ambassador Marks stated that the upcoming

## Saint Vincent Soca Star Raising Funds To Help Homeland



**Soca star Kevin Lyttle is also pitching in to help Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.**

A Saint Vincent & The Grenadines Soca Star is pitching in to help his homeland as well.

Kevin Lyttle has launched a GoFundMe as well to benefit The Janice Lyttle Foundation, the Miami Foundation & the Global Empowerment Mission (GEM).

The funds will assist in shipping over ten 40-ft containers to the island, providing needs such as PPE

gear, cots and asthma pumps to the shelters and individual homes and assisting in providing immediate needs such as hot meals. So far, the fundraiser has raised just \$6,405 of its ambitious \$100,000 goal.

Born Lescott Kevin Lyttle Coombs, the Vincentian soca artist, had a worldwide hit with "Turn Me On" in 2003, that was recorded with the dancehall artist Spragga Benz.

The eruption has displaced some 20,000 people, roughly one-fifth of the population, and as many as 6,000 are considered vulnerable.

The humanitarian and economic crisis unleashed by the eruption of the La Soufriere volcano on the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent will last months and could extend to nearby islands, a UN official says.

~ NewsAmericasNow.com



## This Dancehall Star Is Facing Jail Time

A prominent dancehall star is facing jail time when he appears in a court in his native Jamaica later this month.

Jamaican dancehall star Beenie Man could be jailed for up to three months for breaching the Disaster Risk Management and Noise Abatement Act.

Under the Jamaican law, a person who contravenes the law shall be guilty of an offence for violating the public peace and may be fined up to \$500,000 or, in default of payment, up to three months' imprisonment for a first offence. The DRMA was amended by the House of Representatives on March 23 and individuals found in breach of the health protocols now face fines ranging from J\$3,000 to J\$500,000. A J\$10,000 fine is imposed for failure to stay inside a place of residence during a curfew.

Beenie Man, born Anthony Moses Davis, flipped the not guilty verdict he provided in February and pleaded guilty to the DRM charges he again stepped into the St. Elizabeth Parish Court on February 10th to address charges linked to breaches of the Disaster Risk Management and Noise Abatement Act on November 29, 2020.



**Beenie Man**

Other charges linked to the Act, which insinuated that the deejay did not attempt to secure a permit from the Superintendent for the Shrewbury district, were dropped by the court.

While speaking to The Gleaner after his courthouse proceedings, Beenie Man had this to say about his decision to not contest the matter any further. "Mi nuh wah nobody fi feel like mi above the law so we affi deal wid dat right and mek Jamaica feel safe and mek di people dem know dat we wid dem," the deejay said.

He is set to be sentenced on May 17th.

~ NewsAmericasNow.com



**Shaggy is set to join Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States, Audrey Marks, on the monthly chat series, 'Let's Connect with Ambassador Marks,' on Thursday May 6, 2021 at 7 p.m. EDT.**

online fireside chat will not only update on current areas of interest or concern in Jamaica but will explore the concept of monetizing Jamaica's culture on the international market.

"When I speak about the potential for 'monetization,' I'm not simply talking about

becoming the next famous industry star, but about all areas of creating value including the new and hottest value proposition on the market today Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs), which 'can really be anything digital, such as pictures or music, which your brain downloaded

and turned into an AI,'" she said. "Or just about any unique creative work for which there may be a buyer. We have seen millions being paid for NFTS - \$69M for pictures put in a digital collage, \$3M for Jack Dorsey's first tweet etc., etc."

It is against this background that Ambassador Marks has invited Shaggy, known for not only his music, but importantly his understanding of the business of branding, to chat with members of the Jamaican Diaspora about monetizing Brand Jamaica in their own interest and that of the country.

In commenting on his invitation to connect with the Jamaican diaspora, Shaggy said: "As a proud brand ambassador for Jamaica, 'Let's Connect,' is an ideal platform for the diaspora to engage openly on such important matters as presenting and spreading our culture.

Jamaica is one the most vibrant destination brands in the world and our culture is as unique as it is popular. I am looking forward to participating in these discussions with Ambassador Marks."



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# U.S. Secretary Of State Brings Words But Little Else To CARICOM Meeting

US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, became the first top official in the Biden administration to meet with CARICOM ministers of government Wednesday. But while the meeting may have been historic, Blinken brought words and a “commitment to working with all countries,” but little else. Blinken, who met virtually with 14 foreign affairs ministers at 1 p.m. Wednesday afternoon, “emphasized the strong partnership between the United States and the Caribbean.” Ironically, the meeting came just a day after his US State Department slapped “do not travel” advisories on some 15 Caribbean islands, a move that could further devastate the already decimated tourism dependent economies of the region.

Nothing concrete was announced from the meeting



US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, (r.) and the CARICOM Secretary-General Ambassador Irwin LaRocque on the virtual meeting. (CARICOM SCREEN GRAB)

except a State Department read out quoted Blinken as saying the US “... plans to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and promote a regional economic recovery.” It also plans “cooperation on increasing climate resilience, and continued collaborations on strengthening security, democratic values, and human rights.”

There were also more words – a “US commitment to working with all countries in the region to advance bilateral and regional interests.”

Nothing about donations of vaccines or any aid. In fact, the CARICOM, statement after the meeting promoted pretty much the same spiel – that the meeting “focused on the Covid-19

pandemic and its health and economic fallout for the region, recovery of the regional economy, climate change and democracy, human rights and security.” No one seemed to have raise the travel bans, despite the obvious impact they will have. The CARICOM Ministers also took the opportunity to urge the US to assist with access to

much needed vaccines which was an imperative for the region to emerge from the economic devastation caused by the pandemic.

Blinken, according to CARICOM, then said he would engage with his colleague US Cabinet Secretaries on the issues of mutual interest raised by the CARICOM Ministers.

That’s it – the end! Not a single concrete plan or offer. Just more words.

This as India, Russia and China continue to play a ramped-up game of high stakes vaccine diplomacy in the economically battered region and as the Caribbean has been relying more and more on Asia for COVID-19 help and vaccines, while the US plays cat and mouse with its Caribbean third border.

~ NewsAmericasNow.com



## Why We Need A Better Measure For States' Vulnerability

BY BARONESS PATRICIA SCOTLAND

The unfolding story of the eruption of the La Soufriere volcano in St Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), is another heart-wrenching example of why the international community urgently needs to reform the way it addresses the vulnerabilities of developing countries.

Still caught in the claws of the Covid-19 pandemic, frightened residents are forced to abandon their homes as the giant volcano spews boiling lava and tons of ash as far as neighboring islands.

Thankfully, there have been no immediate reports of casualties, but the last time La Soufriere erupted in 1979, it caused an estimated \$100 million in economic losses.

While trying its best to protect its population from a global pandemic that has ravaged its economy and is testing the mettle of even the world’s richest nations, the island nation must now also cope with a looming natural disaster that threatens to undo decades of hard-fought-for development gains.

It is a devastating concoction of challenges, many shared by others of the 31 small states of the Commonwealth, inherently disadvantaged as they tend to be by structural vulnerabilities, including natural disadvantages such as location and size, and however financially and politically prudent.

For example, since its independence in 1979, SVG has drawn on its natural resources and the determination, talents, and innovativeness of its small population to battle challenge after challenge. It survived the decimation of its banana



Part of the destruction from the volcano on St. Vincent and the Grenadines as seen in this UN image.

industry, which at one time was the engine of SVG’s economy, while its governments have been forced to rebuild infrastructure and successive economies after devastating tropical storms and hurricanes.

But it is clear that much more needs to be done by the global community to help small states such as SVG to overcome their natural disadvantages.

A critical first step is recognition of vulnerability. This has been a recurring theme in discussions amongst Commonwealth ministers of finance at their annual meetings. It was prominently featured in their joint statement of the last meeting in 2020, which made specific calls to international financial institutions such as the G20, Paris Club, World Bank, and IMF to bear in mind the special needs and vulnerabilities of small states when they are creating or adjusting their policies.

Foreign Ministers at the Meeting on Small States, held in the margins of the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London, tasked my team at the Secretariat with achieving global agreement on the definition and

measurement of vulnerability. They have long held the view that using per capita GDP to decide whether or not a country qualifies for certain types of financial assistance puts those who are teetering on the edge of climatic and economic disasters at a grave disadvantage and risk.

Our response is the Commonwealth Universal Vulnerability Index. Developed in collaboration with the Foundation for Studies and Research on International Development, it offers a method for defining and measuring vulnerability that could be globally accepted and could complement GDP per capita as a criterion for access to concessional financing. The Index is multidimensional, dynamic, and inclusive, through its coverage of 138 developing countries, and will be made available soon to all nations. In particular, this index differentiates between structural vulnerabilities such as geographic location, proneness to natural disasters and internal violence, which are out of a state’s control, and non-structural vulnerabilities such as policy performance and governance that are more dependent on the will of governments.

It also recognizes by way of its construction that a country’s resilience in policy performance does not necessarily negate its inherent structural vulnerabilities, such that even those countries which show good progress in national policy development could still need assistance through aid.

According to the Index, small island developing states (SIDS) such as SVG are most vulnerable to climate change and economic and natural shocks, but less so to social and political shocks. SIDS show high policy resilience but average to low inherent resilience, making them the most vulnerable group in the world after Least Developed Countries.

We believe this Universal Vulnerability Index could help to level the field and ensure that countries can plan effectively for disaster-preparedness and mitigate such impacts if and when they arrive, and also assist them to stay on track with social and economic development plans despite setbacks.

However, to realize the immense potential of this promising project, we need the support of international financial groupings and institutions to be mobilized, including the G20 and the IMF.

If anything, the COVID-19 crisis has shown us that we live in a tightly interlinked global ecosystem. A volcano in the Caribbean, a drought in Africa, a cyclone in the Pacific and a flood in Asia all have global ripples. We need to have a global mind-set in our search for solutions.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** Patricia Scotland QC, is the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth



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## Joe Biden's Immigration Conundrum

It's easy to campaign and make big promises on immigration reform as a politician, until you get into the hot seat.

President Joe Biden is finding that out the hard way. The Biden administration has now found itself resorting to Donald Trump's hardline tactics – laughable if it was not so sad.

After slamming Donald Trump's immigration politics as presidential hopeful Biden – and rightfully so – the Biden administration finds itself now adopting some of those very same policies.

Of course, the latest is the brouhaha that erupted on Friday April 16,

2021, after the White House in the morning said it would keep the cap on refugees admitted into the country at 15,000 and not increase it to 62,500.

As Democrats in his own party slammed him and activists and refugee organizations added to the pressure, the administration caved and decided by Friday afternoon it was going to increase the number after all – just not to 62,500. Great going Joe!

The Biden administration has also continued to use Trump's Title 42 – the COVID-19-era policy that is causing the majority of migrants to be turned away at the border.

Add to that the ramped-up deportation of many black immigrants, especially Haitians and you have got a Barack Obama immigration debacle all over again.

Then there is the “border czar” – Caribbean American Vice President Kamala Harris. Biden in late March tapped Vice President Kamala Harris to lead U.S. efforts with Mexico and Central America to address the number of migrants heading north. So far, all she has done is struck an agreement with Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala to temporarily surge security forces to their borders in an effort to reduce the tide of migration to the U.S. border.

According to White House press secretary Jen Psaki, Mexico will maintain a deployment of about 10,000 troops, while Guatemala has surged 1,500 police and military personnel to its southern border and Honduras deployed 7,000 police and military to its border “to

disperse a large contingent of migrants” there. Guatemala will also set up 12 checkpoints along the migratory route through the country.

Sounds like something Trump would have done? Well, you are correct, because this was also done during the Trump era.

Harris' military tactic coupled with failing to so far show her face, over a month into her new post, at the U.S. southern border or to see the problem on the ground with thousands of children in detention facilities, is mind boggling.

Instead, under pressure, Harris has now said she is planning to visit Mexico and Guatemala – the Northern Triangle region this month. But there won't be any stop over at the border – no, no!

“We have plans in the work to go to Guatemala as soon as possible,” she said instead.

The confusion and terrible handling of immigration since Biden decided to rush to remove a policy that allowed refugees to enter the US and not wait in Mexico anymore, is turning off his base just months into the new administration.

They are unraveling fast and looking like the Obama administration in its first term. Instead of taking control of the situation, the Biden administration, along with its immigration czar Kamala, is all over the map.

They are in Central America promising cash instead of really addressing the spiraling crisis. The White House has requested \$861 million from Congress for that effort in Biden's first annual budget proposal – a sharp increase from the roughly \$500 million in aid this year at a time when Americans are struggling to survive in the midst of a pandemic.

A tough approach must be taken on this issue that will not be popular, but it has to be done. Shut the border down for right now and let's get back to immigration reform for the people within the country who have been without legal working papers for years. Throw in border enforcement and application for asylum in home countries as well as a system to apply for employment visas in home countries and you will get a handle on the border surge. That's the only way!

*The writer is publisher of NewsAmericasNow*



Ego and pride go hand in hand. They are inseparable – you can't have one without the other.

But it often leads to self destruction, and as the old saying rings true: “Pride goeth before a fall.” What is ego anyway? It's a person's inflated self-esteem or self-importance. From the noun ego, we get spinoffs such as egotism, egoistic, egomaniac, egocentric and others, all pointing to inflated self importance, conceit, all of which are unlikable like” “His ego becomes more unbearable each day.”

Too much ego is definitely not a good trait to have, and yet, it floats around and infects people just like the Coronavirus. This often weighs heavily on relationships when it comes to material possessions.

For example, when a man moves into a woman's house, his ego is often impacted greatly. Mark you, there are some men who have no pride or ego and will feel no way about living in a woman's house.

But the average man with an ego, or worse, a man with a super ego, will have none of that arrangement. Maybe deep down in his mind he'll harbor the thought that one day she'll throw it in his face when her mouth slips during a heated argument. “Just don't forget that this is my house that you're cothcing in.”

This also applies when the man's earning power is not on par with his partner's. Shakespeare alluded to this when he penned, “My pride fell with my fortunes.” It's very few men, bereft of ego, who will go into a relationship with a woman who earns far more than he does.

How can a man with a superego romance his partner who earns ten times more than he does? That's why some men only seek out women who are, ‘beneath their station,’ from the lower socio/economic class.

But what about too much ego, super ego, ego maniacs? That can be dangerous, sometimes leading to the demise of one partner. Sadly, many men are afflicted with these super egos and death before dishonor is their mantra.

## Egotistical Destruction



Ego is usually the domain of men and often leads to their downfall. As the saying goes: “The higher monkey climb is the more what's under his tail is exposed.”

But a little ego is necessary, for it gives rise to positive self-esteem, self-confidence, self-assurance and of course, ambition. But it's when it's kicked up a notch that it becomes unbearable, and the egoist and egotist become insufferable.

Men with superegos hold back their women, for fear that they will outshine and overshadow them. I still recall how this man forbade his wife from appearing in a TV commercial that she was cast in. What blew my mind, was that he offered to pay her the appearance fee instead of having her featured in the commercial.

An inflated ego blinds people to reality, and all that



**TONY  
ROBINSON**

they see are themselves. Narcissus was the Greek god whose ego contributed to his demise. He was so self-absorbed, possessed so much ego, self-importance and self-love, that once when passing by a pool he was mesmerized by his reflection. So entranced was he with his image, that he killed himself because he couldn't possess his object of desire, his reflection. That's where the word narcissistic came from. I told you that too much ego can be dangerous.

And yet there are still many persons who are not afflicted with super egos. I have friends with PhDs who beg me not to introduce them as Dr. because they don't want people to view them differently.

Such a contrast to those who make sure that a string of letters follows their name, even when they're addressing children. “I am Dr. High Horse, GCE, CXC, LLLB, Bsc, Msc, MBA, PhD.” Ego on steroids!

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# The Post Pandemic Crisis Facing Education In Jamaica And The Need For HELP

BY DR. WINSTON WHYTE

It has been over a year since the pandemic started and the world has changed. America has changed, and the small island on which I was born, Jamaica has also changed.

The lives of adults in the workforce changed radically with people being forced to work from home and schools being closed. Children unexpectedly were confined to on-line learning. For many of them, this was easy as they had the resources/technology to make the transition painlessly. However, for most of the students in Jamaica, it was not easy, as the island was unprepared, with a lack of Wi-Fi service and technology.

This situation has created a platform for expanded digital divide and expanded achievement gap outlined in the April article of this paper. Those with money were impacted the least, while those who could not afford the technology lacked the access to education and have fallen further behind. The blueprint for increasing the number of street kids in the future has been drawn. The schools with wealthy parents



The pandemic has put the spotlight on the inequities of the education sector in Jamaica as never before. (UNICEF Image)

will survive and be unscathed, while the less affluent schools will fall further behind and there will be more dropouts filling the streets and adding to the current unemployment crisis.

The students have a dilemma, the parents have a dilemma, the teachers have a dilemma, the schools have a dilemma, the Alumni Associations supporting the schools have a dilemma and

ultimately the government has a dilemma that needs immediate correction.

At a recent Zoom meeting of the Florida Chapter of an Alumni Association for a traditional high school, the invited guest was the President of the Chapter in Jamaica, who said: "We fear that the school will be at least one year behind."

This was shocking to those listening and, as a former

principal, I became petrified at the thought of how the school could recover from this. As I pondered about the impending doom that will be cast upon Jamaica, I shuddered to think about the devastating ripple effect that this will have upon the country, if not planned for and addressed immediately. In the days ahead, I could not erase the feeling of helplessness that plagued me and the need to explore solutions that may be offered to the country and to my alma mater. I spoke to a fellow alumnus who expressed apathy by saying that this setback has happened to all schools, so all we can do is sit back and accept it, as the playing field will be level. I was not satisfied with this. The following words kept repeating themselves in my mind: "There is no equity in education in Jamaica!"

How will the government and schools deal with the already underperforming students who have the disadvantages of living in vulnerable communities, having little educational and social support, lacking resources such as technology and connectivity, lacking direct supervision of a teacher, and lacking food to sustain learning?

The government needs to put additional "reserve funds" into education. Unfortunately, this may not happen as schools traditionally have not been able to rely on the government to fulfil all their needs and the Parent Teachers Associations, as well as the Alumni Associations, are relied upon heavily to provide the bulk of assistance for students.

The Jamaican education system has approximately 788,000 students in public and private institutions at early childhood, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Each age cohort is about 50,000. The effects of the pandemic on having on-line learning instead of in school contact, adversely compounds the existing

inequality brought about by:

1. Weak teaching techniques
2. Ineffective school leadership
3. Inadequate qualification of some teachers
4. Insufficient resources
5. Unsatisfactory parenting
6. Students with undiagnosed mental and psychological issues
7. Poor community amenities such as water, roads, and electricity.

It is estimated that about 400,000 Jamaican students may have not been able to take part in on-line learning because of lack of technology or Wi-Fi at home. Children attending schools in rural areas have special challenges with on-line schooling. Reports suggests that as many as 50% of the students in Hanover were not able to access online schooling between March and December last year.

An Editorial's advice published in the Jamaica Gleaner; October 29th, 2020 expresses the essence of post-pandemic need:

"Society has a moral obligation to make sure that all children receive an adequate education that gives them the skills needed to become contributing adults in society. This is also in the society's best interest as it is a social waste if some children do not receive a good education. It means that human talents that could contribute to society are not nurtured. All students have talents that grow through formal learning. By failing to develop those talents, society loses opportunities for enrichment and progress. Further social waste is gained by the long-term social and financial costs of poor education. Inadequate education leads to large public and social costs in the form of lower income and poor economic growth, reduced tax revenues, and higher costs of health care, National insurance and increased crime."

As Jamaicans living abroad, we must be concerned about the unfortunate challenges facing our "motherland." The ultimate responsibility lies with our government. It must not be allowed to neglect the plight of the underprivileged. This has been done for too long and the government must be held accountable to provide a solution for our educational woes that provides greater equity for all students, with the premise that, all students can learn, and no child must be left behind.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Dr. Winston Whyte is a Jamaican-born, US educator. You can reach him at [winstonwhyte1@gmail.com](mailto:winstonwhyte1@gmail.com).



In June, Caribbean Today will spotlight the Bahamas-3000 islands, cays and inlets located in the Atlantic Ocean. With a population of over 385,000 people, this nation continues to influence its Caribbean cousins and The United States mainland, Florida in particular. The Bahamas is located in the same island chain as Cuba, Hispaniola (Dominican Republic and Haiti) and is one of the richest countries in the Americas per capita. Come with Caribbean Today as we focus on the great people of The Bahamas and learn of their contributions to the Caribbean region and the U.S. Let us show you why the land of the conch thinks life is better in The Bahamas.

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## Caribbean Airlines And CARPHA Collaborate For Healthier, Safer Tourism

Regional carrier, Caribbean Airlines, says it is collaborating with The Caribbean Public Health Agency, through its Regional Traveler Health Program (THP), to promote healthy, safer tourism, as the region opens to tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic. “Both CARPHA and Caribbean Airlines are committed to safe and responsible tourism to protect the health and wellbeing of both visitors and the local populations,” a recent statement said.

From April 20-21, a total of 179 employees of Caribbean Airlines underwent CARPHA’s COVID-19 Essential Health Guidelines Training for Airlines. These staff members included flight attendants, customer experience officers, crew control officers and others.

The training is the first step in Caribbean Airlines acquiring the Caribbean Travellers Health Assurance Stamp for Healthier Safer Tourism (HST) award. The HST Stamp is a measurable and verifiable recognition award for tourism entities that are implementing CARPHA’s recommended proactive COVID-19 health monitoring and safety measures. It provides travelers with the added assurance of a healthier safer option when choosing a tourism product in the Caribbean.

The COVID-19 training that

Caribbean Airlines employees received was specifically designed by CARPHA for the airline industry.

“Caribbean Airlines is the first airline in the Caribbean region to receive this training and to enroll and initiate the process for the HST award. The airline’s participation demonstrates its commitment and leadership to ensure safe regional travel. Caribbean Airlines is working judiciously to be the first airline to be awarded the HST Stamp in the region,” the statement said.

Caribbean Airlines, Head of Corporate Communications, Dionne Ligoure noted that from the onset of the pandemic, Caribbean Airlines rolled out programmes to educate and secure the health and safety of its employees and customers, including the ability for customers to access COVID-19 test via its website and adding a tool that provides up to date info on entry requirements to all destinations.

Dr. Lisa Indar, Director of Surveillance, Disease Prevention and Control Division, added: “We are delighted to be engaging with Caribbean Airlines. As the Caribbean’s main airline with the largest network, Caribbean Airlines is ensuring that they are protecting travellers every step of the way from check-in to disembarkment, playing a critical

role in fighting COVID-19 and reinstating safe travel to the Caribbean”.

The award of the HST Stamp is also dependent on reporting to CARPHA’s Tourism and Health Information System (THiS) – a real-time, web-based,

confidential, early warning system for public health illnesses. Previously, it was designed primarily for use only by the accommodations sector, but CARPHA modified its THiS to also enable reporting by airlines. In the upcoming months,

CARPHA and CAL also propose to collaborate on various advocacy activities to promote Healthier Safer Tourism and the HST Stamp.

~ *Rewritten from CMC*



## US Slaps ‘Do Not Travel’ Warnings On Over 15 Caribbean Countries

The U.S. government has slapped ‘do not travel’ warnings on over 15 Caribbean nations as it updated its travel advisories it said, “to better reflect the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) COVID-19 travel health notices.”

The update resulted in 80 percent of countries in the world being slapped with Level 4: Do Not Travel warnings. The move could be an economic bomb on the region that is struggling to cope economically amid the pandemic and the devastating toll on its key economic earner – tourism.

The Caribbean countries now listed as Level 4 as of Tuesday are: the Turks & Caicos Islands, Antigua & Barbuda, Haiti, Guyana, Barbados, Bermuda, Curacao, the Dominican Republic, Suriname, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Aruba, the French West Indies,



which includes St. Barths, Saint Martin, Martinique and Guadeloupe and French Guiana.

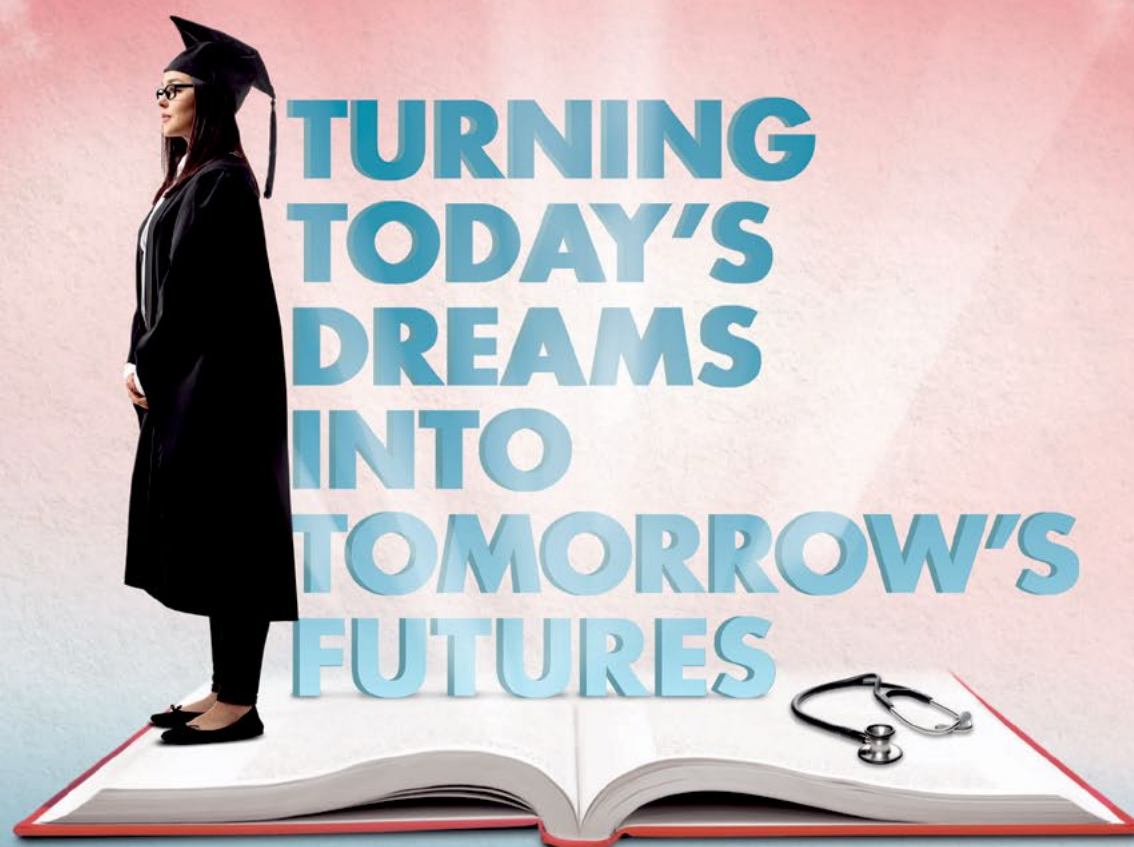
“The COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose unprecedented risks to travelers. In light of those risks, the Department of State strongly recommends U.S. citizens reconsider all travel abroad,” the State Department said.

The news comes as the US’ own COVID-19 infection rate moved closer to 33 million and its death rate heads to 600,000. CURACAO

It also comes as Curaçao said travelers arriving from high-risk countries to the island who have not been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 6 months, are required to take an antigen test at a local laboratory on the third day of their stay.

The required third-day antigen test is required for all travelers entering Curaçao and is additional to the mandatory PCR test. The PCR test must be taken within 72 hours before departure from an accredited laboratory. Dicardcuracao.com allows visitors to fill out the Digital Immigration Card, fill out the Passenger Locator Card within 48 hours of departure and upload the negative test result for the pre-departure PCR-test.

~ *NewsAmericasNow.com*



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# The Caribbean Has Vaccinated Nearly 20 Million To Date



The pandemic has put the spotlight on the inequities of the education sector in Jamaica as never before. (UNICEF Image)

Over 3.2 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have already been jabbed into the arms of almost 20 million Caribbean nationals, across most of the region, a News Americas analysis of the latest PAHO vaccination data has found.

The vaccines are part of donations received from India and China as well as those received from the COVAX Facility, a partnership between the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Pan American Health Organization/World

Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The US has donated to Gavi but not offered vaccines to the Caribbean region, unlike China, India and Russia, which have all donated vaccines to help the battered tourism dependent region to date.

Leading the pack of most vaccinations to date compared to population density is the British Dependent territory of the Cayman Islands while Puerto Rico, a US territory was second.

Trinidad and Tobago and St. Kitts & Nevis are the only

two countries to date where just one dose of the vaccine has been delivered. In terms of population size, Trinidad and Tobago lags way behind in vaccinations.

There was no data on Cuba, Haiti, Sint Eustacius, Saint Martin, St. Barths, or the U.S. Virgin Islands. The NAN analysis comes as several Caribbean countries continue to see a surge in new COVID-19 cases and as the US slapped "Do Not Travel" advisories on 15 Caribbean countries because of the pandemic.

~ NewsAmericasNow.com



## Here's how it stacks up regionwide according to the PAHO tracker:

COUNTRY	Total doses delivered	Population
Anguilla	6,160	18,224
Antigua & Barbuda	28,027	98,728
Aruba	48,254	107,195
Bahamas	7,000	396,194
Barbados	66,211	287,708
Belize	32,150	404,195
Bermuda	45,761	72,009
Bonaire	13,460	20,104
Cayman Islands	60,637	63,103
Curacao	53,519	164,796
Dominica	18,292	74,321
Dominican Republic	1,000,000	10,953,714
French Guiana	21,136	306,450
Grenada	11,266	113,015
Guyana	48,454	790,329
Jamaica	135,473	2,973,462
Montserrat	1,751	5,404
Puerto Rico	1,468,470	2,828,246
Saba	1,300	1,933
Sint Maarten	16,395	44,418
St. Kitts and Nevis	11,152	54,166
St. Lucia	23,448	184,401
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	12,181	111,269
Suriname	34,129	591,798
Trinidad and Tobago	12,725	1,403,374
Turks & Caicos	27,122	57,022
British Virgin Islands	8,374	38,172
Guadeloupe	32,174	400,013
Martinique	33,734	374,743



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\*\*Source: National Cancer Institute



# Caribbean Recipes

This month, we take you on a culinary tour with a twist as we spotlight on two recipes that are popular in the Dominican Republic and take a traditional recipe and add a modern flair. Give them a try and let us know how you feel. Here goes.

## Caribbean Ground Provision Salad

### INGREDIENTS

- 1-1/2 lbs. root vegetables any combination of plantain, sweet potato, yam, cassava
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 sprigs of fresh thyme
- 1 Scotch Bonnet pepper split in half
- 2 garlic cloves crushed
- Salt to taste



Caribbean Ground Provision Salad

### METHOD

Preheat oven to 375 F.  
Peel each item – sweet potato, cassava, yam and

plantains and wash

Chop sweet potato, cassava, yam and plantains into bite sized pieces.

In a square baking dish, toss all chopped sweet potato, cassava, yam and plantains with the olive oil, thyme, Scotch Bonnet, garlic and salt.

Spread vegetables in a flat layer.

## Res Guisada

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs of beef (round or skirt), cut into bite-sized pieces
- Juice of 1 lime
- A pinch of sun-dried oregano
- A pinch of black pepper
- 1 teaspoon of salt (or more, to taste)
- 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil (corn, canola or peanut)
- 3 cups of water (may need more)
- 1 red onion cut into slices
- 2 tomatoes cut into quarters
- 2 bell peppers, cut into small pieces
- 3 cloves of garlic, mashed
- 1 cup of tomato sauce
- 1 sprig of cilantro, chopped

### METHOD

Wash the meat with the lime juice.

Season with oregano, pepper, and salt.



Res Guisada

In a saucepan, heat the oil over medium heat.

Stir in the beef and brown.

Add 2 tablespoons of water.

Cover and simmer over medium heat until the meat is very tender (it may take from 30-60 minutes), adding water by the tablespoon when it becomes necessary to prevent the meat from burning.

Stir in onion, tomatoes, pepper and garlic, cover and simmer until the vegetables are cooked through.

Adjust water if necessary. Add the tomato sauce and 1 cup of water and simmer over low heat to produce a light sauce.

Season with cilantro and salt to taste.

Serve with arroz blanco, a side dish (or salad) and beans.

Transfer to oven and roast for 40-45 minutes, until fork tender.

Remove pepper or it will continue to spice up the dish.

Add into a salad bowl and sprinkle with more olive oil, adding some chopped parsley and tasting for salt.

Serve warm with saltfish buljol or any stews or curries.

## Tripe Stew

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 ½ pounds honeycomb tripe
- Juice of 2 limes plus more for serving
- 1 ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 small onion cubed
- 5 cloves of garlic minced
- ½ medium bell pepper cubed
- ½ cup tomato sauce
- 1 oz pack sazón with culantro and achiote
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1 carrot sliced
- 1 medium potato cubed
- 5 cups of water
- 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro roughly chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh scallion sliced

### METHOD

In a large pot over medium heat, boil the tripe covered with water, lime juice, salt and pepper until tender, about 1 hour and 30 minutes. Remove tripe from the pot and cut into cubes.

In a large pot, heat the oil and add onion and garlic. Let cook until onion cooks through and become translucent. Add the pepper, tomato sauce, sazón



Tripe Stew

and crushed red pepper. Stir to combine and let cook for about 1 minute.

Add carrots, potato, and tripe. Stir once more and let cook for about 1 minute.

Add water and stir. Cover and let cook for about 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until carrots and potatoes become tender.

Add cilantro and scallions. Season with salt to taste.

Serve warm with white rice, hot sauce, and lime on the side.

Bon Appetite!

~ All Recipes From  
NewsAmericasNow.com



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## Holness Stands By Runcie

Jamaican-born Broward Commissioner, Dale Holness, is standing by his fellow compatriot Dr. Robert Runcie, who has been charged with perjury in an official proceeding, a third-degree felony. Holness is one of Runcie's biggest advocate, even as the superintendent is set to resign his post this week and as The Broward County School Board votes on a severance package.

Runcie has offered his resignation after a grand jury investigating the circumstances surrounding the 2018 massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School indicted him on a perjury charge.

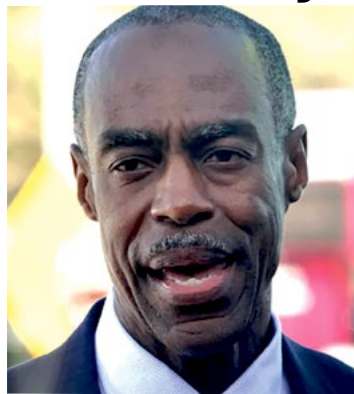
The board may also determine at the special May 6 meeting whether Superintendent Runcie will stay on for 90 days to help guide

the transition until a replacement is named.

Agents of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement arrested Runcie, 59, on April 21, 2021, for his testimony before the grand jury, which was impaneled to investigate possible failures in following school-related safety laws and mismanaging funds solicited for school safety initiatives.

Holness has said he is "saddened, broken-hearted and worried about how the Broward County Public School Board will run without Superintendent Robert Runcie."

He says Runcie is an honorable man who has made great personal sacrifices to serve with distinction. "To see him go out like this is painful," he said, urging the board to negotiate a fair settlement. "The



**Embattled Broward Schools Superintendent Robert Runcie.**

eyes of this community are on you. We're not going to look away. Though he may be going out, we're still going to pay attention to make

sure you do what's right."

Holness and several other leaders from the Black community also say the case against Runcie has become political, racial and economical in the aftermath of the Parkland shooting that pitted some parents from the mostly white, affluent neighborhood, against Runcie, who is Black. He also said he is "concerned about what will happen to him."

Since 2011, Superintendent Runcie has served as the leader of the nation's sixth-largest school district. Through his leadership, the graduation rate for all of our students has drastically increased to the highest rate since the Federal Uniform Graduation Rate was adopted in 2011, to 89.4% in 2020. Remarkably, this increase was

observed across all ethnicities as the Black, Hispanic and White graduation rates increased to 86.5%, 90% and 92.4%, respectively.

At the start of the decade, the district had over 50 "D" and "F" rated schools, many of which were disproportionately located in less affluent and minority communities. Today, there are 69 "A" schools, 54 "B" schools and zero traditional schools that received an "F" report.

The County's General Counsel Barbara Myrick was also arrested and charged also with unlawful disclosure to the statewide grand jury proceedings, also a third-degree felony. Myrick has been general counsel since 2016 and a district employee since 2002.



## Florida Gains One Census Seat

It will be a while longer until Caribbean people in the US will be able to get any data from the 2020 Census on those of Caribbean ancestry here, but the first Census numbers were released on April 26th. The once-a-decade head count shows how many congressional seats and Electoral College votes each state is getting based on its population. Here's a look at the 13 states that will gain or lose political power — and federal money — through the apportionment process because of changes in population over the past decade:

### THE WINNERS

**FLORIDA** -The nation's third most populous state adds one congressional seat because of a population gain of more than 2.7 million. This boosts its House delegation to 28 and Electoral College votes to 30, furthering the Sunshine State's importance in presidential elections.

**TEXAS** - The Longhorn State is the big winner, adding two congressional seats courtesy of 4 million new residents. Demographers say people moving from other states like California have contributed a significant chunk of the growth. The nation's second most populous state will now have 38 congressional representatives, behind only California.

**COLORADO** - Population growth around Denver helped Colorado gain an extra seat, its first new House seat in 20 years. The mostly college-educated transplants have helped Colorado go from being a solidly Republican state to a competitive swing state to, now, a solidly Democratic one - though the state's districts will be drawn by a nonpartisan commission.

**MONTANA** - By gaining a congressional seat, Montana goes from having a single House representative to having two. The gain marks a rebound for Montana, which had two congressional seats for most of the 20th century but lost one after the 1990 census.

**NORTH CAROLINA** - Fueled by retirees and job seekers, North Carolina's population boom is earning it an extra seat, raising its House count to 14. The gains have been concentrated in the Charlotte and Raleigh areas.

**OREGON** - Oregon is getting a new congressional seat for the first time in 40 years, going from five House

members to six. Although Democrats control state government, they have agreed to give up their advantage in redrawing the state's political districts for the next 10 years in exchange for a commitment from Republicans to stop blocking bills.

### THE LOSERS

**NEW YORK** - There was no question New York was going to lose a congressional seat, but the suspense lay in whether it would be one or two seats. The Census Bureau says New York lost its seat by a mere 89 people. The loss of one seat reduces its House delegation from 27 to 26 members.

**CALIFORNIA** - While California is still the nation's most populous state, its stagnant growth over the past decade causes it to lose a single seat for the first time in 170 years of statehood. Its number of House members goes from 53 to 52 for a state that has been a symbol of limitless growth and endless possibilities since the Gold Rush of the 1800s.

**ILLINOIS** - Illinois goes from 18 to 17 House members, continuing a 40-year streak of losing congressional seats.

**MICHIGAN** - The number of House members representing Michigan drops from 14 to 13, particularly because of population losses in the Upper Peninsula.

**OHIO** - Sluggish population growth over the past decade causes Ohio to lose a single congressional seat, continuing its streak of losses every decade since 1960. The adjustment reduces the Buckeye State's House seats from 16 to 15.

**PENNSYLVANIA** - Although Pennsylvania remains an important presidential battleground, its influence will be diminished by the loss of one Electoral College vote. Its House delegation drops from 18 to 17 members.

**WEST VIRGINIA** — A decades long exodus of residents finally causes West Virginia to lose a congressional seat, reducing its representation in the House from three to two members.

~ *Rewritten from the AP*



## Caribbean Immigrant Among 2021 ICABA Women Of Impact Honorees

A Caribbean immigrant was among this year's presented by the South Florida-based International Career and Business Alliance, ICABA, Women of Impact Honorees.

Felicia J. Persaud, the founder and CEO of the global private sector investment agency of the Caribbean, Invest Caribbean, was presented with a 2021 Woman Of Impact award on April 22, 2021.

The honor was presented at ICABA's annual award ceremony — which for the first time had to be presented virtually because of the pandemic.

The South Florida Women of Impact award is presented to women "who have distinguished themselves professionally with their civic and community leadership."

The Guyana-born Persaud, accepted the award on behalf of all Caribbean immigrants in the Diaspora, on behalf of the Caribbean region, and most especially on behalf of the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, who have been devastated and displaced by the La Soufriere volcano disaster of April 9th.

"For over two decades .... I have dedicated my life to fighting for the recognition and respect of Caribbean immigrants and the Caribbean region — from immigration reform, to census recognition to economic respect and empowerment," she said. "Awards like this serve like a balm in Gilead, to renew and strengthen for the battles ahead."

Other 2021 honorees included Precious Williams, Anita Fain Taylor, Nicole Cummings, Rosalyn Crawford-Frazier, Vivian Oludun, Dr. Venessa Walker and Salesia Smith-Gordon.

Invest Caribbean, the global private sector investment agency of the Caribbean, founded by Persaud in 2011, has partnered with the Ritzury Group on a global fundraising effort to raise donations to support the displaced and devastated people of Saint Vincent. Support the effort HERE.

Ms. Persaud wears many hats. She is also the founder of the first daily news wire for the Caribbean in the Diaspora, our News Americas News Network, a network of 20 Caribbean sites that's syndicated; CaribPR Wire, now part of CISION PR Newswire, and the award-winning Caribbean PR, AD and Digital Media Solutions Agency, Hard Beat Communications, Inc. Her extensive knowledge about



**Felicia J. Persaud with her 2021 ICABA Woman of Excellence Award. (Camille Powell image)**

the Caribbean and its Diaspora has seen her appearing and quoted in many major multi-media outlets including on CNN, The BBC, The AP, Reuters, CBS News The New York Times, The International Business Times, the Miami Herald, The NY Daily News, One Caribbean Television, New York One and by numerous Caribbean and Black media houses.

She is also a speaker at many events, including serving as a keynote speaker at the Turks & Caicos Investment conference; her own investment conferences between 2011 and 2015; and as a moderator of many events, including with the University of the West Indies in June 2020. In January 2021, Felicia teamed up with key Caribbean Diaspora groups to salute the Caribbean roots of the US' first Asian, black and Caribbean vice president, Kamala Harris ahead of her inauguration.

She is currently listed as an expert on the Caribbean in the US State Department's speakers database, and on Feb. 25, 2021, presented a Ten Point Plan on US-CARICOM Investment and Trade for the UWI, The Shridath Ramphal Center in Barbados, and the US Embassy in Barbados.

In the past, Felicia has worked as a news editor and print journalist at many publications, including the **New York Daily News' "Caribbeat In Focus;" The Queens Chronicle, The Caribbean America, Black Elegance Magazine, The New York Trend and Caribbean News Now**, and freelanced for numerous Caribbean, African American and African publications. She has been consistently on radio since 1993 — in Guyana and the US — including on **WWRL, WLIB, WBLS** and currently on **WRTN**, and **WBAI Radio**, and has been an anchor, reporter and guest host on several television programs, including on **One Caribbean, CUNY and PBS Television**.

Persaud is also a passionate advocate for Caribbean people in the US Diaspora, and founded CARIB ID in 2008, which battled for 12 years for a way for Caribbean nationals to accurately self-identify on US Census forms. In 2020, that advocacy manifested on the 2020 Census forms, which for the first time in the US Census history, allowed Caribbean nationals and other immigrants to identify their nationality and ancestry. Her passion for recognition of the Caribbean also led to the November 2020 creation of the **Caribbean American Action Network (CAAN)**, which collaborated with One Caribbean Television to host the first Caribbean global inauguration celebration of a US Vice President — the US' first Black and Caribbean American VEEP — Kamala Harris, featuring Caribbean Diaspora and regional artistes and speakers.

In Feb. 2021, she was featured as one of 28 prominent Blacks in South Florida by the Miami Herald.

She remains a major advocate for comprehensive immigration reform in the US and is a weekly immigration columnist for the 100-year-old New York **Amsterdam Newspaper**, while appearing as a radio news anchor weekly on WRTN 93.5 FM radio in New York.

Persaud has received numerous other awards in the past for her work in the Caribbean Diaspora, including from the New York City Mayor's Office, The New York City Council; the Office of the Executive, County of Nassau, the Comptroller of the City Of New York, the Caribbean Tourism Organization and many media and community organizations.

**Invest Caribbean** provides specialized, fundraising support for project developers and governments, and works alongside private equity and debt funders to add depth, breadth and responsiveness to clients fundraising and investor relations efforts in the real estate, cannabis, health care, energy, mining and manufacturing sectors. It partnered with the international project services Bespoke Division of the Barbados-based company, The Ritzury Group in February, to launch a green glove service for investors seeking to invest in Barbados' new medical marijuana sector. For more information on Invest Caribbean's service offerings, log on to [investcaribbeannow.com](http://investcaribbeannow.com).

~ *Rewritten from NewsAmericasNow.com*





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## SPORTS



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## Cricket West Indies Saw Losses Of Over US\$13 Million Last Year



Cricket West Indies President Ricky Skerrit was recently re-elected unopposed.

Cricket West Indies showed losses in excess of US\$13 million last year, according to an audit from KPMG.

The announcement prompted auditors to “cast significant doubt on the company’s ability to continue as a going concern.” With the Caribbean hosting just a single tour last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CWI saw revenues slashed by nearly a third from the previous year to US\$23.5 million.

Also due to the pandemic, the already cash-strapped organization was forced to slash employee and player salaries in half last year, while also reducing disbursements for cricket development regionally.

But CWI chief executive Johnny Grave said the board plans to aggressively continue rolling back debt and streamlining its financial practices, in an ambitious bid to realize profits by 2023 and place the organization on sound

commercial footing. Grave said it was critical the board remained prudent in managing costs by adhering to initiatives already in place. He added that CWI has already managed to reduce borrowing and while the COVID-19 pandemic continued to present unprecedented financial challenges, it was hoped that within

the next two-and-a-half years the organization could be in a sustainable position. Since the start of the year, however, CWI has rolled out several major broadcast deals and is banking on the resumption of international cricket and tours by major Test nations like England and India, to boost its income.

With KPMG acknowledging that CWI’s revenue was “cyclical in nature and depends on the popularity of the various reciprocal tours,” Grave said it is important the governing body’s finances were viewed in a four-year cycle in which important money-spinning tours took place.

The England side is scheduled to tour the Caribbean next January for five Twenty20 Internationals before returning in March for three Tests.

~ *Rewritten from CMC*



## Jamaican UFC Fighter Wins – But Does Not Feel Like It



Jamaican UFC fighter Uriah Hall

Jamaican UFC fighter, Uriah Hall, raked up another win on Saturday night, yet he does not feel like he won.

That’s because the fight lasted all of 17 seconds as his opponent, Chris Weidman, suffered a ghastly injury at

UFC 261, that sent him to the hospital.

That led to a victory for Uriah Hall leaving the win a hollow one for the Spanish Town-born Jamaican immigrant.

Weidman launched a low kick that landed but snapped his lower leg bones in half. Pulling his leg back, Weidman fell to the canvas in agony.

The fight was over. Hall had won.

It was the second time that Hall and Weidman had fought. Hall lost the first fight nearly 11 years ago when they fought under the Ring of Combat banner.

Hall, of course, wanted to avenge that loss, but didn’t really feel like he had because of Weidman’s injury.

~ *NewsAmericasNow.com*



## Caribbean Soccer Star Picked By Indy Eleven

The Indy Eleven soccer team has added a Caribbean soccer star to its squad.

Jamaican international midfielder Peter-Lee Vassell was added last week as one more attacking piece in the team. Terms of the contract that bring the ex-MLS performer with Los Angeles Football Club (LAFC) to the Circle City have not been released per club policy, but Vassell will be available for selection by Eleven Head Coach Martin Rennie pending receipt of his visa.

The 23-year-old Vassell has turned heads in recent years with the Jamaican National Team, bagging six goals in 17 appearances with the “Reggae Boys” at the senior international level including contests in the 2019 Concacaf Gold Cup and Concacaf Nations League competitions.

“I used to play with (former

Eleven forward) Dane Kelly, so we used to talk a lot and he was telling me Indy Eleven is a great club,” explained Vassell. “I’m ready for this season, and hopefully we don’t dwell on last season. The guys coming in, we are prepared to go to the playoffs and hope for the best. We have great players and a great coaching staff heading into the season.”

“Peter-Lee Vassell is a highly talented player who has already played a lot of games – and scored a lot of goals – for his national team at a relatively young age,” said Indy Eleven Head Coach Martin Rennie. “Peter-Lee has a ton of potential, and we feel he can develop a lot with us and become a force in our midfield.”

Vassell split the 2019 season between a pair of regular season champions, making six appearances for LAFC as part of their MLS Supporters

Shield winning campaign and playing another six games on loan for USL Championship side Phoenix Rising FC. LAFC made the native of Saint James Parrish, Jamaica, their first pick in the 2019 MLS SuperDraft (2nd round, 40th overall selection) after the attacking midfielder stood out in both the MLS Caribbean Combine and MLS Combine.

Prior to that season stateside, Vassell began his professional career with Harbour View FC, where he scored a pair of goals in 38 contests across the 2017-18 seasons for the perennial Jamaican Red Stripe Premier League contender.

Vassell’s addition puts Indy Eleven at 26 players under contract leading up to this year’s regular season.

~ *NewsAmericasNow.com*



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## Haitian-American Makes History In Miami Shores



New Councilmember Katia Saint-Fleur (Facebook Image)

Haitian American Katia Saint-Fleur has made Miami Shores' history.

She was recently sworn in as the first ever Haitian-American council member.

"To be able to live in a country where you can be the daughter of immigrant parents who worked as hard as my parents have worked, to live in a community you dreamed of living in as a child and now to represent that community as a council member is something that I will never forget," Saint-Fleur said following her swearing in at Miami Shores Village Community Center.

Saint-Fleur vowed to go above and beyond in her new role as councilwoman.

"I will wake up every day and give a thousand percent of myself to make every one of you proud," Saint-Fleur said. "This village is beautiful. Our goal I believe - I've met and spoken to everyone [in the council] - is to sustain that beauty."

She added that she will also

never forget how the Miami Shores residents rooted for her and trusted her.

Before becoming a councilwoman, Saint-Fleur was the legislative aide of Oscar Braynon, a former member of the Florida senate. She was also the principal at KSF & Associates, a firm that specializes in helping non-profit enterprises with the state legislative process.

Four candidates ran to fill three seats on the Miami Shores' five-member council. Saint-Fleur finished third in the voting, accumulating 1,037 votes, just 22 votes more than the fourth-place runner, Jonathan Meltz.

The top two vote-getters became mayor and vice-mayor. Sandra Harris, who received the most votes, became Mayor of Miami Shores. She is the second Black woman to be in that role. Daniel Marinberg finished second to be elected as vice-mayor.

Mayor Harris and Marinberg will serve a four-year term while

Saint-Fleur will be in office for two years.

Miami Shores has about 10,000 residents with 14 percent of them being Black and 70

percent white, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The village is about two miles from Little Haiti.

~ Rewritten from *The Haitian Times*



## Brooklyn Street Renamed After Haitian Slave

Part of a street in Brooklyn, NY now carries the name of a Haitian former slave turned philanthropist.

The corner of Flatbush and Church avenue has been now renamed the Pierre Toussaint Boulevard.

The effort to co-name the section of Church Avenue was led by District 40 Council Member Mathieu Eugene.

This latest co-named strip is now the third street in Flatbush to be co-named after a prominent Haitian figure. In 2018, sections of Nostrand Avenue and Rogers Avenue were co-named Toussaint Louverture Boulevard and Jean Jacques Dessalines Boulevard, respectively.

"Pierre Toussaint dedicated his life to charity and to helping those in need," Eugene said in the statement. "His legacy of compassion and good will towards people of all backgrounds is a testament to the significant role that our immigrant community has played in the founding of the United States."

Born a slave in present-day Haiti, Toussaint was brought to New York City in 1787 and



The corner of Flatbush and Church avenue has been now renamed the Pierre Toussaint Boulevard. (Haitian Times image)

freed after the death of his owner in 1807. He became a highly successful hairdresser and philanthropist, working extensively to house refugees and raise funds for orphanages and schools. He is considered the founder of the modern-day Catholic Charities.

After his death in 1853, Toussaint was entombed at St.

Patrick's Cathedral in midtown Manhattan, a church he helped found with financial backing. In 1996 Pope John Paul II gave Toussaint the title of "venerable," a key step on the road to sainthood.

~ Rewritten from *The Haitian Times*



## Haiti Gets Sixth PM Under Moïse Administration

Haiti has now installed a sixth prime minister – all under the Jovenel Moïse administration.

Claude Joseph was appointed on April 14, 2021, hours after Prime Minister Joseph Jouthe announced his resignation amid worsening gang violence and political turmoil.

Jouthe, who had been in the role for just over a year, announced on Twitter around 1 a.m. local that he was stepping down, saying it had been an honor to serve his Caribbean country as prime minister. He did

not say why he was resigning.

Hours after, Joseph was appointed. He is also the foreign minister. Joseph said the solution to Haiti's ongoing violence is the upcoming elections.

"Delivering free, fair and transparent elections is the top priority for this administration and the only way to create long-term peace and prosperity for all Haitians," Joseph posted on his Twitter account.



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## HAITIAN HERITAGE



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## Explosion Of Kidnappings Terrorizes Haiti

BY ANDRE PAULTRE AND SARAH MARSH

A wave of kidnappings is sweeping Haiti. But even in a country growing inured to horrific abductions, the case of five-year-old Oslina Janneus sparked outrage.

Oslina was snatched off the streets of the capital Port-au-Prince in late January as she was playing. The child's corpse, bearing signs of strangulation, turned up a week later, according to her mother, Nadege Saint Hilaire, a peanut vendor who said she couldn't pay the \$4,000 ransom. Saint Hilaire's cries filled the airwaves as she spoke to a few local radio stations seeking help raising funds to cover funeral costs.

Saint Hilaire is now in hiding after receiving death threats, she said, from the same gang that killed her daughter. "I wasn't supposed to go to the radio to denounce what had happened," she told Reuters.

Police in her impoverished and crime-ridden neighborhood, Martissant, told Reuters they were investigating the case.

Haiti's epidemic of kidnappings is the latest crisis to befall this Caribbean island nation of around 11 million people, roiled by deepening political unrest and economic misery. Kidnappings last year tripled to 234 cases compared to 2019, according to official data compiled by the United Nations.

The real figures are likely much higher because many Haitians don't report abductions, fearing retribution from criminal gangs, according to attorney Gedeon Jean, director of the nonprofit Center for Human Rights Analysis and Research in Port-au-Prince. He said the research center recorded 796 kidnappings last year.

Haiti's national police force did not respond to a request for comment. President Jovenel Moise has said repeatedly that his government is doing all it can, and has put more resources into anti-kidnapping efforts.



Since February 2020, a particular group of masked police officers operating under the name **Fantom 509** have been marching along the streets of Haiti to allegedly denounce the recent rise of violence and kidnapping in Port-au-Prince. While their motives may appear pure, especially for the victims, evidence has shown that these local groups of police officers are part a kidnapping scheme. (Fabworldtoday.com image)

Still, he publicly acknowledged on April 14 that "kidnappings have become generalized" and that efforts to combat persistent insecurity have been "ineffective."

Human rights activists and a new report from Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic allege that Moise's government has allied itself with violent criminal gangs to maintain its grip on power and to suppress dissent. Opposition groups have called for Moise to resign and hand power to a transitional government that would delay presidential and legislative elections slated for September until the nation is stable enough to ensure a free and fair contest.

Haiti's acting Prime Minister Claude Joseph denied those allegations and the report's findings. He said anti-democratic forces are whipping up violence to destabilize Moise's administration in an election year. "They are fomenting the gangs to stop there being elections," Joseph told Reuters.

Criminals have targeted some poor people, like Saint Hilaire, for modest sums.

Many more victims come from the ranks of the Haitian middle class - teachers, priests, civil servants, small business owners. Such targets aren't rich enough to afford bodyguards but have enough assets or connections to scrape up a ransom.

In one of the most high-profile recent cases, five Catholic priests, two nuns and three laymen were kidnapped on April 11 in the commune of Croix-des-Bouquets, northeast of the capital.

Four members of the group were subsequently released and six are still missing, according to an April 25 statement by the Society of Priests of St. Jacques, a French missionary society linked to four of the kidnapped priests. An official with that group declined to comment on whether a ransom was paid.

"For some time now, we have been witnessing the descent into hell of Haitian society," the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince said in a statement earlier this month.

#### 'KILLING THE ECONOMY'

Haiti last experienced a major surge in kidnappings and gang violence after a rebellion toppled then-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, prompting the United Nations to send in a peacekeeping force.

The departure of that force in October 2019 was followed by a resurgence in gang crime, according to human-rights activists, who say kidnapping has proven lucrative at a time when Haiti's economy is teetering.

Rights activists say politics also play a role. They allege Moise's government has harnessed criminal groups to terrorize neighborhoods known as opposition strongholds and to quell public dissent amid street protests that have rocked the country the past three years.

The report released April 22 by the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School alleges "high-level government involvement in the planning, execution and cover-up" of three gang-led attacks on poor neighborhoods between 2018 and 2020 that left at least 240 civilians dead. The report relied on investigations of the attacks by Haitian and international human rights experts. It alleges the government provided gangs with money, weapons and vehicles and shielded them from prosecution.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury in December sanctioned reputed Haitian gang leader Jimmy Cherizier and two former Moise administration officials - Fednel Monchery and Joseph Pierre Richard Duplan - for helping orchestrate one of the attacks. All three have denied wrongdoing.

Kidnapping is an outgrowth of impunity for criminal organizations, according to Rosy Auguste Ducena, program manager of the Port-au-Prince-based National Network for the Defense of Human Rights.

"We are talking about a regime that has allied itself with armed gangs," Ducena said.

Justice Minister Rockefeller Vincent denied any government alliance with gangs. He told Reuters in December that the wave of kidnappings was the work of political enemies seeking to undermine Moise "by creating a sense of chaos."

The rise in kidnappings has petrified many Haitians. The heads of seven private business associations this month issued a

joint statement saying they had reached "a saturation point" with soaring crime. They endorsed a nationwide work stoppage that occurred on April 15 to protest Haiti's security crisis.

"Kidnapping is killing the economy," said Haitian economist Etzer Emile. He said the tourism and entertainment sectors have withered.

Moise's administration says it is working hard to end the terror. Two years ago it revived a commission aimed at disarming gang members and reintegrating them into society. Over the past year, the government has increased the police budget and solicited advice from Colombia, which once battled its own kidnapping epidemic. In March, Haiti created an anti-kidnapping task force to attack the problem with tactics such as tracing laundered ransom money.

Still, four policemen died last month in a gun battle with alleged criminals in a slum where kidnapping victims are often held. The government declared a month-long state of emergency in gang-controlled neighborhoods. Yet abductions continue to mount.

Moise, who has opted not to seek re-election this September, has defied the opposition's calls for him to step down early. On April 14 he issued a statement saying he aimed to form a government of national unity to better tackle the "pressing problem of insecurity."

#### HOODS, GUNS AND TORTURE

Many Haitians remain skeptical - and on edge.

One victim was a 29-year-old doctor. He was kidnapped in his own vehicle last November after leaving the Port-au-Prince hospital where he had just finished an overnight shift. He told Reuters his story on condition of anonymity.

At dawn, four armed assailants hustled him into the back seat, threw a hood over his head and held him at gunpoint as they drove, he said. His captors eventually tossed him into a room with three other abductees - a man and two women - who had been snatched earlier.

The physician said his kidnappers ordered him to phone his family to request \$500,000 for his release. The first two people he tried said they couldn't pay. The kidnappers slapped him and delivered a threat.

"They said that if I called a third person that didn't give me a satisfying response, they would kill me," he said.

The doctor's girlfriend said she and three friends negotiated with the gang. She wouldn't say how much they paid, fearful of becoming targets for other criminals.

The doctor said he reported his abduction to Haiti's national anti-kidnapping police unit. That unit did not respond to requests for comment.

The physician does not know the fate of his fellow abductees. He said the kidnappers poured melted Styrofoam on their skin because their families had yet to pay up.

Saint Hilaire, the mother of the young girl who was kidnapped and murdered, said she continues to watch her back after speaking publicly about the abduction.

The kidnappers "told me to make sure I never ran into them, because they would kill me," she said.

~ Thompson Reuters News Foundation

(Reporting by Andre Paultre in Port-au-Prince and Sarah Marsh in Havana; editing by Marla Dickerson)



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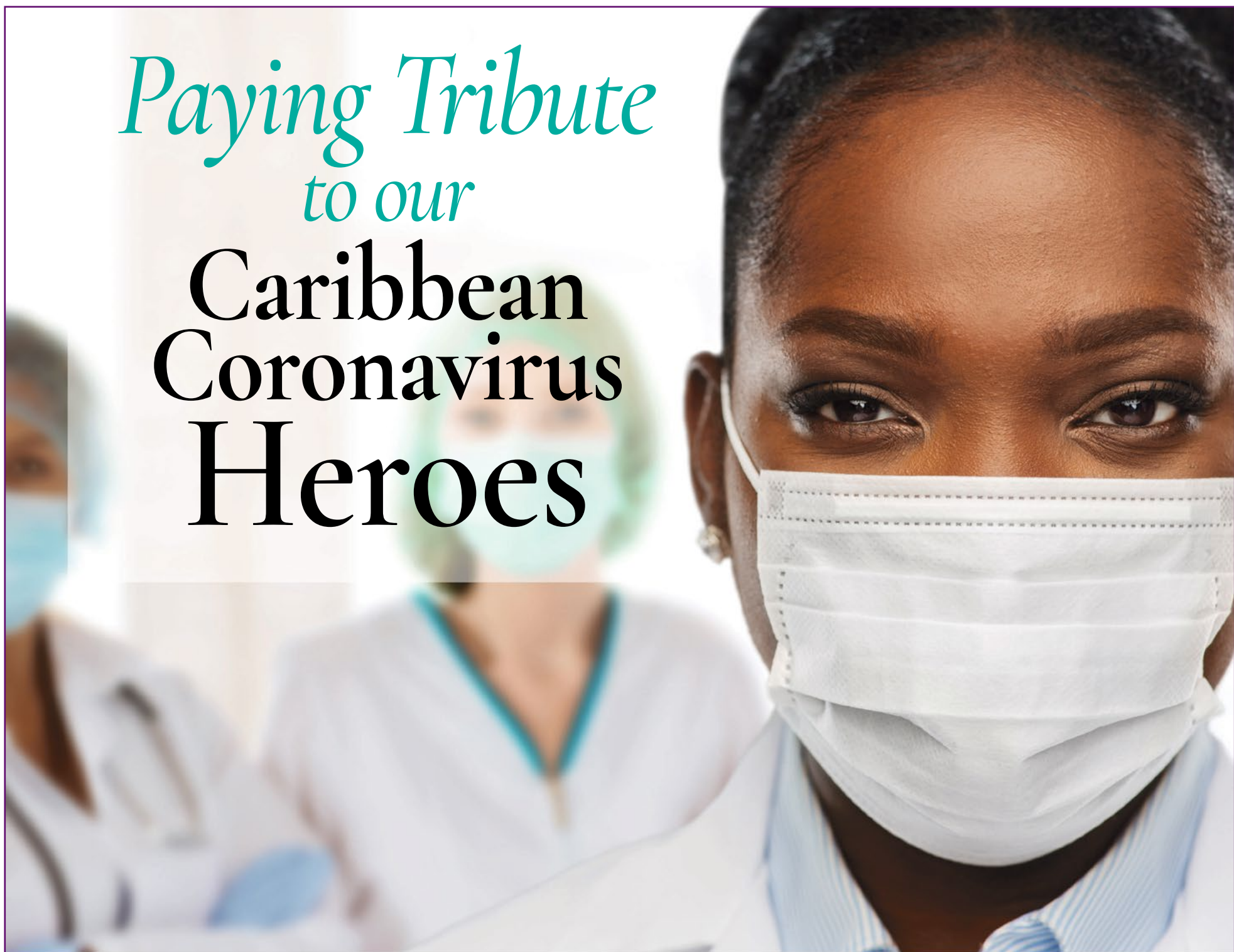
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