

# GUYANAI FOLK

*And Culture*

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10

## **ROXANNE J. PERSAUD** **STATE SENATOR-ELECT** 19TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT, BROOKLYN



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**W**e must apologize for the lateness of this publication, due to circumstances beyond our control.

Welcome to the October 2015 Online Magazine. October was originally the eighth month of the Roman calendar until 153 BCE. The month originated from the Latin term - October mensis - eighth month. Although October is the tenth month of the year in the Julian and Gregorian calendars, it was commonly linked with the autumn season in the Northern Hemisphere and spring in the Southern Hemisphere. The Gregorian calendar has undergone many alterations over the years. Originally there were only 10 months, October being the 10th.

As we continue to bridge the gap, our theme "We Bridgin'" makes more sense not only in Guyana but also in the Diaspora. With Thanksgiving and Christmas fast approaching, we will close this year with a bang after our Annual Symposium at the Empire State College, State University of New York Brooklyn Center 177 Livingston St, Brooklyn NY.

Our president Dr. Vibert Cambridge recently returned from Guyana where he cemented collaboration in areas such as a Literary Festival; a National Symposium and a Masquerade Jamboree for the 2016 Guyana Independence celebrations. Our endeavor is to revive the Guyanese art form and prepare to welcome 2016 when the Guyana Cultural Association of New York will celebrate its 15 years of existence. We suggest that you indulge this unprecedented opportunity by participating in our historic cultural events, taking advantage of the inexpensive advertised airfares and hotel accommodation packages to coordinate our efforts in Guyana for the 50th anniversary celebrations. Stay tuned for further details which will be published in our future online magazines.

Yes, our Guyana Cultural Association Arts and Cultural Center (GA&CC) is imminent. Our Dance Program; Music Program and Performing Arts Program are almost in place. A launch is scheduled for November 29, on the 2nd. Floor over the auditorium at the St. Stephens Church venue - 2806 Newkirk Avenue corner of E 29th. Street in Brooklyn. We are looking for students to participate. Affordable fees are in the offering, and the school is poised to impart knowledge, skills and techniques to build positive careers. Our programs are enhanced by qualified professionals to teach and channel students into the different fields of endeavor.

October is designated as Agriculture Month in Guyana. The goal is not only to build awareness of this important dimension of national development, but to seek protection and support for our natural resources for productivity and sustainability. Emphasis is being placed on reestablishing farming and marketing of products. This noble and dedicated effort is not only testimony to the recognition of the significance of developing the agricultural sector, but about educating and mobilizing the farming community.

It is important to remember the pervasiveness of the dreaded disease "cancer". This stark reality, as portrayed in one article, was center stage at the Cancer Awareness Forum sponsored and supported by three Hometown Associations. In another article we are reminded of the reopening of schools and the challenges and opportunities that Caribbean nationals face following the summer holidays.

You can also read the Indian origins and celebrations of Ramleela at the Monument Gardens; GCA paying tribute to the fallen Guyanese born detective of the NYPD, Randolph A. Holder; Baroness Amos's recent appointment as Director of School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and much more.

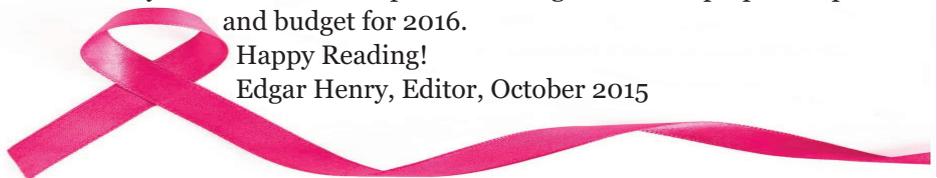
For the past 14 years GCA has continuously provided a stage through the Arts, folklore and literary discourse to entertain, educate, reminisce and articulate possible solutions to social problems and differences. The approach of our cultural organization is not only visually entertaining, but also interactive and inclusive.

October was truly a month to contemplate and invigorate as we prepare to plan

and budget for 2016.

Happy Reading!

Edgar Henry, Editor, October 2015



# CONGRATULATIONS STATE SENATOR-ELECT ROXANNE PERSAUD

SENATORIAL DISTRICT 19 ,

**R**oxanne Jacqueline Persaud is the Senator-elect for District 19 of the New York State Senate. She trounced her rivals, Republican Jeffrey Ferretti and Conservative candidate Elias Weir, in the race for the 19th Senate District — taking almost 90 percent of the vote in the special election.

She served in the New York State Assembly representing District 59 from 2014 to her election in 2015. She was the first female to represent the 59th Assembly District.

While in the state legislature, Persaud became a member of the Higher Education, Real Property Taxation and Libraries and Technology committees, the Brooklyn Daily Eagle reports. She sponsored a number of bills related to housing, healthcare, criminal justice reform, and education — including a piece of legislation that would make tuition free for New York residents at the state's public colleges. That bill is pending in the Assembly's Ways and Means Committee.

Senator-elect Persaud is a longtime advocate for her community and an avid volunteer. Her dedication to serving her community has motivated her to serve in various capacities. She was President of the 69th Precinct Community Council in Canarsie, member of Community Board 18 and Commissioner on the New York City Districting Commission. In addition, she is a graduate of the NYPD Citizens Police Academy as well as the New York City Office of Emergency Management-Community Emergency Response Team, member of Community Action Board of the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development and Chairperson of the Neighborhood Advisory Board - District 18. She also serves on organizations fighting domestic violence and cancer awareness.

She was born in Guyana, South America and migrated to the United States with her parents and siblings. She is a graduate of Pace University from which she earned a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Education Administration.

State Senator-elect Persaud has spent her entire career working in higher education institutions and works tirelessly encouraging urban youth to attend college.

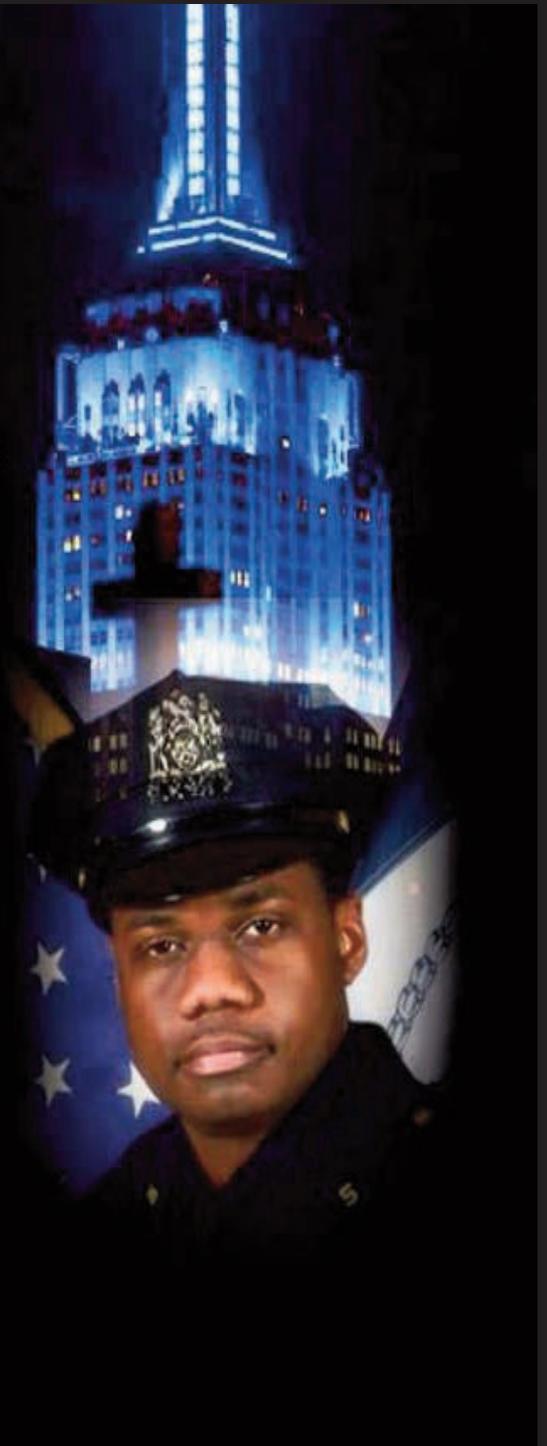
We, the members of the Guyana Cultural Association of New York extend our condolences to the family and relatives of Randolph A. Holder.

In life you represented service, dedication, caring, and justice - values that are dear to our Guyanese heritage. In life you modeled our respect and love for New York. In death you help us to reaffirm our commitment to those values.

**Your life has been  
an inspiration**

R. I. P.  
**Randolph A.  
Holder**

THE GUYANA CULTURAL  
ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK, INC.





## GUYANESE HONOR RANDOLPH HOLDER AT VIGIL IN BROOKLYN

*Tangerine Clarke, photographs courtesy of Tangerine Clarke*

An emotional video by Bobb O Vision chronicling the stellar life of fallen NYPD Officer, Randolph Holder set the tone for an evening of outstanding tributes organized by the Guyana Unity Movement, on Sunday 25 and attended by family members of the fallen officer.

“My son was a high achiever. He was a well disciplined proud young man, a son any family would want to have because he sets a good example for others to follow,” said the elder Randolph Holder, referring to his son as if he was still alive during an exclusively interview with Caribbean Life News, at a traditional ‘wake night’ of drumming, gospel music, and food, in Brooklyn’s St Stephen’s Church Hall.

“He was a kind and loving person who cooperated with others. He cared about the kids he was around in the community, and he followed good principles.”

These were the loving words of praise for his son, fallen Police Officer, Randolph Holder Jr. whose life was cut short by a hail of bullets on a Harlem Street, on October 20.

A wall of former colleagues, hundreds of Guyanese, politicians, activist and members of the NYPD surrounded Holder, a former Guyana police officer.

Mrs. Holder, who sat next to Officer Holder’s fiancée, Mary Mahumad at the head table, wiped away tears as Captain Reymundo Mundo of the NYPD expressed what a pleasure it was to work with Officer Randolph Holder Jr.

“He was a dedicated officer who gave his life for all of us. I was working the night when he was shot and we all rushed to his side. I want you to know, we tried very hard to get him to the hospital as quickly as we could. Unfortunately, it was too late.”

## IN MEMORIAM

“We miss him, but we will not forget him. I told his father that we would never forget you. That is a promise.”

“Mrs. Holder, the community has been at PSA 5 every day. Children have left cards and messages. We are truly proud of the support we got, I invite everyone to visit the memorial to see how it has grown, said Captain Mundo, who will be travelling to Guyana for the burial of his 33-year old for colleague.” said Captain Reymundo Mundo of the NYPD.

“I am very supportive of the men and women who risk their lives to help the community. That is exactly what this young man was doing, someone asked for help and he provided assistance and he was killed,” said Councilmember, Juamanne Williams.

“Gun violence is something that is too pervasive throughout or community, said the politician who called on the community to stand up against whoever is doing the killing and shooting.

“We need to fix this,” added Williams who noted that there is there was no reason for this young man to die.

“I will do whatever I can to eradicate gun violence and continue to support our community,” said Williams.

Assemblywoman Roxanne Persaud, expressed condolences to the family, noting that PO Holder’s home was around the corner of her 58th District office and she was not only sad that he was a Guyanese, but that he was a NYPD officer.

“I have walked with police officers, and attended their citizen’s police academy to understand what they do. When you see a police officer thank them for what they do. Officer Holder took that bullet for all of us,” she said as she thanked the parents for the sacrifice their son made.

Other tributes came from President of the Guyana Tri-State Alliance, Sandra Harte of the New Jersey, Bernita Montique and Errol Lewis of the Guyana Action Committee and the PNCr, North America Group.

Officer Holder’s life was celebrated in true Guyanese style. The lyrics of Adrian Dutchin ‘I am a Guyanese’ was played as nationals waved their national flag and danced, while songstress Jennifer Ferreira sang “There is a friend in Jesus” while saxophonist Souflantis, drummers Akoya Rudder, Gold-teeth-Lance and Menes DeGroit performed a drum salute.

***“My son was a high achiever. He was a well disciplined proud young man, a son any family would want to have because he sets a good example for others to follow”***

*Randolph Holder Sr.*



*Photographs  
compliments of  
Tangerine Clarke*

# DR. ROBERT MOORE REMEMBERED

**D**r. Robert Moore was preparing for a monastic communal life when the University College of the West Indies (UCWI) – the forerunner of the University of the West Indies (UWI) – came calling in 1951.

Set to enter Codrington College, an Anglican theological school in Barbados, Dr. Moore was surprised when Sir Philip Sherlock – a member of the Irwin Commission that conceived the UCWI in 1945 – showed up in Guyana to recruit him to attend the university.

Raised by a great aunt after his American-born father left the family when he was just six years old and his mother went to Aruba, Moore had become a protégé of Alan Knight, the Archbishop of the West Indies and the Bishop of Guyana from 1937 until his death in 1979.

“His idea was that that I would become a priest and when he retired or died, I would succeed him,” said Moore.

However, that changed when Sherlock met with Moore who attended Central High School and taught at Queen’s College, where his students included current UWI vice-chancellor Nigel Harris, advertising executive Vic Insanally, the late Dr. Walter Rodney and Terry Holder.

“Sir Philip told me he was aware of my academic prowess and he wanted me to attend the Mona campus in Jamaica,” said Moore. “I told him I was preparing for priesthood and he let me know in no uncertain manner that he didn’t think I was priesthood material. When I informed Bishop Knight about the meeting, he told me to go if I was getting an open scholarship and then when I was finished, I could go to Codrington and become a scholar and priest. That was the assumption I went on, but after four years at Mona, I no longer wanted to be a priest. I wanted to be an educator.”

Moore, who graduated in 1955, was conferred with an honorary doctorate by his alma mater.

At UCWI, Moore excelled in public speaking, debating and acting and was the chair of the Student Christian Movement.

He said the University of the West Indies played an immense role in shaping his life and he noted that the late Elsa Goveia, the university’s first female professor, whose history lessons left a lasting impression on him



and other students, featured prominently in his acceptance speech.

A brilliant scholar, Guyanese-born Goveia died in 1980 at age 55.

“If I were to dedicate this award to anyone, it would be to Elsa, because she made me a West Indian historian,” he said.

“Once you went to her lectures, you became a West Indian nationalist. She was a very slim woman, but her

lectures were simply fantastic. Very lucid, she opened our minds and was excellent on the topic of slavery. She not only talked about the political aspects of slavery, but also about the psychological aspects too.

“When she wanted to describe a particular social atmosphere, she had the capacity to bring it alive in such a way that you almost felt you were there. Nobody missed an Elsa Goveia lecture. If any single person made me what I am, it was her.”

Completing his Master’s at Cambridge University and his PhD at Sussex University, Moore was a renowned radio broadcaster before serving as Guyana’s High Commissioner to Canada for almost five and a half years.

During his first and only diplomatic assignment that ended in 1979, he was the dean of the Commonwealth Group of Diplomats and he worked closely with secular and religious non-governmental organizations that were devoted to the alleviation of poverty in the Global South as well as with Canadian universities with outreach programs in the Caribbean.

Moore, who co-founded the now defunct Caribbean Contact newspaper, returned to Guyana with the promise by former president Forbes Burnham that he would head an institute for the study and teaching of Guyanese history. When Moore was informed that funding wasn’t available to get the unit off the ground, he went back to Canada and after a three-year stint with Carleton University’s International Affairs School, joined the Canadian International Development Agency as a senior policy advisor in public engagement.

Moore retired in 1997. He has an honorary doctorate from a theological college in Saskatchewan – authored *Third World Diplomats in Dialogue with the First World* and co-authored *Audacious Anglicans* that was published six years ago.

*Extract from Share Publication*

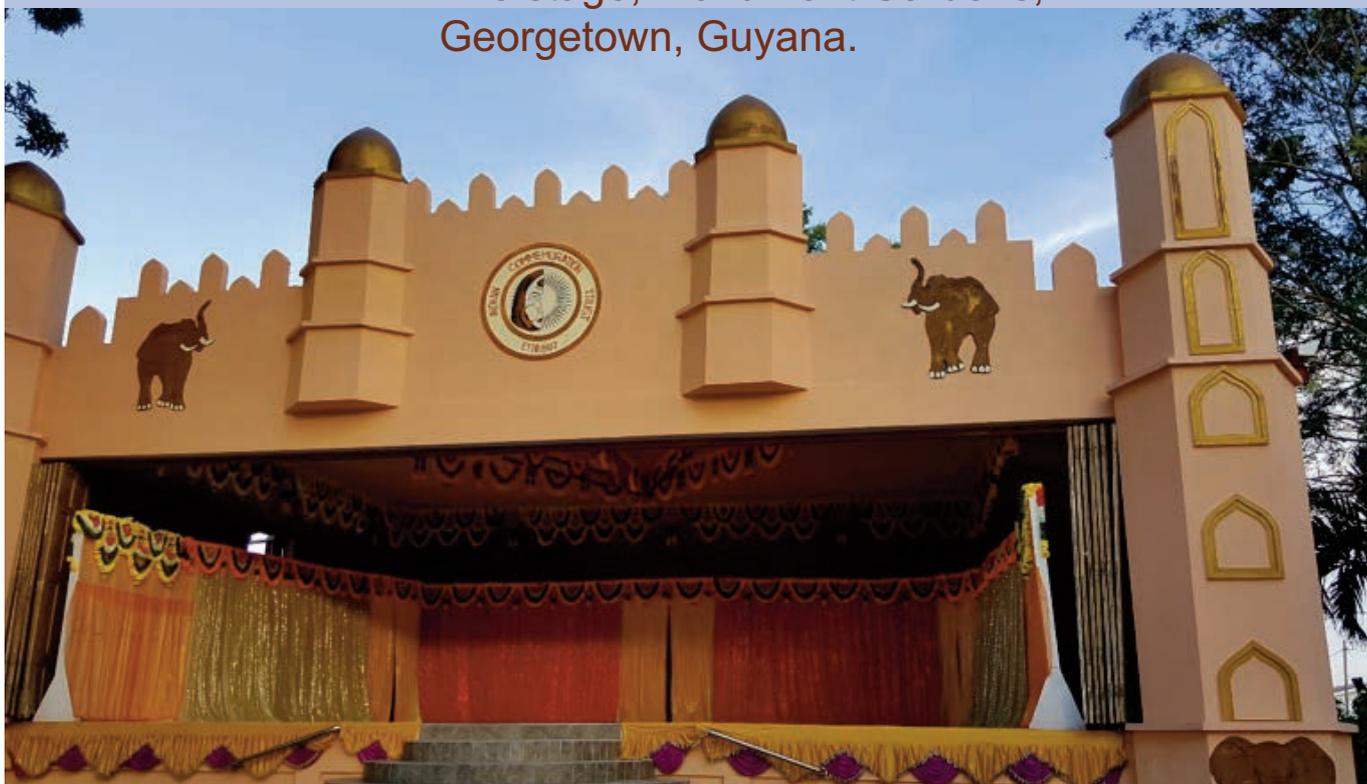
# RAMLEELA

## AT THE MONUMENT GARDENS

*Vibert C. Cambridge*

*Photographs courtesy of Vibert Cambridge*

The stage, Monument Gardens,  
Georgetown, Guyana.



I welcomed the cooling breeze that blew across Monument Gardens on the evening of Saturday, October 24, 2013. The Monument Gardens is located at the intersection of Camp Street, Church Street, and North Road. The centerpiece is a bronze sculpture representing the ship *Whitby*.

The *Whitby's* arrival in Demerara on May 5, 1838 is

recognized as an important moment in the peopling of Guyana.

The garden's neighbors include St. Roses' High School, Bedford Methodist Church, the architecturally significant Go Invest Office building, Real Value Supermarket, and Bourda Market.



Signage on building at the corner of Church and Thomas Streets, Georgetown, Guyana.

The cooling breeze and a rising moon encouraged nostalgic reflection. I knew the location before it became the Monument Gardens. I spent many wonderful years in nearby Thomas Street with my grandparents. I recalled early childhood walks up Camp Street, bordered with blooming flamboyant trees, to Church Street, and then facing the Water Works at the junction.

The Water Works was established in the late 19th century. It represented achievement—a system to deliver potable water to homes in Georgetown.

The Water Works was also contiguous to Bourda Green—the epicenter of political life during the early 1950s as British Guiana prepared for the first general elections under universal adult suffrage. I remembered the Water Works as being integrated into the cultivated landscape of century palms and the large shade trees that characterized Church Street as one proceeded to the Botanic Gardens, GFC, and GCC.

In time, as the size of the urban population increased and demand for water increased, the Water Works was

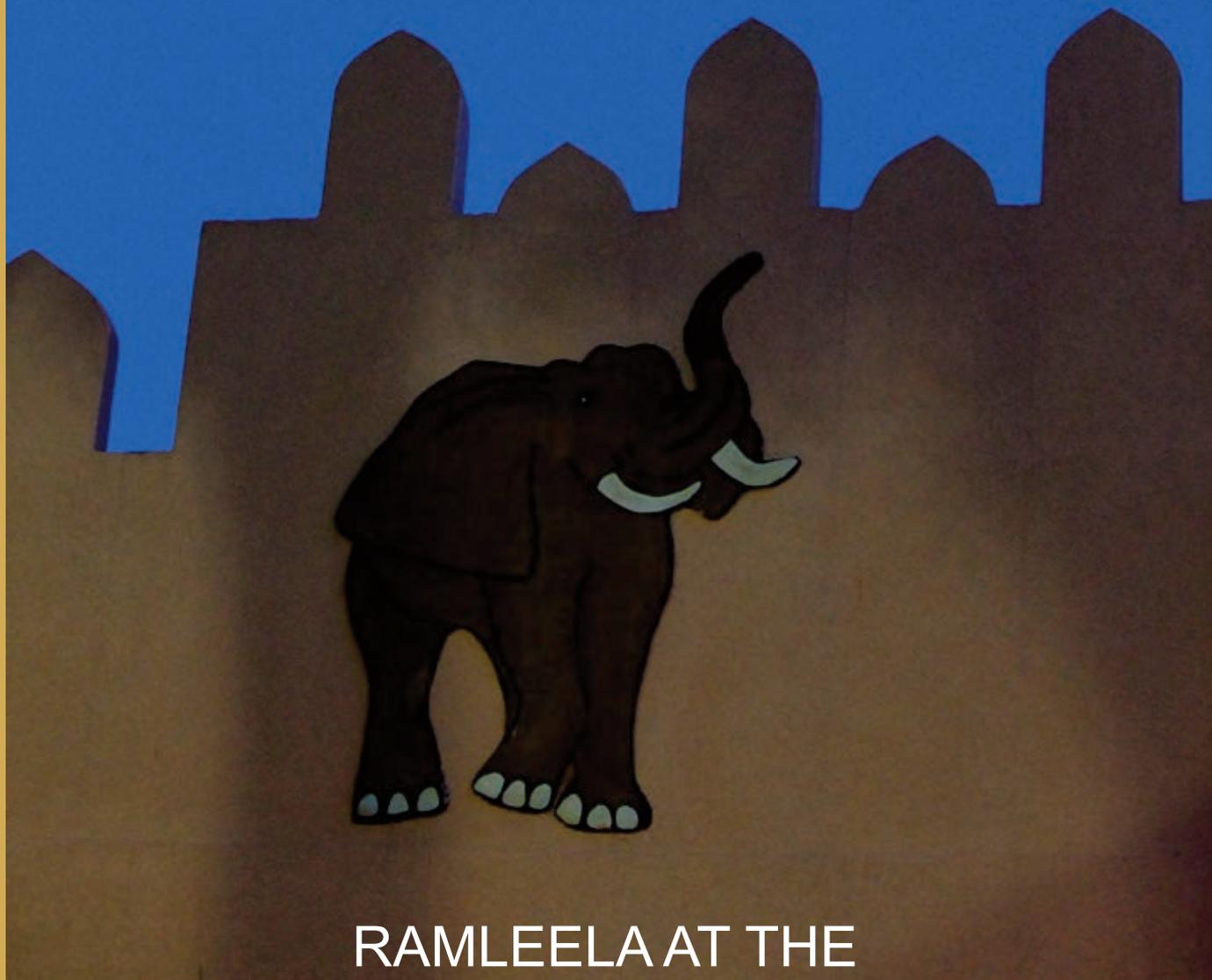
moved to its current Vlissingen Road location.

In 1988, the old Water Works grounds were repurposed. According to Dr. Seeta Shah, the Monument Gardens was built by the Indian Commemoration Trust to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first East Indians from India. In 2012, to commemorate the 175th anniversary, a performing arts space was opened.

It was on this stage that Roshini Boodhoo presented a performance of *Ramleela*, featuring the Jewan Ka Nritya dance company.

This was my first opportunity to experience a tradition in Guyana's theatrical history. *Ramleela* is a dramatic rendition of the *Ramayana* (Ram's journey). Ms. Boodhoo's production has been described as a "colourful blend of dance and pantomime [using recorded narration and music to tell] the story of the life of Ram from birth, training as a prince, his exile from *Ayodhya*, the abduction of Sita and battle with the demon king culminated with a burning of the effigy of Ravan, the demon king."

Moon rising over  
the Monument  
Gardens



RAMLEELA AT THE  
MONUMENT GARDENS

*Saturday, October 24, 2015.  
Photograph courtesy of Vibert Cambridge.*

Bronze sculpture representing the Whitby was created in India and sits on a pedestal of black marble from South India.

## RAMLEELA AT THE MONUMENT GARDENS

The *Ramayana* is recognized as one of the two great works of Indian literature. (The other is the Mahabharata.) In addition to being a great work of Indian literature (according to some sources dating back to the second century B.C.), the *Ramayana* is a pivotal text in Hindu literature. It codifies a body of values to guide human relations—respect for elders, healthy lifestyles, loyalty, service, bravery, the ideal husband, the ideal wife, and perseverance in the struggle against evil. It has almost 24,000 verses.

The Ramleela is a theatrical device to deliver the story

of Ram's journey. It is a story-telling tradition brought to Guyana by our ancestors from India. It is an early example of entertainment-education (edutainment). Until the middle of the 20th century, the epic story of Ram and Sita was performed by all-male casts in rural Guyana. By the end of the 20th century, it appears that the *Ramleela* tradition had "died" in Guyana and other parts of the Caribbean. In recent years, there have been efforts to revive the tradition in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana. Roshini Boodhoo's recent production at the Monument Gardens is one such example.

## RAMLEELA AT THE MONUMENT GARDENS

Roshini  
Boodhoo,  
director of Ramleela.

This production revealed the influence of Bollywood's aesthetics on contemporary Guyanese performing arts. It was an altogether exciting production featuring colorful costumes and innovative performers. The Jewan Ka Nritya dance company revealed its versatility and enthusiasm. The lighting suggested good lighting infrastructure. The performance succeeded in telling the story in a way that I understood. It helped me connect dots among the grand narratives of human civilization and develop a deeper appreciation of the significance of names such as Ram, Sita, Kowsilla, Bharat, Sumintra, and Lakshman in Guyanese society. The Indian Heritage Trust must be congratulated for hosting the event. The producer, director, choreographers, set and costume designers, and the young cast deserve recognition and encouragement.

Similarly, we must also congratulate and support the work that is being done quietly in places like the National School of Theatre Arts and Drama, Theater

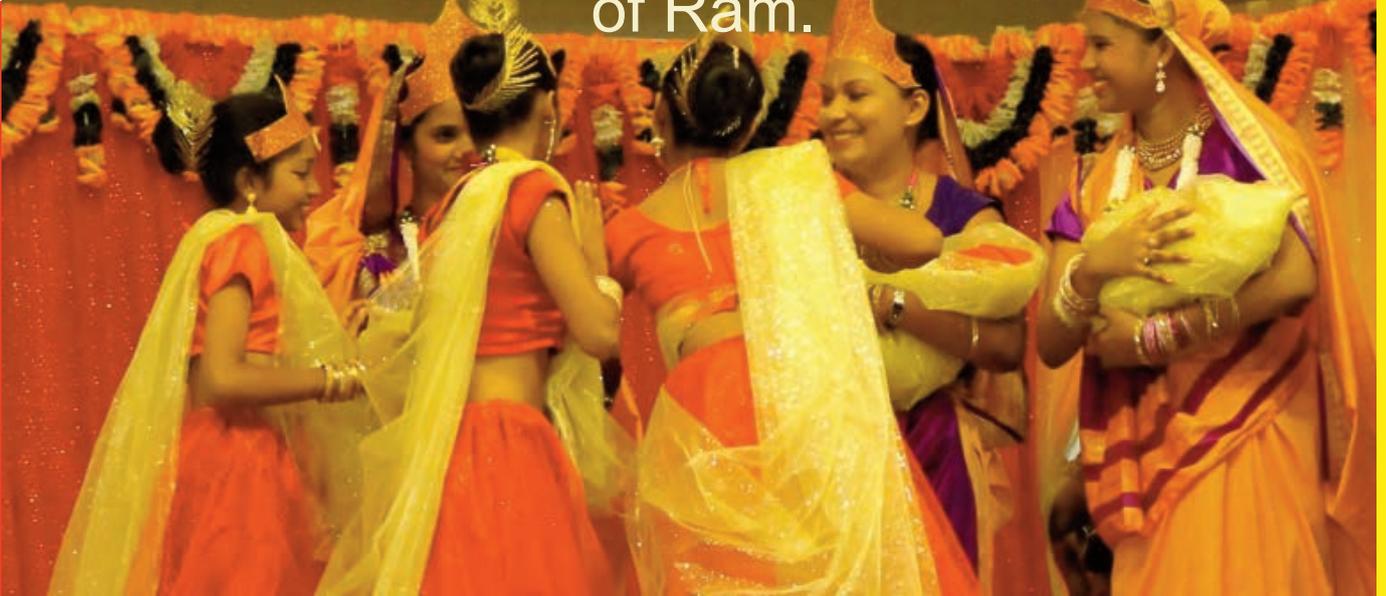
Guild, Guyana Hindu Dharmic Sabha, and the Nadira and Indranie Shah Dance Troupe to revive *Ramleela* and the other theater and story-telling traditions we have inherited from our ancestors who have peopled Guyana over the past 5,000 years. Yes, at least 5,000 years!

The Monument Gardens is rapidly developing into an important open air performing space. As Dr. Seeta Shah has noted, the garden's beautiful stage is being used throughout the year to present theatrical shows that celebrate Guyanese festivals including Christmas, Easter, Phagwah, and Diwali.

I look forward to attending creative activities in the Monument Gardens during the 50th anniversary of Guyana's independence in 2016.



# The birth of Ram.



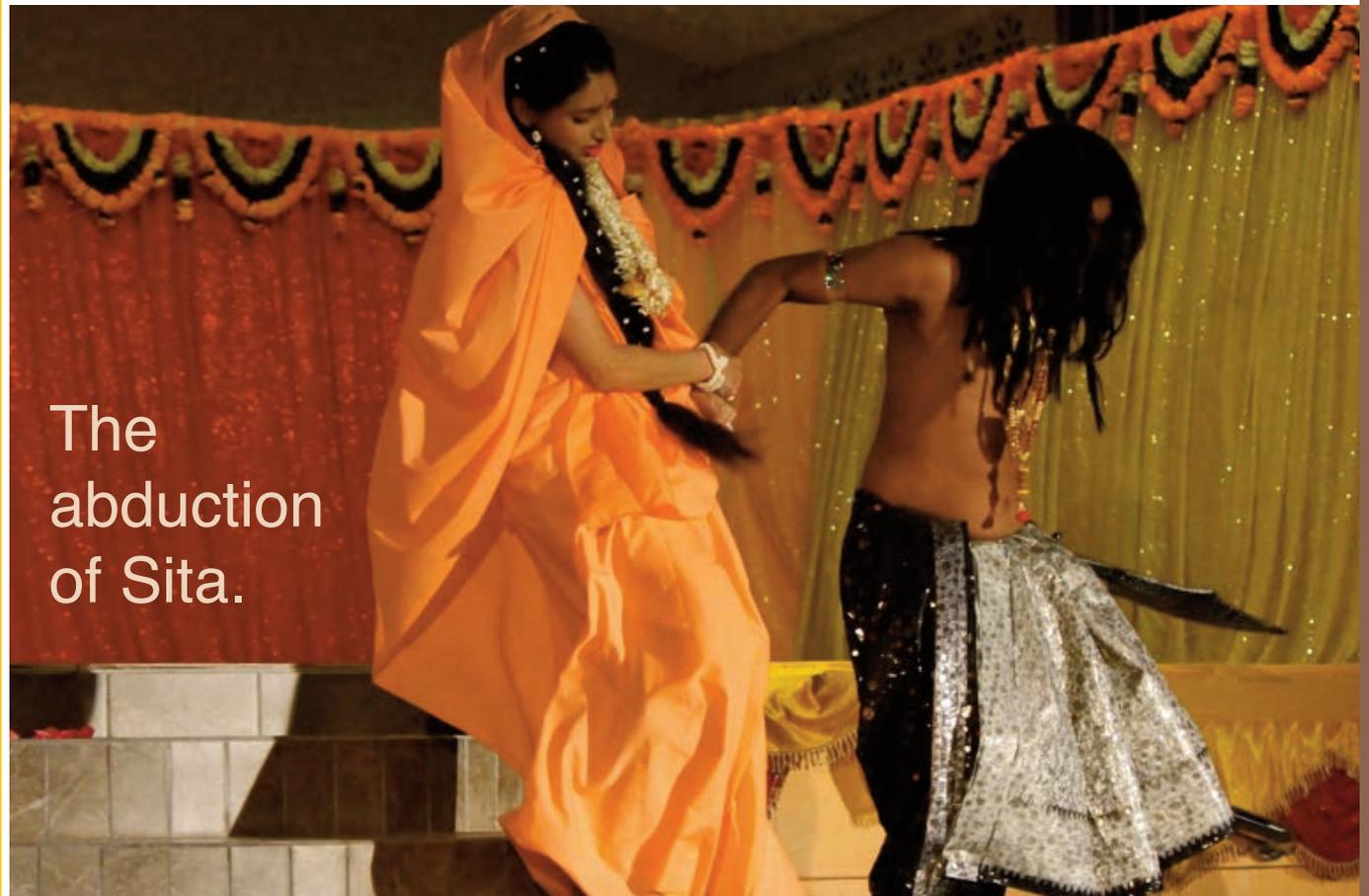




# RAMLEELA AT THE MONUMENT GARDENS



Ravan



The  
abduction  
of Sita.



Reunification

**RAMLEELA  
AT THE  
MONUMENT  
GARDENS**



RAMLEELA  
AT THE  
MONUMENT  
GARDENS

Ram and Ravan  
in battle



## The burning of the effigy



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# Legislation to address copyright infringement in Guyana remains priority for US

## GUYANA GOVERNMENT TO PASS MODERN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LEGISLATION WITHIN A YEAR

*Abena Rockcliffe, Kaieteur News*

**T**he United States of America remains concerned about the absence of legislation in Guyana to prevent copyright infringement.

The US had urged Guyana before to establish stringent copyright legislation, but Guyana slipped behind in its deadlines to make this a reality.

At a recent press conference at the Duke Street, Kingston Embassy, US Ambassador, Perry Holloway, said that Ambassadors are legally required to inform congress about errant countries.

Holloway said that his government is keen on ensuring Guyana gets copyright legislation as well as “proper protection.”

“So yes, copyright infringement is certainly a serious concern for my government and it will continue to be a serious one. I think we actually have legislation that requires us to even inform our Congress of which countries are performing at a certain level and which are not. So it is an important issue, one that we will continue to work on under the democracy and governance I described as being one of the US top priorities.”

Local musicians have long lamented that an outdated copyright law is preventing them from earning a decent living.

The APNU+AFC coalition had announced that it would pass modern Intellectual Property legislation within a year.

During his contribution to the 2015 National Budget debate, Minister of Education, Dr. Rupert Roopnaraine had said that the new government could not, “as has happened for a decade and a half under the previous administration, pay lip-service to intellectual property by neglecting it to the point of institutionalizing intellectual property piracy.”

He later said that there would be a wide-ranging consultation with musicians, authors, poets and others in the creative industry, to ensure that the new law takes into consideration their concerns.

Dr. Roopnaraine, who is also the Minister with overall



responsibility for culture, youth and sport, also expressed hope that the law would be enacted in one year to replace the 1956 Copyright Act that Guyana inherited at the time of independence from Britain in 1966.

His announcement came less than one week after the Guyana Music Network (GMN) decided to mobilize its community to petition government for new legislation.

Addressing that meeting was world renowned Guyanese singer, Eddy Grant, who issued a passionate call for the radio stations being operated by the state-owned National Communications Network (NCN) to play more local music to enable the artistes to earn royalties and promote their craft.

The People’s Progressive Party Civic administration had claimed that copyright legislation would have prevented poor Guyanese from accessing otherwise expensive textbooks.

The award of a multi-million dollar contract by the Ministry of Education to a local producer and supplier of bootlegged textbooks was only halted after the United Kingdom Publishers Association secured a High Court injunction.

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# Back to School: DIASPORA CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

*Lear Matthews*

**A**s school re-opens and parents in the Caribbean Diaspora anticipate the success of their children, it is important to explore the opportunities and challenges emblematic of that journey. Having come from societies where people of African and East Indian ancestry are in the majority, the patterns of racial and ethnic dynamics in the United States do not escape their attention.

Being relegated to “minority communities of color” includes the realization that their adopted communities are notorious for characteristics which can make them poor indicators of success. In New York City, Caribbean-American neighborhoods are among the most racially segregated. School District #17 in Brooklyn, with its high concentration of immigrants in Crown Heights, Flatbush and East New York, has more than 87% students of color (primarily Caribbean and African American) and a smaller, but increasing number of Hispanic, Asian and Caucasian. It is important to note that Guyanese in particular have a proclivity to ‘settle’ in NYC as compared to other immigrant groups, thus they comprise a significant percentage of school-age children. This dynamic applies to both Afro- and Indo-Guyanese.

## **Challenges**

There are challenges for students, parents and teachers. Approximately half of the ‘West Indian’ student population attends schools that are often plagued by low academic achievement, high levels of violence and high dropout rates. Many in the neighborhood face daunting problems of poverty, violence, law enforcement indiscretions, drug use and various indicators of poor health.

Children are expected to assimilate, but they face risks of academic failure, delinquency and other forms of maladaptive behaviors. A classic example of the latter occurred when a teacher told a newly-arrived Guyanese student that he should “stay away” from the boys in his class. To protect themselves from indignities, some students may disinvest, especially from school, or from speaking Standard English, and other positive attributes (including dress code) as opposition to their core identity.

A number of factors affect the capacity of students to live up to their full potential. These include a lack of resources essential to the total well being of families. For example, inadequate employment and child care facilities; single parenthood; undocumented status; poor parenting skills, inability to navigate the system, and gentrification.

Although not unique to this population, some parents may be unaware of potentially debilitating physical and psychological conditions of their children. Though generally optimistic, lack of such knowledge, compounded by structural racism, cultural dissonance, substandard schools, disinvested neighborhoods and forms of interpersonal indignities have impacted these immigrants. Many endure

the sacrifices in lieu of “being in America”.

Indeed there are deficiencies in the educational system in the Caribbean. Owing to the brain/skills drain caused by emigration, which results in a dearth of qualified teachers, students increasingly struggle to excel educationally when they arrive. This is in stark contrast to the past when Caribbean immigrant students excelled academically.

Conversely, local school districts, particularly in the Metropolitan regions, are generally unprepared for the influx of an expanding multicultural student body. Cultural differences are frequently misinterpreted as educational handicaps and enough has not been done to address the unique needs of this population.

Educational institutions in the Caribbean are largely patterned after the British system. Despite recent efforts to reform them, vestiges of an old English approach still exists. The current debate in Guyana about the use of corporal punishment in schools is an example. Understanding the differences in the two educational systems holds important implications for students’ success.

The stratified nature of North American schools, particularly in the inner city – with typically high teacher-pupil ratio, lack of suitable equipment, technology and laboratories, and with less quality faculty, often result in differential levels of educational exposure of immigrant students. Depending on the academic tier from which the students come, they may require remedial help. A further disadvantage is that some immigrant children may not enter the school at the beginning of the term, due to the patterns of visa regulations or fragmented migration of families. Despite these shortcomings, some students (particularly those who had “extra lessons” in the home country) tend to do well.

## **Recommendations**

Create a more welcoming school environment, which would decrease intimidation by the enormity of the school’s bureaucracy; teach parenting skills; acquire knowledge of children’s basic health and emotional needs, including access to Early Childhood Intervention programs; encourage frequent attendance at Parent-Teacher meetings; include parents as partners with the school in the education of their children; promote parent advocacy; improve the relationship between the school and the broader immigrant community; develop cultural competence among teachers and other school personnel; understand that some parents work long hours in multiple jobs, thereby limiting their ability to fully participate in their children’s education; advocate for adequate funding and accommodating Parent/Teacher meeting schedules; facilitate counseling on immigration issues, including exploitation of the undocumented; collaboration with Administration for Children’s Services to develop services that are easily accessible and culturally competent. Hometown Associations can play a significant role as cultural ambassadors/surrogates in pre- and post-migratory preparation. Implementing the above will provide a “comfort zone” and motivation for newly-arrived immigrant students.

# Baroness Valerie Amos

New director of the  
School of Oriental and  
African Studies (SOAS)

*Josh Surtees, The Voice*



*'Academic endeavour  
can shape Africa'*

## Baroness Valerie Amos: 'Academic Endeavour Can Shape Africa'

*Josh Surtees, The Voice*

THE EXTRAORDINARY life of Baroness Valerie Amos has taken her from the small island of Wakenaam at the mouth of the Essequibo River in Guyana to the House of Lords.

It is a journey that includes time spent at the United Nations headquarters in New York and the British High Commission in Australia.

She has now returned to London where she has become the first black director of a British university at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

From the way Amos speaks you get the sense that she has taken all of these achievements in her stride.

The latest milestone did surprise her though and suggested that Britain has a long way to go to compete with America in terms of equality in high-powered positions, particularly in education.

"On our first day at school," says Amos, talking about her arrival in Britain in 1963 with her mother and two siblings (her father had arrived two years earlier), "the classes were graded and for some reason we were just automatically put into the bottom class, we didn't know why. And when we came home my mother asked us about our day and we said we hadn't learnt anything, because of course Guyana had a strong education system and we came with a huge amount of knowledge."

### DOWNGRADED

The following day, her mother went to the school to ask why her daughters had been downgraded. The next day, the pair were moved straight into the top class.

The legacy of low expectations from Caribbean and African children in British schools is an ongoing problem in the UK.

Caribbean pupils, particularly, languish at the bottom of league tables, having fallen behind African pupils. Some blame curriculums or a lack of black teachers, some say cultural attitudes towards education need to change.

In further education, the staffing statistics are shocking: just 85 of Britain's 18,500 professors are black.

In a previous interview, Amos explained that because of segregation in the US, black scholars founded their own universities creating a tradition of African Americans in higher education.

In Britain, where the black community has a shorter history, that kind of solid foundation and a culture of academic ambition are yet to be put in place.

Amos hopes to be a role model in that regard.

Next year SOAS marks its centenary year, and with Amos at the helm, the institution will aim to do more to guide policy in Africa and other developing regions.

"SOAS is connected to the regions that we study and this means our research is utilised by policy makers across the world, within developing countries and through agencies such as the UN and World Bank," says Amos.

"Our work informs legal frameworks, governance, economic development as well as cultural heritage. Our scholars ask challenging questions about access to resources such as water, food and energy, inequality and social justice."

Amos will contribute to its work through her extensive experience at the UN, where she coordinated the humanitarian and relief programme under secretary-general Ban Ki-moon.

The daughter of two teachers, Amos was the first black girl at her secondary school in Kent, where she became deputy head girl.

There weren't many black people in the area at the time but her mother encouraged her to become a pivotal part of their new country and culture while retaining her Guyanese identity.

She says Guyanese culture not only shaped her upbringing but remains an integral part of who she is today. Her parents showed her what generosity of spirit and a welcoming 'open house' culture meant.

Growing up in Guyana also gave her a strong sense of connection to the African continent as well as the Caribbean region.

"Although I was too young really to absorb it all there was a very strong movement of making sure Afro-Guyanese reconnected with their history" she recalls.

She was also aware of the tensions between African and Indian Guyanese communities. In the year she left, there were race riots in Guyana.

Later on in her career in local government in London, Amos' diplomatic skills and cross-cultural awareness put her at the centre of the UK's struggle to tackle racial tension.

In her position as race relations advisor at Lambeth Council in south London, she found herself giving a live interview as the 1981 Brixton race riots waged all around her.

## Baroness Valerie Amos:

*Josh Surtees, The Voice*



The tensions in Guyana and Britain, although very different in context both came, essentially, from the same source: British colonialism.

### INFLUENCE

The influence of black Britain continues to be felt now that Amos' generation, through sheer necessity, have carved out the social, cultural and political space that makes things easier for younger generations.

The Guyanese influence in particular is a strong one with a small group of highly educated, talented, successful and influential figures in public life, not least the baroness herself who became chief executive of the Equal Opportunities Commission in 1989, was made a life peer in the Lords by Tony Blair in 1997, became the first black woman in the British cabinet when she was appointed International Development Secretary in 2003 and later Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs at the UN in 2010.

"I think it was Prince Charles who coined the term 'Guyanese mafia'," says Amos laughing.

"Because at one stage you had myself, Trevor Phillips (former chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality), Colleen Harris (the first black royal press secretary), David Lammy (Labour MP and former cabinet minister under Tony Blair) and Waheed Alli (a baron in the Lords and multimillionaire media entrepreneur) whose father is from Guyana and his mother is from Trinidad."

"All of these people, either born in Guyana or with a strong Guyanese connection through their parents, were kind of emerging in their different fields at the same time. And the term [Guyanese mafia] has kind of stuck. But at any one time you see a confluence, be it from Jamaica or Barbados or Trinidad in terms of the Caribbean and at the moment we're seeing a lot of people from Ghana, like David Adjaye, June Sarpong, Oswald Boateng, in positions of responsibility and authority across the UK. I think what happens is people are always there but suddenly there's more public consciousness about them all at the same time, even though they were there all along."

That it took until 2003 for the first black woman to hold a position in the UK cabinet, 55 years after the Windrush arrived in Britain with the first Caribbean settlers, is an indicator of the size of the battle Amos and her peers had to negotiate.

Now a new challenge awaits her at SOAS. As renowned as SOAS is for its academic credentials, she recognises the need to disseminate its important work to circles outside of academia.

Amos' work in Africa goes beyond academia and humanitarian relief.

She sits on the board of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, an organisation whose main aim is to award best practice in an attempt to rid African politics of corruption.

But, she argues: "Academic endeavour, scholarship and education are all essential elements in sustaining the considerable gains made on the African continent in the last few years."

And with someone of Amos' formidable talents and influential connections highlighting this issue Africa has a lot to look forward to.

## YOUTH IN ACTION: A MOMENT OF PRIDE

### Guyanese teens are finalists for 2015 Innovating Justice Challenge in The Hague

The winner of the challenge will receive the Innovating Justice Award 2015 in addition to which an investment of €20,000 will be made in taking the initiative to the next level.

The Innovating Justice Challenge is sponsored by



Three Guyanese-American siblings, Ima, Asha and Caleb Christian, who created the FIVE-O mobile app that allows citizens to rate, review and rank police officers, woke up to the uplifting news that their creation was selected as one of the three finalists for the 2015 Innovating Justice Challenge in The Hague, Netherlands. ‘Team Christian’ made it through a rigorous screening process and into the first round of the challenge, then onto a voting process in the second round where the top three scores and three wild card picks were chosen. The FIVE-O team emerged as one of the three wild-card picks.

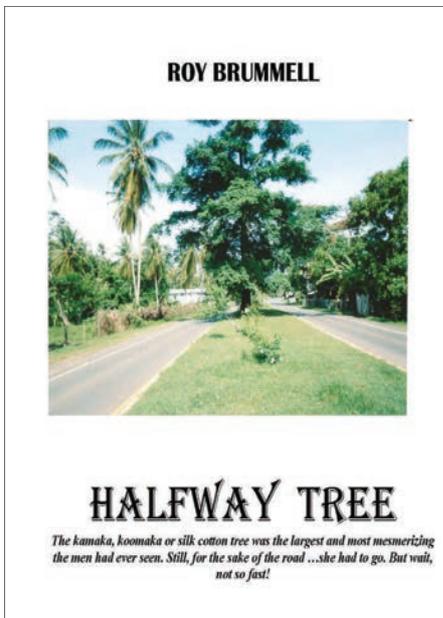
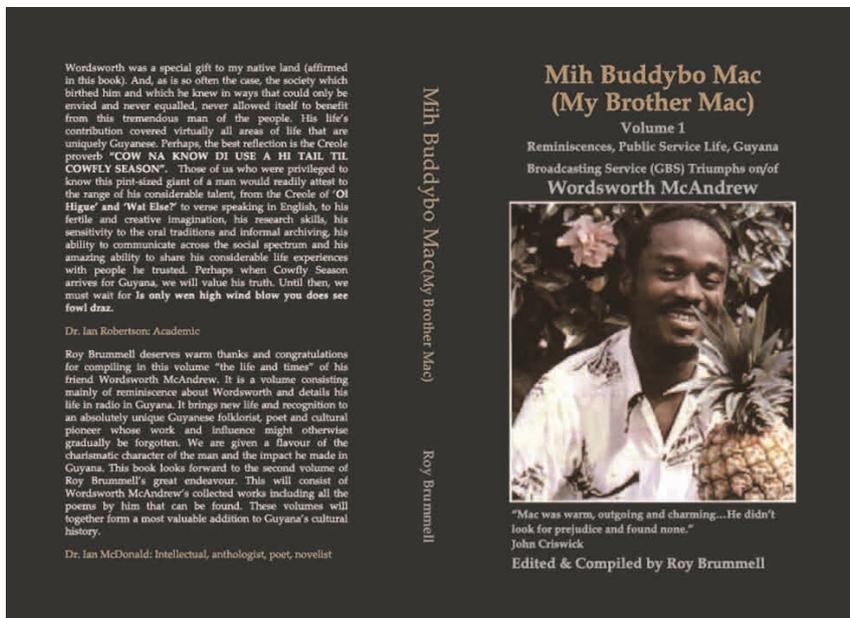
The teens’ selection for the final round means that they will pitch their innovation at the Peace Palace in The Hague on December 3 and 4.

the HiiL group, an advisory and research institute for the justice sector, based in The Hague. The HiiL group advocates the application of innovative approaches to help solve the global challenge of underperforming justice systems.

“It is an incredible honour to be chosen as an Innovating Justice finalists,” said one of the siblings, Asha Christian. “We are all excited to have this opportunity to visit the Peace Palace at The Hague and we feel humbled to be a part of the very important work of the HiiL group to make justice work all over the world.”

Only Asha and Caleb will be attending The Hague forum since Ima, the eldest of the trio, is currently away studying Computer Science at Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA.

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Roy Brummell is Dartmouth, Essequibo born. He has served as an educator in Guyana and New York. Roy Brummell has written the Sunday Chronicle column "A Word with You, Please" and several short stories for the Chronicle and radio. Roy is also a folklorist and produced the weekly radio folklore programme, GANGA TIME, for thirteen years.

## FOCUS ON CANCER AWARENESS

In commemoration of cancer awareness month, the Caribbean American Social Workers Association (CASWA) invited the Guyana Nurses Association and Guyana Wives Association to host its annual health forum at the Hills Lounge, Church Avenue in Brooklyn, New York on Saturday, October 24th.

A panel of experts in the healthcare and social services fields disseminated a broad range of information on breast cancer and prostate cancer. Opening remarks were made by Ms. Elaine Reid, past president of CASWA and introductions by Ms. Elsa Kum, president of CASWA. The presenters were: Dr. Karen Sandford, MD; Mr. Conrad Forsythe, LPN; Ms. Carol F. Nelson, RN, BSN; Ismay Griffith, MS, LCSW and Ms. Debbie Fraser, LMSW.

Dr. Sandford, a surgeon and specialist in women's health issues, opened the forum by articulating the pervasiveness of cancer among some ethnic groups and the need for awareness of treatment options. The framework for the presentations could be grouped into several categories, namely: Preventive care; holistic care, i.e. focusing on the whole person, including physical and mental health; continuous care, which considers second opinions and follow-up services; quality of support systems, involving family members, friends

and trusted care institutions; health and healthcare education, including nutrition, diet and available resources; Individualization, i.e. respecting the individuality of each person as unique, with dignity and the capacity for positive change.

Specifically, presenters' topics included causes, diagnosis and treatment of cancer, techniques of self-examination, myths vs. facts, and other pertinent information about the disease. Volunteers conducted free blood pressure checks and distributed multiple flyers and booklets with pertinent health information.

The event was another excellent example of the collaborative work by immigrant organizations. These associations are often not credited enough for the unprecedented efforts by a dedicated membership in providing needed community service through education and intervention. It is important to note that these three organizations, mentioned above, are among several hometown associations throughout the Caribbean Diaspora, that also provide health and other human services to communities in Guyana and other Caribbean countries.

The audience, made up mostly of service providers, was very interactive, engaging in meaningful discussions during the question and answer period. It is hoped that in future presentations and workshops there will be more service users in attendance. In closing, CASWA thanked the proprietor of the Guyanese-owned establishment, Ms. Doris Rodney for her continued support of meeting the needs of the Caribbean community.

Judging from the response of the attendees, the experience was not only gratifying, but they left with an expanded body of knowledge about an important topic, which they would likely share with others who could not attend.



# Cancer Awareness Forum promotes Quality Community Health Care Education

*Lear Matthews*

## COMMEMORATING AGRICULTURE MONTH

**W**ithin the context of the Guyana Cultural Association's motto "We Bridging", I am compiling this article to add to the observance of Agriculture Month in Guyana, celebrated during October. As a "country boy" from the Corentyne, Plaisance and Mahaycony, and with the youth and their future foremost in my thoughts, I will share some history on old-time, small-scale rural agriculture. My interest and focus on this topic is aroused because of the doubts that are being repeatedly raised about the future of Guyana's rice and sugar industries.

President David Granger and other speakers at 2015 Emancipation events made calls for the revival of the Village-Movement in Guyana, especially as means of catalyzing self-employment avenues to combat extreme forms of poverty among numerous rural residents, and curtailing tides of urbanization.

### Highlighting the Agri-Context

Adjaero Tony Martina, a population expert opined "...The challenge and impact of rural-urban migration have continued to generate great debates

over the last three decades. Rising urban unemployment results from the phenomenal growth in urbanization and the inability of urban centers to be able to utilize the excess labor..."

The Director General of the Food and Agricultural Organization, Jose Graziano da Silva made a recent call on CARICOM leaders to view agriculture as "...creating employment, especially for the youth, and as a way to reduce rural poverty..." He also supports the view that small scale farming would help to decrease unemployment, food security and nutrition concerns.

## SMALL SCALE AGRICULTURE: ONE PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY

*Carlyle Harry*



## SMALL SCALE AGRICULTURE: ONE PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY

*Carlyle Harry*

On October 17, 2015 President David Granger in a message to mark 'World Food Day', with the theme Social-Protection and Agriculture: Breaking the cycle of poverty, reiterated, reiterated that "ensuring greater food security is one of the means of eliminating extreme poverty and hunger; food security is built on three main pillars--food availability, access to food, and the appropriate use of food...Our challenge is to make agriculture resilient..."

It is this writer's firm belief that small-scale agriculture needs certain guarantees, such as credit, insurance, marketing outlets, storage, transportation, refining and packaging-mechanisms, and consultative/technical-assistance, as well as guaranteed supplies of feed, seed, fertilizer, equipment, energy, weedicides and pesticides.

For the last few years, Dr. David Hinds, Associate Professor, Arizona State University and some of his colleagues have been traveling the length and breadth of Guyana striving to rekindle economic activities within villages mainly through encouraging villagers to go back to farming their lands, and marketing their produce. This noble and dedicated effort is not only testimony to the recognition of the significance of developing the agricultural sector, but educating and mobilizing the farming community.

### Memories

Many of us might recall pedaling of "fish and bread" at the Mahaicony train platform, the abundance of fruits at the Mahaica market, the availability of coconut and crab oil which was used for cooking and skin/hair-dressing purposes, and the fishermen and milkmen who used to blow their horns as they peddled through villages selling their products. These are examples of farmers and other villagers producing and marketing their products.

In the olden days there was an interwoven system of agriculture, such as the use of animal droppings (down) as manure for their vegetable-gardens. We should remember how those residents who raised pigs would come around to households in order to collect food

(washing) for their animals. It was a rich tradition to observe small farmers leading their cows and sheep to the pasture to graze early in the morning and returning in the evening to guide them home.

One can also think of the coconut planters drying coconuts in order to make copra; and of course, the coconut water (with some steel-drops – "fo de back!"

### Modernization

There have been vast changes globally, which affected the capacity of developing nations such as Guyana to effectively sustain growth in the agriculture sector. The cultivation of vegetables involves a lot of mechanization, coupled with the utilization of fertilizers, while the rearing of animals for commercial purposes involves confining them to pens, and force-feeding them day and night, via flood-lit pens, stables, or coops.

Since President Granger has expressed a commitment to the cause, I assume that he is going to have favorable responses to calls from fellow politicians and economists for small farmers to be granted affordable rentals of arable lands, grants or low-interest loans to launch agri-ventures and the establishment of a government department to organize small farmers into for-profit co-operatives. This writer strongly believes that such a structure and approach could go a far way towards solving Guyana's racial and social-cohesion problems.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Each and everyone  
supports the vision  
for rekindling the structure  
of the Village culture.  
Working in agriculture  
may no longer be popular;  
It will take guidance and education  
to revive the mission.*

## Value-added Pork Products Training Workshop revisited: Toward Agricultural Self-sufficiency

*Aubrey DeMendonca, PhD*

Caribbean Diaspora engagement appears to have intensified over the past few years. A classic example of such engagement is the work of Guyanese siblings, the DeMendoncas, who launched a program essential to the agricultural sector. As reported by this magazine, approximately one year ago, twenty one Guyanese hog producers were trained to manufacture ham and sausage products using fresh pork from hogs that they raised. The training was conducted at the Value-added Pork Products training workshop in Georgetown, Guyana on October 27 to 29, 2014. Workshop activities were conducted by the DeMendonça siblings, Aubrey, Annette and Arnold who specialize in Food Technology, Business Management and Agriculture Marketing, respectively.

Since the completion of the workshop several participants started their own small-scale production and manufactured ham and sausage products for the 2014 Christmas season. Funds from the World Bank's funded Rural Education and Development (READ) project were used to assist workshop participants in marketing their products. Various sizes of locally made "bone-in" and "boneless" hams were marketed mainly at Nigel's supermarket and sales greatly exceeded expectations. "All our hams were completely sold out" said Roxanne Edwards, a workshop participant who raises her own hogs and now makes ham and sausage products from the fresh pork.

The ham products received excellent reviews regarding their taste and flavor and as the word started to spread there were numerous requests for more hams that exceeded supplies at Nigel's supermarket. "Some people could not believe that the ham was made in Guyana" said Guyanese businessman Jeffrey Wong. This response is not surprising because as I observed, "at the workshop we were using one of the basic ham formulations from Iowa State University Meats Laboratory in Ames, Iowa". In addition, while the taste of the locally manufactured ham is very good, the next steps will include assisting the workshop participants with attractive product packaging, and sustaining viable small business operations. In this regard



Annette

DeMendonça maintained contact and consulted with those who started their own small-scale ham production business.

From January 2015 to date, Annette DeMendonça provided assistance to several trainees in business planning, marketing strategies and sourcing of some ingredients and supplies from the United States. In March 2015 Annette and Aubrey made follow-up visits to small-scale ham producers in Maichony, East Coast Demerara, Tuschen, West Bank, Demerara and in Linden. During these visits, the DeMendonça duo answered questions regarding the need for ham formulation ingredients and supplies and Annette discussed issues on proper management of the small business operations for ham and sausage production. During the visits, the Maichony group of ham producers was preparing ham for a local food show and had already embarked on the construction of a small outlet for sales of ham and sausage products.

Overall, the Guyanese hog producers who were trained at the 2014 workshop expressed interest in obtaining greater value from their hogs by investing in value-added pork products. The investment will position those producers further up the market chain for meat products in Guyana. Advantages of this positioning include greater control over their product, a very good opportunity to gain direct access to customers, and obtaining a much higher income for the sales of value-added pork products compared to income from sales of fresh pork products. Workshop participants are now increasing ham production for the upcoming Christmas season.

This project could be viewed as a prototype or model for other areas of growth in the agriculture sector. It also exemplifies the willingness of the Diaspora to contribute to the development of the home country.

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