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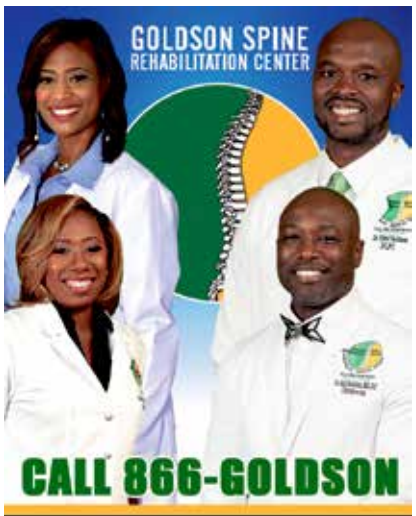

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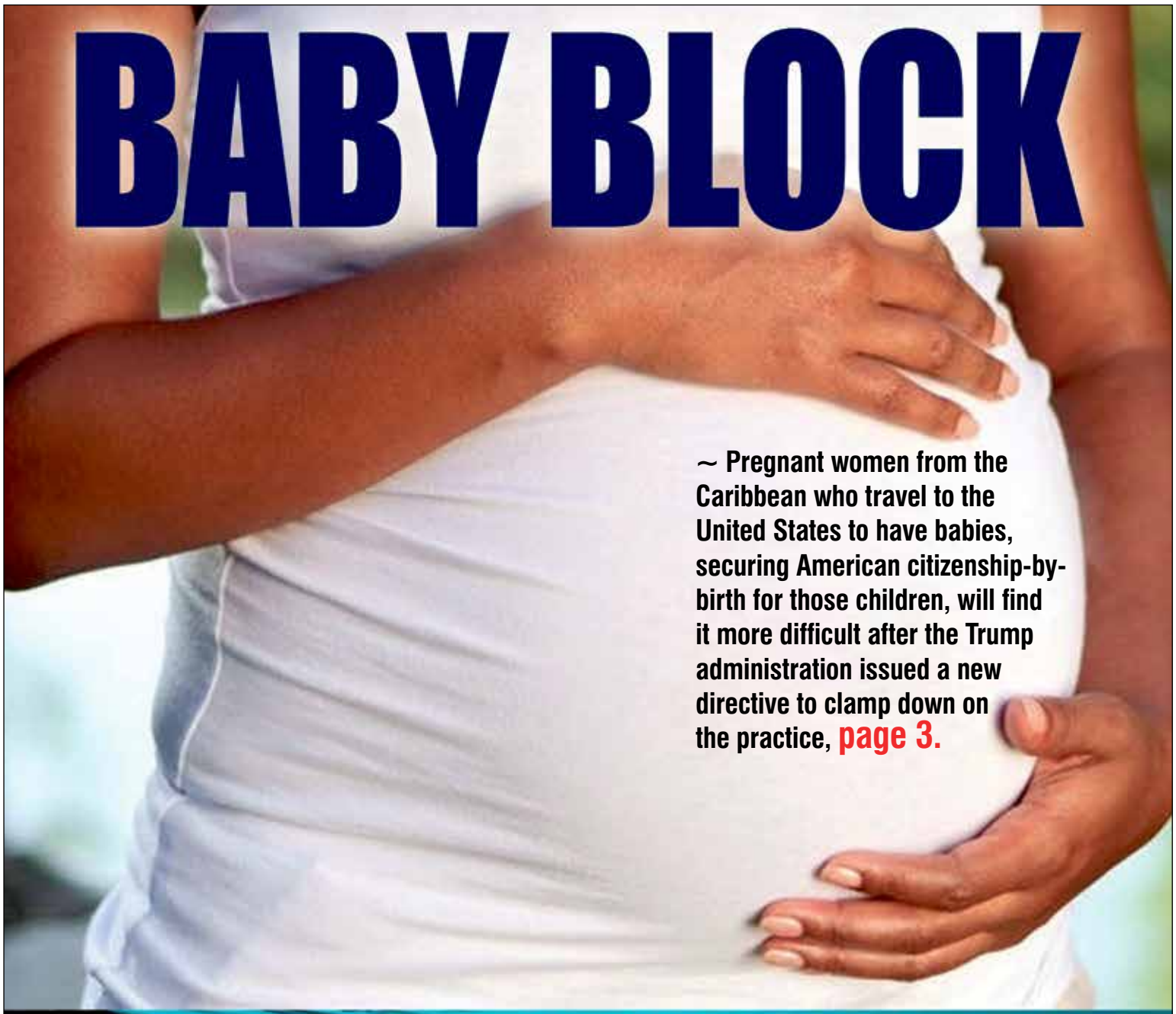
The teenaged son of a Caribbean national may not be allowed to participate in his upcoming United States high school graduation ceremony if he doesn't cut his dreadlocks, which he believes is a symbol of his cultural identity, page 2.

The top professional league in the United States/Canada is rapidly expanding, but the growth of Caribbean presence in Major League Soccer - once common at clubs – is struggling to keep pace, page 19.



BABY BLOCK

~ Pregnant women from the Caribbean who travel to the United States to have babies, securing American citizenship-by-birth for those children, will find it more difficult after the Trump administration issued a new directive to clamp down on the practice, page 3.

BAHAMAS BOUNCING BACK

~ The Bahamas was left battered after Hurricane Dorian smashed into the Caribbean nation last September. Now citizens are sorting through the rubble, showing their willingness to rebuild with patience and pride. page 7.

INSIDE

News 2
Feature 7
Viewpoint 9
Black History Month 11
Arts/Entertainment 12
Food 13
Regional 14
Health 15
Tourism/Travel 16
Classifieds 17
FYI Local 18
Sports 19

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U.S. school bans Caribbean roots student from graduation for wearing dreadlocks

The teenage son of a Caribbean national may not be allowed to participate in his upcoming United States high school graduation ceremony if he does not cut his dreadlocks.

The possibility of a ceremony ban for DeAndre Arnold, a student at Barbers Hill High School in Mont Belvieu, Texas, follows accusation that the senior violated the institution's dress code with the length of his locks.

The incident sparked fierce debate across the U.S., including charges of racial and sexual discrimination, as the student claims his hairstyle represents embracing his Caribbean culture and identity.

Arnold's father David, and chunks of his family, are from Trinidad. The 18-year-old said he had been growing his hair in dreadlocks for years, as a tribute to his Caribbean heritage.

"I really like that part of Trinidadian culture," he told U.S. television network **CNN**. "So, I really embraced it."

However, last month, Arnold was told by the school he had to cut his hair because it is too long or he would not be allowed to walk across the stage with his graduating class in a few months.

The Barbers Hill Independent School District's dress code allows male students to wear dreadlocks. However, the dress code states male students' hair must not fall below their eyebrows or ear lobes. Hair, the code added, must also be shorter than the top of the collar on a T-shirt.

- Photograph by NBC 7 San Diego

Arnold, right, and his mother Sandy.

Arnold, whose hair, when let down, exceeds the length outlined by the dress code, insisted he is not in violation of the code as he doesn't let his hair down while in school.

"They say that, even though my hair is up and (in line) with all the regulations, if it was down I'd be out of the dress code," he explained to **CNN** last month. "Not that I'm out of dress code, but if I was to take it down it would be out (of dress code), which doesn't make any sense … I don't take it down in school."

EMBRACE

Arnold's family believes the U.S.-born young man of good character. They don't see his hair as a distraction and encourage his embrace of Caribbean culture.

"He's not a problem," mother Sandy Arnold told the network. "…This a part of who he is; our beliefs."

She also believes the issue goes beyond her son.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

Ex-Barbados government minister guilty of money laundering in U.S.

Inniss

NEW YORK – Former Barbados government Minister Donville Inniss was found guilty of three criminal counts when he appeared in a federal district court here last month.

The unanimous verdict was handed down by a 12-member jury after just under two hours of deliberation.

Innis is guilty of two counts of money laundering and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering.

The court found that the former legislator took bribes from insurance giant ICBL in 2015 and 2016 while he was minister of industry, international business, commerce and small business development. ICBL then paid him $36,000 to use his authority to ensure that the firm's million-dollar contract with the state-owned Barbados Industrial Development Corporation (BIDC) was renewed.

The court was told that he then conspired to hide the payment by having the money sent to a New York dental company, then deposited into his bank account through a series of transfers.

Inniss was allowed bail, pending his sentencing this month.

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Ex-Antigua official pleads guilty in U.S. for Ponzi scheme link

King

WASHINGTON, D.C.– Leroy King, the former head of the Antigua Financial Services Regulatory Commission (FSRC), has pleaded guilty in the United States for his role in connection with the Stanford International Bank's (SIB) $7 billion Ponzi fraud scheme.

The 74 year-old King, who was extradited to the U.S. last year from Antigua and Barbuda, was the last remaining defendant in the SIB scheme.

Late last month, he admit-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

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Trump restricts pregnant Caribbean women seeking visas to visit U.S.

Pregnant women from the Caribbean and other nations who travel to the United States to have babies, securing American citizenship-by-birth for those children, will find it more difficult after the administration of President Donald Trump issued a new directive to clamp down on the practice.

The U.S. Department of State last month announced a new rule, which allows more leeway for consular officers issuing visitor's or tourist visas to block the application of pregnant women if they believe the expectant mothers are participating in what is known as "birth tourism". An entire money-generating industry has also sprung up to support the practice, where people pay thousands of dollars in the U.S. to people who facilitate them having babies to ensure U.S. citizenship.

- File photograph

U.S. restricting visits by foreign expectant mothers.

"Birth tourism poses risks to national security," wrote the State Department's Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Carl C. Risch in the rule. "The birth tourism industry is also rife with criminal activity, including international criminal schemes."

The rule, which targets applicants seeking entry into the U.S. under tourist visas, including thousands from the Caribbean, took effect Jan. 24.

'ANCHOR BABIES'

It reflects a long held belief by the Trump administration and political conservatives that the U.S. should reject birth tourism. The "anchor babies" it produces, the president claims, also triggers a generational succession of immigrants entering the U.S. That's because once the child turns 21 he or she is able to apply for permanent residence or "green card" status for other family members in the country of origin.

The U.S. Constitution allows automatic citizenship for babies born in the country.

The exact number of anchor babies being born in the U.S. each year is unclear. The Center for Immigration Studies reported that some 36,000 foreign women gave birth to in the U.S. in 2012. The mothers reportedly then left the U.S. to return home afterwards. Mothers from the Caribbean have openly admitted to the practice, claiming that a baby with U.S. citizenship can reap better benefits than are available in the region, including healthcare, education and career opportunities.

"At least I know my child will be able to get the benefits any American has, especially when she grows older," a Jamaican, who gave birth to a daughter in the U.S. a few years ago before returning to her homeland, told **Caribbean Today.**

She didn't want to be identified for this story, but added that she brings her child periodically to the U.S. to receive medical care.

DETERMINED

What is clear is that the Trump administration is determined to stop the practice of "automatic and permanent American citizenship" for children born "on American soil.

"The integrity of American citizenship must be protected," White House Press Secretary Stephanie Grisham noted in a statement issued last month.

The new rule will make it more difficult for pregnant women to get U.S. visitor's visas. They will now be required to produce, in writing, proof they will not be giving birth in the U.S. If,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

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Congresswoman blasts U.S. Supreme Court ruling restricting Caribbean applicants for 'green cards'

NEW YORK – Caribbean American Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke has expressed outrage over a United States Supreme Court ruling that allows the administration of President Donald Trump to deny permanent residence or "green cards" to Caribbean and other immigrants who may need government aid.

"As a product of the hopes and dreams of an immigrant family, I am outraged by the Supreme Court's decision to implement the public charge rule, a cruel policy Donald Trump has crafted to jeopardize the lives of our nation's most vulnerable," said Clarke, a Democrat, and daughter of Jamaican immigrants, who represents the 9th Congressional District in Brooklyn, New York.

"… It is disturbing to witness a global leader toying with people's lives, and we must not stop fighting until Donald Trump is removed from office," Clarke, a critic of Trump's immigration policies, told the **Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC).**

Clarke

RULE

Last October, Clarke welcomed temporary injunctions by U.S. federal judges in three states blocking the Trump administration's public charge rule against issuing green cards to Caribbean and other immigrants if they appear to be needing public assistance, such as financial aid, healthcare, food stamps and housing assistance.

Several legislators and immigration advocates had filed legal challenges to Trump's "Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds" rule.

Last September, Clarke joined members of the U.S. Congressional Tri-Caucus in filing amicus briefs opposing the public charge rule aimed at legal Caribbean and other immigrants who wish to remain in the U.S., but whose dearth of financial resources are deemed likely to make them a burden on U.S. taxpayers.

Amicus briefs are legal documents filed in appellate court cases by non-litigants with a strong interest in the subject matter.

But, in a 5-4 ruling on Jan. 27, the high court honored the Trump administration's request to set aside a ruling by a U.S. federal judge barring the so-called "public charge" rule while the merits of the case continue to be argued in lower courts. The court's majority conservative justices concurred to permit administration officials to implement the policy.

Immigration advocates have warned that the court ruling will shut the country's doors to low-income immigrants and people of color, such as those from the Caribbean.

"Lives are at stake and actions have consequences," said Clarke. "Donald Trump will go down in history as a corrupt and senseless leader who has put millions of lives in danger as each day passes."

- Edited from CMC.

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U.S. school bans Caribbean roots student for dreadlocks

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

"He should get to choose who he identifies himself as, and he shouldn't be discriminated against," Sandy explained to the network. "You don't tell girls they can't have short hair. It's so much bigger than DeAndre."

The school said Arnold would not be prevented from graduating if he doesn't cut his hair, just participating in the ceremony. Last month his mother sought an exemption for her son by filing a form which allows deviation from the school's code for medical or religion reasons. However, she stressed she will not cut Arnold's hair or encourage him to do so to participate in graduation exercises.

"Absolutely not," said Sandy.

SUPPORT

Support for Arnold has grown since the incident became public. Celebrities have chimed in, with some blasting the school district's policy as an attack on African American hair. They also encouraged Arnold not to give up his belief and continue to speak out.

"The policing, criticism, and all other forms of bullshit ass commentary about our hair... KEEP FIGHTING!!! They truly believe if you stay quiet, they've won. Don't be quiet. Do not let this stand", African American actress Gabrielle Union wrote on **Twitter**.

DeAndre Hopkins, a star professional American football player who also wears dreadlocks, tweeted support for Arnold.

"Never cut your locks Deandre," he wrote.

School Superintendent Greg Poole rejected the criticism, especially those which allege racism.

"People want to call us racist, but we're following the rules, the law of the land," he told CNN. "We're certainly not making this up."

An estimated 3.1 percent of the school district's student population is African American.

- Gordon Williams. Multiple sources contributed to this story.

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NEWS

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Major Caribbean corruption, fraud scandal shows U.S. connection

A major corruption scandal brewing in the Caribbean is making a mark in the United States.

The scandal, which became public in Mar. 2019 and alleges corruption, fraud and misappropriation of money in Jamaica, has so far led to the arrest of a university president, a former government minister and members of his family, plus a councilor in the ruling Jamaica Labor Party (JLP).

Last month, media reports linked a company in U.S., run by Jamaican nationals, to the scandal although, up to press time, there was no evidence of illegal conduct by the company.

In Oct. 2019, Jamaica law enforcement announced, in a press release issued by the Major Organized Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency (MOCA), it had busted alleged "multi-million dollar corruption and fraudulent schemes perpetrated at the Ministry of Education, Caribbean Maritime University (CMU) and other Government entities falling under the portfolio responsibility of Mr. Ruel Reid, former Senator and Minister of Government."

Police arrested former Minister of Education Reid, his wife Sharen and daughter Sharelle, CMU's President Fritz Pinnock and Kim Brown, a JLP councilor. The accused pleaded not guilty to criminal charges.

LINK

According to a story in The Gleaner newspaper last month, Business Supply Source (BSS) in Florida was contracted by CMU in 2018 to secure materials earmarked for construction of a new building at CMU's campus in east Kingston, Jamaica's capital. The newspaper reported that BSS was formed close to the time CMU began seeking to buy materials for the building's construction. BSS, according to the story, reportedly bid $621,132 to provide materials. The company was reportedly paid another $368,303 for other materials, bringing the total received from CMU to $989,485, according to The Gleaner.

Three U.S.-based Jamaicans, Leo Gilling, Kimone Gooden and Balfour Peart, are listed as principals of BSS.

According to The Gleaner, Jamaica's Auditor General Department found that CMU could not justify why BSS was awarded the contract. Five companies tendered bids.

The Gleaner also reported that Peart confirmed he has been friends with Pinnock since both attended a high school in Jamaica. Last month, The Gleaner quoted Gilling as denying any wrongdoing, adding that the timeline for the establishment of BSS and CMU's search for a materials supplier was a "big coincidence."

The Gleaner reported that Gilling, a managing partner in BSS, also denied his company had inside information leading to its securing the university's contract.

"It has nothing at all to do with CMU," Gilling was quoted by the newspaper as saying.

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Trump restricts pregnant Caribbean women seeking visas to visit U.S.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

for example, a pregnant woman requires medical treatment in the U.S., she will have to prove she can afford the treatment and that it could not be received in her own country. Failure to do so could result in the rejection of her visa application.

"If an applicant's responses to this line of questions are not credible, that may give consular officers reason to question whether the applicant qualifies for a visa," Risch wrote.

UNCERTAINTY

Before the new rule, U.S. consular officers were not instructed to ask visa applicants if they were pregnant.

Pregnant women granted a visitor's visa are not guaranteed entry into the U.S. That decision, as it does for all others with tourist visas, remains with Department of Homeland Security officers at U.S. ports of entry, such as airports.

There is also uncertainty over the new rule as it relates to foreigners with U.S. multiple entry visas, which may be granted for up to 10 years. That means a woman, for example, could get pregnant years after receiving that multiple entry visa and attempt to enter the U.S. It is also not clear how an officer at the border could tell with certainty if a woman with a visitor's visa is pregnant.

- Gordon Williams

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Ex-Antigua official pleads guilty in U.S.for Ponzi scheme link

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

ted to committing one count of conspiracy to obstruct justice and one count of obstruction of justice for his role in obstructing the United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) investigation into SIB.

U.S. District Judge David Hittner, of the Southern District of Texas, accepted King's plea and has set sentencing for April 24.

PROBE

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) said that from 2002 King, who holds dual Antigua-U.S. citizenship, served as the administrator and chief executive officer of the FSRC, an agency of the Antigua government. As part of his duties, the DOJ said he was responsible for Antigua's regulatory oversight of Stanford International Bank Limited's (SIBL) investment portfolio, including the review of SIBL financial reports and the response to requests by foreign regulators, including the SEC, for information and documents about SIBL's operations.

The DOJ said that in or about 2005, the SEC began investigating R. Allen Stanford and Stanford Financial Group (SFG) and made official inquiries with the FSRC regarding the value and content of SIBL's purported investments.

From 2005 through February 2009, the DOJ said Stanford, James Davis, King and others conspired to obstruct the SEC's investigation of SFG, SIBL and their related entities. From at least 2003 through Feb. 2009, the DOJ said "Stanford made regular secret corrupt payments of thousands of dollars in cash and gifts to King in order to obtain his assistance in hiding the truth about SFG and SIBL from the SEC and other regulatory agencies."

PAYMENTS

Over the course of the conspiracy, Stanford's cash payments to King was an estimated $520,963.87, the DOJ said, adding that Stanford also provided King tickets to Super Bowls in Texas and Michigan in 2014, and 2016. It said Stanford also provided King with repeated flights on private jets Stanford or SFG entities owned and that King later denied the SEC's request for help, writing that the FSRC "had no authority to act in the manner requested and would itself be in breach of law if it were to accede to your request.

"In reality, the FSRC did have this authority and failed to exercise such because of the payments and other benefits Stanford gave to King," the DOJ noted.

A U.S. federal jury found Stanford guilty in June 2012 for his role in orchestrating a 20-year investment fraud scheme in which he misappropriated billions of dollars from SIB to finance his personal businesses. He is serving a 110-year prison sentence.

Five others were also convicted for their roles in the scheme and received sentences ranging from three to 20 years in U.S. federal prison, the DOJ added.

- Edited from CMC.

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~ BAHAMAS RECOVERING AFTER HURRICANE DORIAN

BOUNCING BACK: Bahamians show resilience after hurricane disaster

DAWN A. DAVIS

THE BAHAMAS - "We are a resilient people; we will rebuild." That's the mantra of the people of The Bahamas, particularly those from the northern part of the Caribbean nation most severely affected by Hurricane Dorian.

The Category 5 storm ripped into the Abaco and Grand Bahama islands early September, leaving 70 confirmed dead up to press time and an estimated $3.4 billion in damages.

Almost six months later, the stories of those who suffered most may no longer be front page news, but many tell of a people determined to move forward. The hurricane brought devastation, changed people's outlook on life and left ugly memories. But now, they believe, it's time to rebound. So many will stay to rebuild.

"Abaco is my home," Dave*, a resident for five years, told **Caribbean Today** last month.

Indicators show The Bahamas surpassing expectations. At last month's Caribbean Travel Marketplace held in Nassau, the region's largest tourism event, travel suppliers, buyers and decision-makers came together to bring focus to recovering Bahamas. With numbers showing tourism growth and development projections, it was an easy sell for hoteliers, attractions and other tourism companies.

- Photograph by CNBC.com

Bahamians are still picking up the pieces after Hurricane Dorian.

PERSONAL

Personal stories of loss - and hope - underscored the feeling that The Bahamas is bouncing back. But the horrors Hurricane Dorian inflicted aren't so easily forgotten.

"Nobody thought it was going to be as strong as it was," Mona* said as she described the tragic event. "I was in my house on Abaco when the hurricane hit. I could hear the force of the wind, then the house started to flood."

That's when Mona said she made a dash for it in her vehicle. She and others headed for her workplace, a three-storey building less than a mile away. By that time most roads were already impassable, she said. Mona stayed at that office for a few weeks after Dorian. When she finally returned home, she found the roof of her house totally destroyed, along with other severe structural damage.

"I couldn't believe it," said Mona. "But I had my life and that was the most important thing."

Like some in her neighborhood, Mona's house is still standing. The roof is covered with blue tarp. Some of the walls are missing or damaged. Inside is unrecognizable to her. Mona has, however, started rebuilding after getting the go-ahead from her insurance company. Like many from the Abacos, Mona is now living in Nassau until her home is completed.

LOSING ALL

Some others didn't fare so well. They lost everything. Nicky* was also at home on Abacos with her husband and two teenaged children when Dorian hit.

"When the water started to rise I started panicking," she recalled. "We had to get out. So, we grabbed the children and drove as fast as we could to higher ground."

Like many others, Nicky and her family have had to find accommodations on Nassau. Last month, she went back to Abacos for the first time since the hurricane. Although she had heard from neighbors that there was nothing left of her home, seeing it for the first time left Nicky stunned. Only thing left was the foundation.

Nicky, too, will rebuild. She said schools on Abaco had not re-opened because of severe hurricane damage. So available schooling in Nassau influenced her choice to live there temporarily.

A tour of the Abacos and outer cays reveal what looks like giant-sized domes. They are temporary housing the Bahamian

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

Bahamas, U.S. sign open skies pact

NASSAU, The Bahamas and the United States have signed an air services agreement (ASA) that the Caribbean nation said reflects a strong commitment by both countries to the continued strengthening of bilateral relations and the modernization of aviation operations.

Foreign Affairs Minister Darren A. Henfield said the air transportation agreement covers a wide range of aviation issues, such as security, safety oversight, airworthiness, navigation, environmental protection and passenger services at airports.

"Although the number of carriers operating in The Bahamas is small, air services agreements hold great promises, as they allow our airlines to have access to the world and to allow foreign carriers to increase their access to The Bahamas," said Henfield.

"It also allows nationals of the respective countries to widen their horizon and get to know people in other parts of the world, and to enjoy their culture, music and food."

FRIENDSHIP

He said both countries are close neighbors with strong relations and Washington's friendship was evidenced in the rapid response it provided in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Dorian last September that killed at least 70 people and caused damage estimated at $3.4 billion.

"They were amongst the first responders and continue to provide needed cooperation and assistance," Henfield explained. "I take this opportunity to thank once again the U.S. for the many ways it has supported The Bahamas in Hurricane Dorian relief, recovery and restoration efforts.

"The Air Transport Agreement with the United States reflects a strong commitment by both The Bahamas and the US to the continued strengthening of bilateral relations and the modernization of aviation operations," he said.

Henfield said in addition to the air services agreement, there are other agreements that will eventually lead to ASAs in the not too distant future, including one airline designation, two code-share agreements and 28 memorandum of understandings between The Bahamas and other countries.

Tourism Minister Dionisio D'Aguilar said the ASAs pave the way for future economic growth and increased airlift between the respective countries.

- Edited from CMC.

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~ BAHAMAS RECOVERING AFTER HURRICANE DORIAN

'STILL ROCKING': Record tourist arrivals after hurricane devastation

DAWN A.DAVIS

Hurricane Dorian's damage is still visible, but Bahamas is rebuilding.

Despite the major national disaster caused by Hurricane Dorian, that devastated The Bahamas last September, the Caribbean island archipelago has cause to celebrate.

Minister of Tourism and Aviation Dionisio D'Aguilar reported record-breaking visitor numbers for 2019 at the annual Caribbean Travel Marketplace conference held last month in Nassau, the nation's capital.

"It is with great pride that the islands of The Bahamas has exceeded a record-braking seven million visitors in 2019, our strongest tourism numbers in history," D'Aguilar announced.

"This is a tremendous accomplishment, particularly in light of the challenging year we as a country just endured. I stand before you with tremendous gratitude and admiration for every single one of my fellow Bahamians who have showed the world the true meaning of resilience."

Speaking to a room packed with international and local media and tourism officials, the minister reported that 2019 saw the highest number of stopover visitors (1.78 million), in addition to record numbers from the United States (1.45 million), which boosted the total to 7.216 million visitor arrivals for the year.

"This is a tremendous accomplishment, particularly in light of the challenging year we as a country just endured" – D'Aguilar

HEALTHY

Overall, the Caribbean reported healthy tourism statistics for 2019, according to the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA). Utilizing performance statistics measured by STR, a global tourism benchmarking system, the CHTA noted that the average daily rate for hotel occupancy across the region was up 5.6 percent, while room inventory was up 2.8 percent to 259,538. Overall arrivals increased by four percent for the first nine months of 2019, with air arrivals up 4.4 percent.

The Bahamas is welcoming increased airlift in 2020 from major U.S. cities. JetBlue is scheduled to add a second flight from Boston, Massachusetts to Nassau in March and April. United Airlines plans to introduce flights from Denver to Nassau, while Southwest Airlines said it will add air travel from Houston to Nassau in June.

To increase air options to The Bahamas, the Port of Nassau will see significant transformation and improvements to its harbor with the new Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line to accommodate up to 1,400 passengers and an entertainment complex. Downtown Nassau will also be further revitalized with the addition of a $250 million Margaritaville resort slated to open June. It will feature 150 hotel rooms and 150 oceanfront residences on its six-acre property.

CLEAN-UP

Nassau's signature properties also contributed to the country's strong tourism performance, including The Baha Mar resort with properties the Grand Hyatt, SLS and the Rosewood, and Atlantic Paradise Island.

The Abacos, a chain of Bahamian islands with 17,224 residents, is also rising from major hurricane damage. A tour of the islands showed people cleaning, clearing and rebuilding. Roads once impassable, blocked by yachts, roofs and cars, have been cleared. Hill-sized piles of rubble remain and some homes, hotels and resorts are still untouched. But many are starting to push through.

D'Aguilar

The Abaco Beach Hotel and Harbour Marina, a waterfront resort with a marina dating back to 1955, was decimated by the hurricane. But it's being rebuilt and set to open by April 1. It's a sign of progress.

"If you were here after the hurricane, this is paradise," said Emmanuel "Manny"' Alexiou.

"If you were here after the hurricane, this is paradise. People keep saying there is not a lot done; there is a hell of a lot done" - Alexiou.

"People keep saying there is not a lot done; there is a hell of a lot done. To put it in perspective, for the first three weeks, or possibly a month, anybody here was living like an animal. You couldn't come if you weren't from Abaco. The government had taken control of the airports, all transportation in and out, food coming one way and people going out. When that was stabilized, it was all about life. For us, just getting a walking path to walk from one end of the property to the other was an achievement."

ON TARGET

Also on target to open soon is the Green Turtle Club Resort and Marina, a boutique resort offering 30 deluxe rooms and waterfront villas on Green Turtle Cay. The resort is in the midst of extensive rebuilding and renovations and plans to be fully operational by Mar. 1.

Although the Abaco Club on Winding Bay lost some residences, its higher elevation spared it from total hurricane devastation. This property of high-end private residences, estate homes and cabana suites housed its hurricane displaced staff in luxury trailers set up on the property. They'll remain for as long as it takes to rebuild their homes.

"Last year as a nation, we faced tremendous tragedy brought to us by Hurricane Dorian, the effects of which we will feel in our hearts forever," D'Aguilar said "However, the Bahamian people stood together, remaining strong and resilient and the world took notice.

"We are in awe of our country and deeply grateful for the outpouring of support and assistance from friends, partners, and even strangers from around the globe …

"The impact of Hurricane Dorian has not slowed The Bahamas' tourism growth … The Bahamas is better than ever and we are still rocking."

Story and photographs by Dawn A. Davis, a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.

BOUNCING BACK: Bahamians show resilience after hurricane disaster

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

government is putting in place for displaced persons until their homes are reconstructed. It's part of the $6.4 million Temporary Housing project started immediately after Hurricane Dorian. Located in Spring City on the Abacos, just south of Marsh Harbor, these pods resemble igloos. They can house up to four people.

Hurricane Dorian left deep, lasting impressions. Dave, who works with heavy moving equipment, said he's a changed man. His home was damaged, but he decided to stay through the renovation. That wasn't the worst. Dave was recruited to remove dead bodies from the streets after the hurricane. The experience left a mark.

"This is something that I will never forget," he said, his voice low, quivering.

Story by Dawn A. Davis, a freelance writer for Caribbean Today. *Names changed to protect persons interviewed.

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Democratic presidential candidates announce plans for immigrants

FELICIA J. PERSAUD

The first Democratic primary in Iowa is this month, with - as of now - 13 active major candidates competing for a shot at being the Democratic Party's presidential candidate in November.

But where do the leading candidates stand on helping the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States? Here's a rundown of their record:

Senator Bernie Sanders

His website says as president he will:

- Push Congress to enact a swift, fair pathway to citizenship for the 11 million unauthorized immigrants currently living, working and contributing in America today.
- Ensure the path to citizenship is broad, inclusive, and minimizes financial burdens.
- Establish a path to legal permanent status and citizenship within five years.
- Ensure that old or low-level contacts with the criminal justice system, such as marijuana possession, do not automatically prevent undocumented immigrants from attaining citizenship.
- Prioritize expedited citizenship for undocumented youth.
- Ensure any path to citizenship does not come with a reduction in traditional, family-based visas.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren

As president, she she says she will expand legal immigration and create a pathway to citizenship for DREAMers, as well as their grandparents, cousins, people who have overstayed student visas, and people who came to the U.S. to work in the fields.

"I want to have a system that is a path to citizenship that is fair and achievable," says Warren, who also notes that she will "work with Congress to pass broad-reaching reform," but is "also prepared to move forward with executive action if Congress refuses to act."

Pete Buttigieg

The mayor of South Bend, Indiana says he supports a path to citizenship for the country's 11 million undocumented immigrants and in his first 100 days as president he will push for legislation that provides a mechanism to gain legal status and ultimately citizenship, including for people with temporary protections — Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), temporary protected status (TPS), deferred enforced departure (DED), and withholding of removal.

Former Vice President Joe Biden

Biden's campaign website says as president he will immediately begin working with Congress to "modernize our system, with a priority on keeping families together by providing a roadmap to citizenship for nearly 11 million undocumented immigrants."

Biden says he will also "commit significant political capital to finally deliver legislative immigration reform to ensure that the U.S. … brings hardworking people who have enriched our communities and our country, in some cases for decades, out of the shadows."

Sen. Amy Klobuchar

Klobuchar says in her first 100 days as president she will jump-start legislative negotiations for comprehensive immigration reform with the stated goal of passing it in the first year. This includes a pathway to citizenship, the DREAM Act and border security – with the stated goal of passing it in the first year of her presidency.

Klobuchar also says she will undo attempts by the administration of President Donald Trump — many of which have been blocked by courts — to deport DREAMers and immigrants who are living, working and succeeding in the U.S. under TPS and DED.

Andrew Yang

His plan for the 11 million includes a pathway to citizenship, but only after securing the southern border "so that we don't end up right back where we started." He also says the "pathway must reflect the fact that these individuals tried to circumvent our legal immigration system."

This he says will be done by providing a new tier of long-term permanent residency for anyone who has been here "illegally for a substantial amount of time so that they can come out of the shadows, enter the formal economy, and become full members of the community.

"This new tier would permit individuals to work and stay in the country, provided they pay their taxes and don't get convicted of a felony and would put them on a longer, 18-year path to citizenship – the same amount of time it takes those born in the US to get full citizenship rights," Yang, the son of immigrants, says.

Edited from News Americas. Felicia J. Persaud is publisher of NewsAmericasNow.

Barbados P.M. takes ride or die approach to CARICOM-U.S. ties, warns about division

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados – Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley is warning of an attempt to divide the 15-member Caribbean community (CARICOM) as some regional leaders met with United States Secretary of State Michael Pompeo last month.

Addressing a gala to celebrate the centenary of the birth of the late Errol W. Barrow, a Barbados prime minister and regional integrationist, Mottley said she was conscious questions would be asked as to why the Barbados foreign minister "happened to be missing in a meeting in Kingston in Jamaica.

"We don't look to pick fights," she said. "I don't look to pick fights, but I am conscious that if this country does not stand for something, then it will fall for anything. As chairman of CARICOM, it is impossible for me to agree that my foreign minister should attend a meeting with anyone to which members of CARICOM are not invited. If some are invited and not all, then it is an attempt to divide this region," Mottley told the ceremony.

'COMMITMENT'

Last month, Jamaica's Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Minister Kamina Johnson Smith said Pompeo's two-day working visit, which began on Jan. 21, is a commitment to strengthen relations with the Caribbean.

"We welcome the visit of Secretary Pompeo as a demonstration of the commitment of the United States of America to once more strengthen its engagement with Jamaica and the wider Caribbean," Johnson Smith said. "We truly look forward to this opportunity to engage and reinforce our longstanding ties."

During his visit, Pompeo was scheduled to hold talks with Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness and senior members of his Cabinet was expected to give a policy speech on the Caribbean region's critical importance to the U.S. and the country's renewed commitment to closer ties, based on shared values, interests and economic prosperity, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade noted.

Both the **Jamaica Gleaner** and **Observer** newspapers, quoting sources, reported that Pompeo was also due to meet with several Caribbean leaders. But a CARICOM source told the **Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC)** that the regional grouping had not been formally invited to participate in the discussions during Pompeo's visit.

CO-OPERATION

Last year, Holness was among Caribbean leaders – St. Lucia, The Bahamas and Haiti, the others – who flew to Miami to meet with U.S. President Donald Trump where they discussed the ongoing political situation in Venezuela where Washington is seeking to remove President Nicolas Maduro in favor of Opposition Leader Juan Guaido.

- File photograph

Mottley

CARICOM leaders, at their last summit in St. Lucia July 2019, reiterated their position of non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of Venezuela.

"We don't look to pick fights. I don't look to pick fights, but I am conscious that if this country does not stand for something, then it will fall for anything."

Mottley told the gala she was conscious that when Barrow stood and remarked that "we shall be friends of all and satellites of none," little did he know that that statement would be embraced by every single prime minister of Barbados that succeeded him.

"It is as valid today, perhaps even more so than it was at the time of its initial delivery," Mottley said. "And I say so conscious that principles only mean something when it is inconvenient to stand by them.

"Conscious that this region must always check itself to ensure that we (do) not become the pawns of others, the satellites of others, but that we keep every most and uppermost in our minds what we must do for our people without simply becoming pawns on a chessboard for others to be able to benefit from," she added.

"Conscious that this region must always check itself to ensure that we (do) not become the pawns of others, the satellites of others, but that we keep every most and uppermost in our minds what we must do for our people without simply becoming pawns on a chessboard for others to be able to benefit from."

PRINCIPLE

Mottley said that sense of commitment to principle and sense of commitment to the thesis expressed by Barrow "that we have lived by, 'friends of all, satellites of none', is really what inspires us to this position today.

"And therefore, it didn't take a lot of thought as to what our decision should be because this country does not pretend to be what it is not and does not pretend to have that which it doesn't. But it does aspire to be sincere and to be correct and to be moral and to be principled."

Mottley said: "Barbados first, as expressed by both former prime ministers Grantley Adams and Errol Barrow has come to mean for us that Barbados must stand for something.

"And I give thanks, that that expression of leadership to that person who first gave us the right to vote, then that person who gave us the right to independence, has been followed for the most part by this country and its leaders.

"Similarly, the understanding that we shall not loiter on colonial premises or loiter on any premises where we are not wanted, continues to be as relevant today as it was then."

Mottley told the audience that the expression delivered to the president of the U.S., "who offered to pay our dues to join the Organization of American States when Mr Barrow politely refused and said, 'in our part of the world where I come from, if you cannot afford the dues, you do not join the club.

"That is the Barbados first to which I speak," Mottley said.

- Edited from CMC.

Mixed views on Mottley's statement, page 10.

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DOGGONE IT: When the pooch is more pampered than the partner

I'm working like a dog. I'm dog tired. it's a dog eat dog world.

The dog has played a pivotal role in the life of mankind for centuries and shares a bond that no other animal has.

Scientists have shown that all dogs descended from wolves and somewhere, back in our history, a hungry wolf ventured close to the cave to scavenge some scraps and decided to stay.

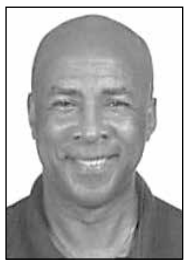
A dog's love is unconditional and, no matter what mood you're in or your financial state, that animal will remain by your side and is always happy to see you. Many people cannot say that about their partners, as often someone gets treated like a dog or someone gets thrown in the doghouse.

Dogs seem to be always in the news, with the focus being on a certain breed of terriers often referred to as pit bulls. These dogs have a fearsome reputation and have been known to have a bloodlust as they mutilate, maim and even kill humans. Sure, now the pit bull lovers will say that other dogs bite people too, but pit bulls are so aggressive and murderous that many countries have banned them. I never heard of any ban on German shepherds, rottweilers, ridgebacks, Dobermans or other breeds. It's the pit bulls that are given that distinction of being overly aggressive and unpredictable.

BETTER

There are persons who treat dogs better than they treat humans. They pet, powder, primp, preen those pooches more than they would babies.

They even put clothes on their pet pooches, shoes included. When the dogs have to go to the vet, it's an all day family affair as everyone takes time off from work to stay with Poochie Pie.



TONY ROBINSON

As for those little rat dogs, they have no use. I prefer dogs that have a practical use, that can alert you to danger and protect you, that can guard your house and will at least make intruders think twice about venturing into your space.

But those other little designer rat dogs only act as substitutes for women who have no men in their lives. How they cuddle, kiss and caress those mutts.

Nowadays if you go to some people's homes you have to compete with the dogs for space as they run amok all over the house, on the couch, in the kitchen, in the bedroom, everywhere, shedding their fur all over the place.

The way that some people speak about their dogs you'd think that they were human.

"Mommy loves Poochie so much, yes she does, she does. Kiss mommy. Does Poochie love mommy too?"

NO SCRAPS

As for what they eat, some eat better than some people. Dogs used to eat table scraps, but nowadays they are offered a vast array of gourmet doggie delights that cost more than baby food.

Dog business is big business and the breeding and selling of dogs is a huge industry, but some of those cross bred dogs are prone to genetic problems.

On the up side, dogs are versatile and fill many important areas in people's lives. There are service dogs, police dogs, drug sniffer dogs and a host of other breeds that serve us well. On the down side, people have been bitten savagely with no compensation.

I know this lady who used to have a bubbly outgoing personality until she was attacked and bitten badly by dogs while jogging. It's been years since the attack and the wounds on her legs may have healed, but the emotional scars are permanent. She has lost her zest, her spirit, her laughter and is now a withdrawn sad person.

It's a doggone shame.

seido1yard@gmail.com

Mixed views on Mottley's statement

The comments by Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley, relating to United States Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's visit to the Caribbean last month to meet with some Caribbean community (CARICOM) leaders, drew a variety of responses around the region. Below are samples of those comments:

"P.M. Mottley has the full support of the government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago in outlining our principles and vision of Caribbean unity. In the expectation of Caribbean unity, the prime minister of Barbados speaks for Trinidad and Tobago" - *Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Keith Rowley.*

"I was not aware that CARICOM was involved at all. It is to my mind not a CARICOM meeting as far as I have been told, but rather an opportunity for those who have been invited to meet and discuss bilaterally issues with Secretary of State Pompeo (and) certainly that's the interest St. Kitts-Nevis would have" - *St. Kitts and Nevis Foreign Affairs Minister Mark Brantley.*

"We are very much in support of, and identify with the sentiments expressed by the CARICOM chair, P.M. Mottley of Barbados. As a government, we stand in support of this position" - *Antigua and Barbuda's Foreign Minister E.P Chet Greene.*

"There is nothing unusual or divisive about such meetings. All countries, large and small, have a sovereign right to engage bilaterally with any other country, beyond any regional or hemispheric arrangements. This happens across the world even in political unions which CARICOM, indisputably, is not" - *Jamaica's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Kamina Johnson.*

"I have a strong support for Mia Mottley where she said she couldn't, as chairman of CARICOM accept an invitation to go where some countries are invited and some are not invited. I think that's the correct position because it would appear as though you are dividing CARICOM. Having said that it is the right of every sovereign country to invite who they want to invite and for those sovereign countries to go" - *Ralph Gonsalves, prime minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.*

CELEBRATING HERITAGE

February is Black History Month. It's a time to recognize and celebrate Black Heritage — the great struggles, achievements, and contributions of African Americans. It's a time to rededicate ourselves to year-round inclusiveness — to bring all of us closer as a community here in Miami-Dade County, and throughout the United States. At Jackson Health System, we celebrate the heritage of our patients, nurses, doctors, and staff of all backgrounds. Our diversity is a firm foundation for the future and underlines our commitment to deliver compassionate care to all in need.

Learn more at JacksonHealth.org.

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Miami Gardens renames community center to honor late civil rights activist

Graham

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY – Late civil rights activist Reverend Dr. Edward T. Graham is being honored this month in South Florida.

A public dedication ceremony, hosted by Commissioner Barbara J. Jordan, has been scheduled to rename The Miami Gardens Community Resource Center, on Northwest 25th Avenue, the Reverend Dr. Edward T. Graham Neighborhood Center.

Graham was pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Miami. He helped bring about integration in Miami-Dade. He also founded the Urban League of Greater Miami and was among Miami's first black city and county commissioners.

"By bearing Rev. Graham's name, this center will pay tribute to a civil rights icon whose life had such a tremendous impact on our community," Jordan stated in a recent press release.

Jordan sponsored the Oct. 2019 resolution that renamed the center, which offers activities including job development assistance, temporary financial aid and summer camp program scholarships for low-income youth.

Rev. Graham died in Mar. 1987.

✹

Afro Roots fest kicks off Feb. 8 in Florida

A series of concerts featuring African American music will begin this month in Florida.

The Miami non-profit organization Community Arts and Culture will present its Afro Roots fest starting Feb 8 with a free concert at the Guanabanas Island Restaurant & Bar in Jupiter.

The series will conclude on June 6 at the Murray Nelson Center. In between, new stops in Miami, Doral and South Miami are planned, as is a collaborative presentation with the Rhythm Foundation on Miami Beach.

For more information, including the full schedule of concerts, visit the brand new website at ***www.CommunityArtsandCulture.org.***

✹

Delray Beach honors 'Moses'

The city of Delray Beach, Florida will honor Harriet Tubman in February as part of Black History Month.

Tubman is among the most revered figures in African American history. Known as "Moses", she was once a slave, but became a liberator of slaves by transporting them from the southern United States to freedom in the north.

Delray Beach has scheduled a month of community activities to mark the occasion. For more information, call **561-274-9578, 561-665-0151** or **561-279-8833.**

✹

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Jamaica's N.Y. consulate, VP Records host 'Reggae Music Journey' exhibit

To mark "Reggae Month", Jamaica's Consulate General in New York will host a pop-up exhibition titled "A Reggae Music Journey" through Feb. 21.

The exhibition, being staged in collaboration with VP Records, documents the history of the Jamaican musical genre. It will feature artifacts, including historic vinyl records and a platinum sales award for Sean Paul's "Dutty Rock" album presented to VP President Randy Chin.

The exhibition was created to display the legacy of reggae music and the role the Chin family, through Randy's Record Mart in Jamaica and later VP Records, has contributed to the development of the genre. An eight-panel display tells the label's history dating to its origins as Vincent and Patricia Chin's Randy's Record Mart in the late 1950s, extending to the present and featuring its 40-year run in Jamaica, Queens.

The story of the company's global impact and sustained relevance is woven into the story of reggae.

ARTISTES

Some of reggae's most admired artistes, including Dennis Brown, Gregory Isaacs, Beres Hammond, Barrington Levy, Garnett Silk, Lady Saw and Freddie McGregor, who either had key releases distributed by VP Records or were signed to VP, are featured in the exhibition, which includes the work of photographers David Corio, Anders Jones, Wonder Knack, Jonathan Mannion, Martei Korley and others.

On Feb. 6, the birthday of late reggae icon Bob Marley, the consulate will live stream celebrations from the Bob Marley Museum in Jamaica.

In 2018, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization added reggae to its list of cultural institutions worthy of protection and preservation. In 2008, the government of Jamaica declared February "Reggae Month" to highlight the genre's impact on the country's socio-economic development.

CUP OF KOFFEE

Jamaican teenager Koffee has won the 2020 Grammy award for "Best Reggae Album". The 19-year-old, whose real name is Mikayla Simpson, won last month for her debut album "Rapture". She's the youngest winner in the category and first female artiste. Koffee beat several veteran reggae acts in the category, including Julian Marley, Third World, Steel Pulse and Sly & Robbie & Roots Radics.

T&T poet wins TS Elliot Prize

LONDON, England – British Trinidadian Roger Robinson has won the prestigious TS Elliot Prize for his poetry collection "A Portable Paradise".

Robinson, a writer and performer, won the £25,000 (one British pound = US$1.29 cents) from a field that also included the previous winner Sharon Olds and début poets Anthony Anaxagorou and Jay Bernard.

He was the unanimous choice of the judges. John Burnside, who chaired the panel, noting "this ambitious and wide-ranging shortlist speaks to all that poetry can be.

"The winner, Roger Robinson's 'A Portable Paradise', finds in the bitterness of everyday experience continuing evidence of 'sweet, sweet life'," he added.

Robinson is an alumni of The Complete Works and was a co-founder of both Spoke Lab and the international writing collective Malika's Kitchen. He is the lead vocalist and lyricist for King Midas Sound and has previously won the People's Book Prize and the Oxford Brookes Poetry Prize. His first full poetry collection, "The Butterfly Hotel" was shortlisted for The OCM Bocas Poetry Prize in Trinidad.

Robinson

Notorious B.I.G. in Hall of Fame

Notorious B.I.G.

The Notorious B.I.G., the late American rap icon with Caribbean roots, will be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Christopher Wallace, also known as B.I.G., Biggie Smalls or Biggie during a music career which lasted roughly five years, but pushed him to the pinnacle of the rap genre, will be inducted during the The 35th Annual Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Cleveland, Ohio in May.

Wallace, whose mother Voletta Wallace moved to the United States from Jamaica, was born in Brooklyn, New York. After a troubled childhood, during which time he sold drugs on the streets and was arrested, Wallace began a rap career which produced several hits, including "Juicy", "Big Poppa" and "One More Chance".

However, on Mar. 9, 1997 Wallace was shot dead in Los Angeles, California, where he had gone to promote his album "Life After Death", among other business. He was 24 years old.

Wallace will be inducted along with Depeche Mode, The Doobie Brothers, Whitney Houston, Nine Inch Nails and T-Rex.

- CNN contributed to this story.

Delightful ducana is Antiguan delicacy

Ducana is an Antiguan delicacy. It's so delicious, we wanted to share it with **Caribbean Today's** readers. Here's how you make it:

Ducana

INGREDIENTS
- 2 cups grated sweet potato
- 2 cups grated coconut
- 2 cups grated pumpkin (optional)
- 1½ cups flour
- Brown sugar to taste
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 dash of salt
- Milk or water to mix
- Sterilized banana leaves and strips of banana stem
- ½ tsp. grated nutmeg

METHOD

Sift flour, salt and spices in a bowl. Add potato, coconut and pumpkin and mix well.

Add sugar.

Mix to a very thick batter with milk or water. Drop batter into squares of banana leaves. Fold securely. Tie with strips of banana stem.

Cook in rapidly boiling water until firm. Serve with cooked salt fish.

- Edited from News Americas.

Feast on delicious ham di pasku

Ham di pasku

In many Dutch Caribbean islands, including Curacao, ham di pasku is a favorite dish. Here's how you can make it:

INGREDIENTS
- 1 small skinless ham (2 to 2.5 kg. or 4 to 5 lbs.)
- 150 grams brown sugar (approximately 5.5 ounces)
- 4 tbls. honey
- 1 bottle red wine (approximately 34 ounces)
- 1 large green pepper, rinsed, ribs and seeds removed, roughly chopped
- 5 bay leaves
- 1/2 bunch parsley, chopped
- 10 cloves
- 1 onion, peeled and roughly chopped
- 5 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced
- 1 small can pineapple rings
- 5 glacée cherries, halved

METHOD

Add red wine to a large pot and bring to a boil. Add the ham, bell pepper, bay leaves, parsley, onion, garlic and brown sugar. Reduce heat and simmer for an hour. Remove ham and let it sit for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F).

With a sharp knife, notch 10 small diamonds in the top of the ham and insert a clove into each diamond. Brush ham with the honey and cook in the oven for 45 minutes.

Remove ham from the oven, remove cloves and garnish with pineapple rings and cherries. Cook in the oven for another 10 minutes until the pineapple and cherries are nice and glossy.

Remove ham from the oven and allow to cool for at least 15 minutes before slicing and serving.

- Edited from News Americas.

Are you getting all your vitamins? Revamping your diet

You don't need to devote hours each week to meal prep to ensure you're healthfully getting essential vitamins. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

• **Don't follow fads -** When it comes to your wellness, it's best to rely on basic science, not the latest fad diets or sports drinks and supplements that rely on added sugars, fillers, preservatives, artificial flavors, sweeteners, dyes, and negatives. Look for products that transparently list all their ingredients.

• **Drink your vitamins -** Did you know that liquids are the most bio-available form for your body to absorb nutrients? Consider drinking your vitamins.

• **De-stress -** Too much stress can compromise your body's ability to absorb nutrients. Take steps to relax and unwind.

• **Refuel wisely -** For optimal high performance, consider upgrading your drink of choice.

• **Maximize meals -** To maximize meals, make sure the bulk of the calories you consume are not "empty". Empty calories, such as added sugars and solid fats, contain little to no nutritional value. Fill up on dark leafy vegetables, berries, nuts, seeds and good-for-you fats like avocado and salmon, while avoiding chips, cakes and other junk foods.

- Edited from StatePoint.

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USVI sues estate of late U.S. millionaire for allegedly trafficking in underaged girls

ST. CROIX, U.S. Virgin Islands – Denise N. George, attorney general of the United States Virgin Islands, has filed a lawsuit against the estate of late wealthy American financier Jeffrey Epstein for allegedly trafficking in underaged girls in his homes in the USVI.

George charged in the USVI civil lawsuit that Epstein used his private, secluded islands to conduct the illegal activities.

"Epstein clearly used the Virgin Islands and his residence in the U.S. Virgin Islands at Little Saint James as a way to be able to conceal and to be able to expand his activity here," she said.

The suit also claims that Epstein used a second private island, Great Saint James, in conducting his alleged sex trafficking activities. George charged that Epstein coerced girls, as young as 11 years old, which included prospective models from South America, to engage in sexual acts in his homes.

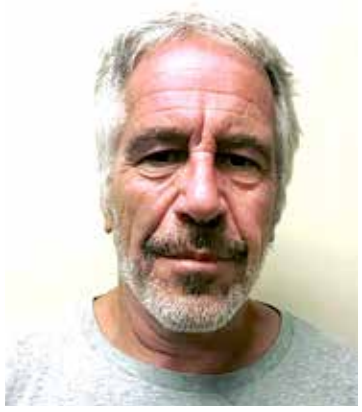
George

COVER-UP?

In addition, she claimed in the lawsuit that Epstein's estate "continues to engage in a course of conduct aimed at concealing the criminal activities of the Epstein enterprise."

U.S. prosecutors said Epstein, whose assets are estimated to be about $500 million, hanged himself last August at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in lower Manhattan, New York. He was being held there awaiting trial on U.S. federal sex trafficking and conspiracy charges.

Prosecutors in Manhattan had charged Epstein in July with sexually assaulting dozens of women and girls in New York and Florida.



Epstein

✸

Cuban imprisoned in U.S. for immigrant smuggling

MIAMI, Florida – A Cuban national has been sentenced to 57 months in prison for his participation in a for-profit immigrant smuggling conspiracy operation.

The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency said the sentencing of Tomas Vale Valdivia, 45, came as a result of an investigation conducted by its Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Miami office and the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

According to the court record, Valdivia was among several individuals who, from as early as Oct. 2013 and continuing through to at least July 2018, engaged in an immigrant smuggling conspiracy operating here, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Mexico.

"A leader of the scheme, Vale Valdivia also admitted to organizing the alien smuggling conspiracy, which included five or more participants," ICE stated.

ICE crackdown breaks up smuggling conspiracy.

CONSPIRACY

Through this conspiracy, ICE said more than 100 migrants were smuggled into the U.S., with the migrants being charged about $10,000.

"Vale Valdivia admitted to knowing that the conspiracy's activities were unlawful and further admitted their methods, at times, intentionally or recklessly creating a substantial risk of death or serious bodily injury to another person using vessels that were overloaded or used during foul weather so as to risk capsizing," ICE added.

In addition to smuggling migrants, it said Valdivia smuggled baseball players from Cuba to the U.S.

Valdivia also admitted to being involved in a conspiracy that stole engines in the U.S. and shipping the engines through a freight forwarding company in Miami to Mexico "to be used to further the alien smuggling conspiracy," ICE said.

- Edited from CMC.

✸

Powerful earthquake rocks Caribbean, South Florida, but no deaths reported

Parts of the Caribbean and South Florida were shaken up late last month by a powerful earthquake which struck between Cuba and Jamaica.

However, up to press time there were no reports of deaths or major damage caused by the quake, which measured 7.7 when it hit around 2:10 p.m. on Jan. 28.

Reports from the U.S. Geological Survey indicated that the quake struck about 86 miles northwest of Montego Bay, Jamaica and 87 miles west-southwest of Niquero, Cuba. Tremors were also felt in the Cayman Islands, where it caused damage to roads and sewage pipes. The epicenter was six miles beneath the surface.

Tremors were felt in Miami-Dade County and the city of Miami.

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British-born Grenadian is 2020 'Caribbean Hotelier of the Year'

NASSAU, The Bahamas – The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) has named British-born Grenadian hotelier Leo Garbutt as 2020 "Caribbean Hotelier of the Year".

Frank Comito, CHTA's chief executive officer, described Garbutt as "an adept, self-taught entrepreneur, whose love of his hotel, his adopted island and the Caribbean drove him to master the intricacies of the industry in our region."

Garbutt, the owner of Calabash Luxury Boutique Hotel, received the award during the opening of the Caribbean Travel Marketplace here last month in recognition of "his exceptional contributions to Grenada and the Caribbean hotel and tourism industry over the past 30 years."

Garbutt is flanked by CHTA President Patricia Affonso-Dass, left, and Comito.

VISION

"We all know that 20/20 vision is perfect and at this moment this is a perfect moment in my life," said Garbutt, who began his hotel career by chance when a delayed flight to his native United Kingdom landed him in the Calabash Hotel in 1986.

"We all know that love makes people do strange things and despite a complete lack of experience in the hospitality business he and his wife bought what was then a 22-room hotel and built it into today's 30-suite world-class award-winning luxury resort and spa," said Comito, adding "as they say amor vincit omnia – love conquers all!"

CHTA said Garbutt's commitment to excellence has seen the continuous improvement of his hotel product and service over the years.

"TripAdvisor now ranks Calabash the top luxury hotel in the Caribbean," the CHTA added. "A member of the coveted Virtuoso and Fine Hotels & Resorts programs, as well as the prestigious Relais & Châteaux group, Calabash's worldwide recognition has significantly raised Grenada's international profile as a top-class tourist destination."

✸

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Caribbean grapples with threat of novel coronavirus

Outbreak of a deadly virus globally has thrown the Caribbean into a conundrum, with nations scrambling to deal with its effects, citizens' vulnerability, measures to counter it and public misinformation.

The rapidly spreading novel coronavirus, which was first publicly identified in Wuhan, China several weeks ago, was responsible for more than 420 deaths in that country and infected over 20,000 in at least 25 countries worldwide.

On Jan. 30, coronavirus was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization and the United States has warned residents not to travel to China.

Those infected usually suffer from respiratory difficulties, including shortness of breath and coughing, plus fever. They can also develop pneumonia and kidney failure. There's currently no vaccine available to counter novel coronavirus.

No Caribbean nation had confirmed a case of novel coronavirus up to press time, although health ministers from the region were scheduled to hold an emergency meeting early this month to discuss handling the medical emergency. Its potential danger is weighing heavily on those in the region and nationals living in the diaspora, with many wondering if the Caribbean is prepared for possible impact.

Meanwhile, Grenada reported it had quarantined one national who had arrived in the country on Jan. 31 from China. Health Minister Nikolas Steele also said eight passengers on a plane from Beijing, China were screened for the virus after landing in the country on Jan. 28. They were all cleared.

Countries are stepping up screenings as the virus spreads fast.

Trinidad and Tobago on Jan. 30 declared it would restrict passengers from China entering the twin island republic for 14 days. T&T was also screening flights entering the country, from places other than China, for novel coronavirus.

'SAFE'

Dominica also announced restrictions on travelers from China who, according to government officials in the Caribbean island, include a "high presence" of immigrant workers. However, officials late last month claimed Dominican nationals in China, who include more than 80 students, were "safe".

Jamaica reportedly denied entry to 19 Chinese nationals who tried to enter the country on Jan. 31, but quarantined at least one of its own nationals who had traveled to China recently. Jamaica also identified more than two dozen nationals studying in China, but added none was close to Wuhan, reportedly the epicenter for novel coronavirus. Minister of Health Christopher Tufton was forced to publicly deny reports that a case of coronavirus was being treated at the University Hospital of the West Indies. The patient had reportedly traveled to China early last month. However, Jamaica had quarantined at least one national up to press time.

Antigua and Barbuda indicated the government had prepared "present and future plans for readiness … to combat harm to citizens and residents, should the coronavirus somehow reached our islands' shores."

Concerned that some passengers were showing signs of respiratory tract infections, St. Lucia on Feb. 1 prevented a cruise ship carrying nearly 3,300 passengers from entering Castries Harbor.

COLLABORATION

The Caribbean Public Health Agency is advising health authorities in the region about ways to reduce the effects of coronavirus. Countries in the region are also consulting with Centers for Disease Control in the United States.

However, up to end of last month Caribbean nationals in the U.S., who were still planning to visit the region in upcoming weeks.

"I just got my ticket," said one Jamaican. "So I'm still going."

Yet the fallout has impacted the Caribbean in several ways. Tourism, so vital to the region's economy, was bracing for the possible impact of coronavirus. Visitors are still being welcomed, but the hospitality industry was desperately hoping that persons infected by the coronavirus would be identified long before planned trips to the Caribbean.

- Gordon Williams.

✸

Go ahead - take a nap!

Many Caribbean Americans are sleep-deprived, which can have unpleasant and even dangerous effects.

And while a nap can alleviate fatigue, increase alertness and improve mood, for years napping was considered to be a pastime more appropriate for little children and the sick than healthy adults.

But the tides are changing. National Sleep Foundation encourages napping, citing improvements in alertness, performance and mood as benefits. So here are a few tips on getting the most out of your daytime snooze:

- Photograph by Mayo Clinic News Network

Short sleeping spells help keep you sharp.

• **Find a comfortable spot** - A bed is the best, but is not always available. If napping in a chair or on a couch, make sure your neck is well-supported to avoid sore muscles.

• **Use a sleep mask and earplugs** - Sometimes disconnecting from your surroundings can be difficult, even when you're tired. Cutting out noise and light can help.

• **Use a nap as a caffeine substitute** - If you find yourself reaching for coffee because you can't stay awake, consider taking a nap instead. Close your eyes and get some shut-eye - it will help relieve tiredness instead of postponing it until the caffeine wears off.

But remember to keep your naps to a maximum of 20 to 30 minutes, lest they interfere with a much-needed good night's rest.

- Edited from StatePoint

✸

Broward Health hospitals promote heart care in February

One in three Floridians will die from heart disease, according to the Florida Department of Health.

However, there are steps Floridians can take to reduce their risk of succumbing to heart disease.

Regular checkups can help detect illnesses.

Broward Health hospitals are offering a variety of events this month - some at no cost - to help raise awareness of heart disease.

One of Broward Health's signature events for American Heart Month is its "Spin-a-Thon" on **Feb. 9** at Ride Element in Fort Lauderdale. It's a family friendly event featuring food trucks, a silent auction and kids' zone. Advance registration is available at ***BrowardHealthFoundation.org/Pages/Spin-a-Thon***.

Other events throughout the month, which include heart health and stroke assessments, blood pressure and cholesterol screenings, plus heart health demonstrations, will be held at:

- Broward Health Medical Center (BHMC), 1600 S. Andrews Ave., Fort Lauderdale.
- Broward Health North, 201 E. Sample Road, Deerfield Beach.
- Broward Health Coral Springs, 3000 Coral Hills Dr., Coral Springs.
- Broward Health Imperial Point, 6401 N Federal Hwy., Fort Lauderdale.

Meanwhile, the second annual Broward Health Cardiac Symposium will be held over two days, **4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Feb. 28**, and **7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Feb. 29**, at Embassy Suites by Hilton Fort Lauderdale, 100 S.E. 17th St., Fort Lauderdale.

Broward Health cardiologists Dr. Kenneth Herskowitz and Dr. Ahmed Osman make presentations. This event is geared for physicians and health-care professionals. There is a fee to attend.

Contact Broward Health hospitals for details on times, dates, events and issues to be covered during February.

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CIRCULATION VERIFICATION COUNCIL

U.S. issues security alert for Americans in Caribbean

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados – The United States last month urged its nationals in the Caribbean to be cautious as a result of the "heightened tension in the Middle East" as Washington continued to defend its targeted missile strike that killed senior Iranian General Qassem Soleimani.

Iran has vowed to avenge his death and the U.S. Embassy here said the tension "may result in security risks to U.S. citizens abroad" and that the embassy would "continue to review the security situation and provide additional information as needed". It urged Americans to keep a low profile, be aware of their surroundings as well as staying alert in locations frequented by tourists and reviewing their personal security plans.

In addition, the Americans were also urged to have travel documents up to date and easily accessible.

Pompeo

DEFENSE

On Jan. 7, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo defended the decision of President Donald Trump to order the strike that killed Soleimani, insisting that the president was right to order the killing and sarcastically dismissed any suggestion that Soleimani might have been in Iraq for peaceful purposes.

"Is there any history that would indicate that it was remotely possible that this kind gentleman, this diplomat of great order, Qassem Soleimani, had traveled to Baghdad for the idea of conducting a peace mission?" Pompeo asked reporters at the State Department. "We know that wasn't true."

Up to press time Caribbean governments had not made any official statement regarding the situation in the Middle East.

- Edited from CMC.

Canada issues new guideline for travelers from Caribbean

Canada has told Caribbean visitors with new electronic passports that they should refrain from traveling with the old one as well.

In a statement issued last month, the Canadian government said travelers are advised to transfer the visa counterfoil to the new passport to avoid delays at the airport when boarding flights to Canada.

"Delays happen as result of airline representatives entering details from two separate passport documents," the statement noted. "This procedure will itself result in the Interactive Advance Passenger Information (IAPI) detecting conflicting information from the new and cancelled passports, and subsequently relaying a 'No Board' prompt."

Canada said additional time is now required to override the system in order to generate a boarding pass, "all of which result in inconvenience to both airline and passengers."

PROCESS

Ottawa said instructions on transferring visas to the new passport can be obtained by contacting the Migration Section of the High Commission of Canada in Port of Spain, Trinidad. The procedure normally takes three weeks.

"The transferred visa will have the same duration of validity as the original visa, and biometric enrollment is not required," the statement added.

"If a traveller wishes to apply for a new visa for the duration of the validity of the new passport, then it is considered a new application and would therefore be subject to biometric enrollment, if the citizen has not already enrolled their biometrics since December 31, 2018."

ON A ROLL: Jamaica's tourism industry sustaining steady growth ~ *director*

DAWN A. DAVIS

Tourism in Jamaica has experienced sustained growth in recent years, according to Donovan Whyte, the Caribbean nation's director of tourism.

Speaking while attending last month's Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA)-sponsored Caribbean Travel Marketplace held in the The Bahamas, Whyte said Jamaica's preliminary arrival numbers indicate the island welcomed 4.3 million visitors in 2019.

That number is made up of 2.7 million in stopover visitors, each spending an average of just over eight days in the island. Cruises contributed 1.6 million visitors, while earnings from arrivals grew by 10.2 percent to $3.64 billion.

STRONG

This year is also poised to be strong for Jamaica, based on the global demand for travel to the island, which Whyte said has grown 76 percent over the past three years.

Demand is defined as intended travel searches. When an intended traveler searches for a destination with a start and end travel date it is considered a purpose search and viewed as a demand. Some 426,000 searches were recorded for Jamaica in 2016. By 2019 those searches grew to 832,000.

According to Whyte, the tourism industry had 1.3 trillion searches for travel globally. Therefore, the 832,000 searches in 2019 represents about 1.5 percent of global searches for Jamaica. This is being interpreted as positive demand for travel to Jamaica.

Whyte

COMMITMENT

Jamaica, according to Whyte, has already secured commitments for just over 170,000 new air seats to the destination to meet increased demand for travel to the island.

Responding to the consumer demand, Half Moon, one of the Caribbean's most iconic resorts, is scheduled to open Eclipse at Half Moon, a new luxury resort, on Mar. 1. Eclipse will feature 57 rooms, two restaurants, three bars, a cafe, spa and private beachfront options on 400 acres.

Tryall Golf and Country Club is expected to open a new beach club this year, having spent $9.2 million to transform the property. The all-inclusive beachfront resort Oceans at Coral Springs in Montego Bay will officially open in May with 513 rooms, 10 restaurants, and a waterpark. It began accepting visitors in December.

Other projects slated for Jamaica include the Hard Rock Hotel, with 1,900 rooms and a casino; Karisma Hotels, with the first 900 of 4,000 rooms; and Princess Hotel with 2,000 rooms are scheduled to break ground within the next 60 to 90 days.

KINGSTON

Jamaica's capital Kingston, on the waterfront, a new hotel development, part of the Hilton's Tapestry collection, is also slated to open this year. The Courtleigh Hotel Group is expected to open its newly refurbished property, formerly the Hilton in New Kingston, by the end of 2020.

According to Whyte, the growth of the tourism industry highlights the variety and lure of the Caribbean nation.

"Jamaica is refreshingly different from what you expect," he explained. "There are so many experiences to relish.

"We are soulful, we are upbeat, we are vibrant, and good vibes is what we are about. Our personality is what sets us apart from other destinations and helps us to connect to our guests …

"On the map, Jamaica is a mere dot in the Caribbean sea, but our influence on the world's culture is the size of a continent."

Story and photograph by Dawn A. Davis, a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.

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Peter A. Webley, *Publisher*

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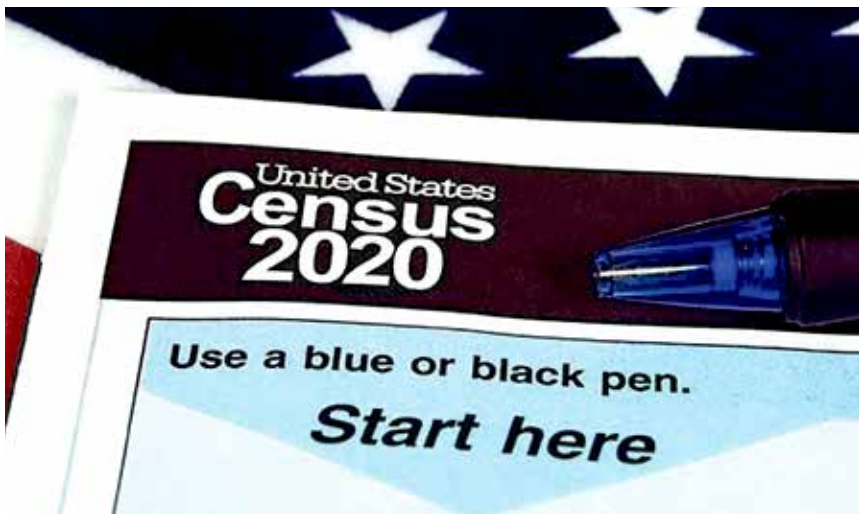
HEAD COUNT: Caribbean immigrants in U.S. can self-identify on census

For the first time in the history of the United States Census, Caribbean immigrants and those with Caribbean ancestry will be able to self-identify on the 2020 Census forms.

The option comes 12 years after Carib ID, the group founded by Caribbean immigrant entrepreneur and advocate Felicia J. Persaud, begun lobbying for better self-identification on U.S. Census forms for people from the region and those with roots there. A congressional bill, a U.S. Senate bill and over a decade of advocacy, the choice is here.

This means that persons from the Caribbean region will now be able to write in their nationality or ancestry while also choosing the race group they identify with. For example, under the category "Black or African American" on Census forms, black Caribbean nationals will now be able to choose the race group while writing in for example Guyanese, Jamaican or Haitian.



'PROGRESSIVE'

Persaud called it a "progressive" resolution to the problem of lack of self-identification for Caribbean immigrants on past forms and now hopes that those from the region who live in the U.S. and those with Caribbean roots will take full advantage of counting themselves present in this Census.

"Data on Caribbean nationals in the U.S. is currently sparse based largely on the fact that this bloc has had no previous opportunity to self-identify in the past but have been lumped in with the African American, Asian American or Other communities," she said.

"Hopefully this goes a long way in making sure we count in 2020 so we can receive the respect we deserve as a huge economic and political bloc in this country and our communities and businesses that have been dismissed because of a lack of economic data, can begin to thrive. Let's stand up and be counted."

RESEARCH

The form's re-design was based on a 2015 NCT research on race/ethnicity aimed at improving the question design and data quality for race/ethnicity, while addressing community concerns over the past several years, including the call for more detailed, disaggregated data for the diverse American experiences, census officials have said.

The U.S. Census kicked off its 2020 national promotional campaign last month ahead of Census Day, April 1, 2020.

The 2020 Census counts the population in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories – Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Each home will receive an invitation to respond to a short questionnaire – online, by phone or by mail by mid-March.

- Edited from News Americas.

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Tips for financial health, happiness in 2020

What tops most New Year's resolutions lists? You guessed it: Greater health and happiness.

But what most Caribbean Americans don't consider is that financial health can be equally, if not more important, to overall happiness than other resolutions, such as starting a new diet or joining a gym.

- Photograph© Ridofranz/iStock via Getty Images Plus

A trusted financial adviser can make decisions easier.

While saving money is one of the top five New Year's resolutions, it is also in the top five for most commonly failed. So how can savers commit to a more financially sound future and stick to it? Here are some top tips for achieving greater financial happiness.

• **Embrace uncertainty** - When it comes to markets, the only known is the unknown. And many experts believe that 2020 could be a particularly unpredictable year.

Research from Lincoln Financial Group shows that 76 percent of investors feel the upcoming presidential election will affect the market. Taking steps to protect your finances and retirement plan can help you feel less anxious and more empowered in uncertain times.

• **Protect your income** - Lincoln Financial's research also shows that 82 percent of pre-retirees are rightfully concerned about what will happen to their investments if the market drops. For this reason, many advisors suggest diversifying your portfolio to include an annuity with optional income benefits.

• **Build a new relationship** - A trusted financial professional will look at your financial situation holistically to help you determine whether you are on track or need to rebalance your accounts, help you employ tax-saving strategies, answer your toughest questions and help you strengthen your own financial know-how.

Most importantly, building a relationship with a financial professional means bringing more predictability to your future in an unpredictable market.

As you head into the new year, be sure to factor financial health and happiness into the new-year-new-you equation. With a few smart strategies, you can feel more confident about a financially sound future and retirement, come what may.

- Edited from StatePoint.

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Nominations open for Jamaica honors, awards recognition

Nominations are being accepted for the Jamaica National Honors and Awards for 2020.

The nomination forms and guidelines are available online through the Chancery of the Orders of the Societies of Honor, Office of the Prime Minister (***www.opm.gov.jm***) or through the overseas locations of the Jamaican Foreign Missions. The deadline for submission is **Mar. 27**.

Completed nomination forms can be submitted via email (***chan-prot@opm.gov.jm***) or by mail to: The Chancery of the Orders of the Societies of Honour, Office of the Prime Minister, 1 Devon Road, Kingston 10, Jamaica.

Orders are used to recognize merit relating to achievement and service while decorations and awards acknowledge nominees for bravery, meritorious long and/or valuable service and/or good conduct.

All honorees will be announced on Jamaica Independence Day, Aug. 6, 2020.

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'Caribbean Leadership Summit'

The South Florida edition of the "Caribbean Leadership Summit" will be held this month in Miramar.

The summit, presented by Mind Food International, is scheduled for **9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 29** at the Springhill Suites by Marriott hotel.

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SOCCER STALL: Caribbean talent stagnant as MLS rapidly expands

GORDON WILLIAMS

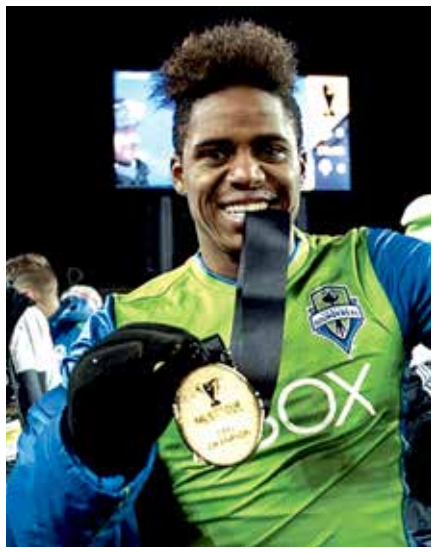
The top professional soccer league in the United States and Canada is rapidly expanding, but the growth of Caribbean presence - once common at clubs - has remained stagnant.

Rosters for teams going into preseason training for the 2020 season of Major League Soccer (MLS) late last month showed the player pool from the Caribbean is struggling to keep pace.

A few years ago at least two dozen players who were either born in the Caribbean or chose to represent nations in the region were attached to MLS clubs. Several were selected high in the annual MLS SuperDraft as clubs sought to cash in on Caribbean talent while not paying enormous salaries commanded by more established players, especially from Europe and South America.

However, only 11 Caribbean-born players were listed on club rosters heading into this preseason, and that doesn't guarantee them a spot at the clubs when the MLS season kicks off Feb. 29. That's the same number listed on rosters for MLS 2019, which featured two less clubs. The trend has not gone unnoticed by persons knowledgable of MLS and the Caribbean.

"MLS is recruiting from everywhere and a lot more people - players (from outside the Caribbean) - are looking at MLS," offered Jamaican Omar Cummings, who played several seasons in the league, won a MLS championship with Colorado Rapids in 2010 and became an all-star.


Joevin Jones

GROWTH

The MLS started in 1996 with 10 clubs. With the addition of Inter Miami CF and Nashville FC in 2020, the league will feature 26 teams. That number will increase next year when Austin and Charlotte join and two other teams - Sacramento and St. Louis - will bring the number to 30 MLS clubs by 2022.

The brisk expansion was viewed as a huge opportunity for players from the Caribbean to pursue professional careers due to the proximity of the region to the U.S. and Canada, talent believed to be in the region, relatively modest salaries those players would command and restrictions which limit opportunities in Europe.

The MLS has attempted to tap Caribbean talent by choosing players who excelled in U.S. college soccer. The league has also held trials in the Caribbean and added players from the region to its annual trial for college players in the U.S.

Meanwhile, MLS's reputation as a competitive and lucrative league has grown appreciably. Clubs are now willing to spend more for more experienced players rather than recruiting raw talent from the Caribbean. That may be hurting the region.

"With MLS getting more prestige … (maybe the clubs) are looking elsewhere," Cummings explained.

PRIME

MLS is no longer being viewed as a "retirement league", where established professionals come to wind down their career, at times well past their prime. Young, vibrant talent is finding the league more attractive, coming to the MLS from places like Europe, Asia, South America and Africa.

That appears to be among the main reasons Caribbean players are having difficulty sticking in MLS. The 11 players on preseason rosters were scattered over eight clubs. That meant 18 clubs didn't have a single Caribbean player, although players from the region, like former Jamaica international Cummings, have consistently been part of MLS Cup-winning clubs. Trinidad and Tobago international Joevin Jones helped Seattle Sounders win the title in 2016 and 2019.

Jamaica is the Caribbean nation most represented on MLS 2020 preseason rosters. Six of the 11 - Andre Blake, Kemar Lawrence, Darren Mattocks, Alvas Powell, Oniel Fisher and Cory Burke - are current or former Reggae Boyz. T&T's Joevin and Alvin Jones, plus Kevin Molino, are also attached to clubs. So too Maikel Chang of Cuba and Martinique's Jordy Delem.

Caribbean nationals are also sprinkled among MLS staff. Jamaican-born Robin Fraser, a former U.S. international, is head coach of Colorado Rapids. Jamaica's Tyrone Marshall and Ezra Hendrickson, of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, are assistant coaches at Real Salt Lake and Columbus Crew, respectively.

Cummings is currently a club ambassador at FC Cincinnati. Andy Williams, another former Jamaica international, is head scout for Real Salt Lake.

Caribbean women booted early from Olympic soccer

The hope of further international glory for Caribbean women's soccer came quickly crashing down, after all three of the region's teams seeking a place at this year's Olympic Games were eliminated from the final qualifying tournament in the United States.

Following Jamaica's historic berth in last year's World Cup in France, the Caribbean was keen to push on by booking a spot in the Olympics in Japan. However, the three teams lost their two opening games of the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) qualifiers, which began late last month, eliminating them in the group stage.

In Group A, Haiti was beaten 4-0 by the U.S., then 2-0 by Costa Rica. The downward spiral continued when St. Kitts and Nevis was hammered 11-0 by Canada in Group B and Jamaica lost 1-0 to Mexico. St. Kitts and Nevis was then swamped 6-0 by Mexico and Canada crushed Jamaica 9-0 ensuring Caribbean teams wouldn't reach the CONCACAF semi-final round, ending their hunt for an Olympic spot.

Jamaica's World Cup women drafted by U.S. pro league

Jamaica's Konya Plummer, who captained the Reggae Girlz in their historic appearance at the 2019 World Cup, and national teammate Chantelle Swaby were last month selected in the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) college draft.

Plummer, a defender who played for the University of Central Florida, was the first pick in the second round, 10th overall, by the Orlando Pride. She became the highest Caribbean national selected in the draft.

Swaby, a defender/midfielder who represented Rutgers University, was selected by Sky Blue FC in the fourth round, 29th overall.

Bermuda's Aaliyah Nolan, another Caribbean representative, went undrafted.

The United States-based NWSL is the top women's soccer league in North America.

BRIEFS

Haiti, D.R. take shot at Olympic soccer

Two Caribbean nations - Haiti and the Dominican Republic - still have a chance to qualify in men's soccer for this year's Olympic Games.

Next month, D.R. will play in Group A, alongside Mexico, United States and Costa Rica. Haiti will compete in Group B, which also includes Canada, Honduras and El Salvador. The top two teams will qualify.

T&T sprinter banned

Trinidad and Tobago sprinter Michelle Lee Ahye has received a two-year ban for allegedly missing drug tests and not notifying testers of her whereabouts. Ahye is the reigning 100 meters Commonwealth Games champion.

'One Love' soccer in Miramar

Soccer players, including former Caribbean national team members and celebrities, are scheduled to participate in the "Bob Marley One Love Football Celebration" 4 p.m. **Feb. 16** at Ansin Sports Complex in Miramar, Florida. Mikey Barnes, Papa San, Janet Morales and Bruce Klasner will be honored.

- Compiled from various sources.

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