

Caribbean Today

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Jamaican-born businessman Lowell Hawthorne, founder and chief executive officer of the popular Golden Krust Caribbean Bakery & Grill franchise, committed suicide last month in New York, page 2.

Caribbean American teenager Haile Thomas is among CNN's "Young Wonders", part of the United States-based television network's recognition of "Heroes" who have done outstanding work to help others, page 14.



RESISTANCE

~ Not a single Caribbean nation supported President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the United States embassy to that city. While some abstained from the United Nations vote, other Caribbean nations rejected Trump's plan, despite immense U.S. pressure, page 3.



LAST WORD

~ With her final breaths, 16-year-old Guyanese-born Shemel Mercurius was able to tell New York police who shot her, page 6.



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Golden Krust boss commits suicide in New York, thousands flock to funeral

Jamaican-born businessman Lowell Hawthorne, founder and chief executive officer of the popular Golden Krust Caribbean Bakery & Grill franchise, which has more than 120 outlets in the United States, committed suicide last month in New York.

Hawthorne, 57, reportedly shot himself in the head at the franchise's Bronx factory on Dec. 2, according to police sources.

Up to press time it was not clear why Hawthorne reportedly took his own life, although he did leave a note. According to reports, he reportedly owed thousands of dollars in New York City taxes. He was also being sued by employees over unpaid overtime wages.

FIRST

In 1989 Hawthorne

opened the first Golden Krust store in the Bronx. The franchise, known for its Jamaican patties and other specialties from the Caribbean, has spread to at least nine states in the U.S.

Last year Hawthorne was featured on the CBS television show "Undercover Boss".

Hawthorne came to the U.S. in 1981 at age 21. He reportedly worked as an accountant with the N.Y. Police Department before launching would turn out to be a Caribbean business empire.

"By 2020, all Americans we expect to be eating Golden Krust patties," Hawthorne once said.

SHOCK

His death triggered shockwaves in the Caribbean American community and elsewhere. Jamaica's Prime



Hawthorne, the Jamaican-born patty king of the U.S.

Minister Andrew Holness offered condolences to Hawthorne's family via the social media outlet Twitter. New York City Mayor Bill

de Blasio tweeted: "We are shocked and saddened by the death of Lowell Hawthorne. Our prayers are with his family and his loved ones."

U.S. Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, daughter of Jamaican parents, tweeted: "The legacy of Lowell Hawthorne will live on. I admire him greatly for bringing our shared love for Jamaican culture to life on a larger scale through food and fellowship."

"Words are still not able to fully convey my utter sense of shock, disbelief, and sad-

ness since receiving the tragic news about the passing of one of our most visible member of the Jamaican and Caribbean American community," Jamaica's U.S. Ambassador Audrey Marks noted in a statement.

Hawthorne's Dec. 19 funeral drew a massive crowd at the Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn, where several members of his family paid tribute.

"My husband was a visionary, a dreamer, a motivator, a courageous and compassionate person," wife Lorna said in a message. "... And a tower of strength to our family."

Hawthorne left behind four children, three sons and a daughter. Son Haywood said his father also left behind his troubles.

"You are now in eternal peace" he told the funeral crowd. "Fret no more."

According to its website, Golden Krust was the first Caribbean-owned business granted a franchise in the U.S. In addition to the restaurants, Golden Krust products are sold in U.S. supermarkets and retail stores. An estimated 50 million Golden Krust patties are sold each year.



Barbados emerges among top immigration countries

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A new report has suggested that Barbados and three Central, South and Latin American countries have "established themselves as the new emerging countries of immigration in the Americas".

The "Fourth Report of the Continuous Reporting System on International Migration in the Americas (SICREMI 2017)" was prepared by the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and was presented last month in the framework of the celebration of "International Migrants Day".

According to the report, between 2012 and 2015, of the 7.2 million people that emigrated from the countries of the Americas, 48 percent moved to Canada and the United States, 34 percent to Latin America and the Caribbean and 18 percent to European countries of the OECD.

880,000 people from all over the world emigrated to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, which represents 20 percent of the total emigration, the report stated, adding that Barbados, Chile, Ecuador and Panama have "established themselves as the new emerging countries of immigration in the Americas."

In the last 15 years, the report stated the total number of immigrants residing in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean increased by 2.6 million people or 45 percent, while the number of immigrants residing in the U.S. increased by 34 percent and in Europe by 30 percent.

In 2015, there were 184,000 asylum applications in the Americas, representing an increase of 83 percent over 2013. This amount represented six percent of all requests made worldwide, which increased 187 percent in that period as a result of the armed conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

- Edited from CMC.



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Caribbean rejects Trump's push for Jerusalem as Israel's capital

Caribbean nations brushed aside threats from the United States and openly defied President Donald Trump last month by rejecting his push to make Jerusalem capital of Israel.

However, several other nations from the region declined to come down on either side of the issue by abstaining from the vote at the United Nations General Assembly.

The non-binding resolution called "upon all States to refrain from the establishment of diplomatic missions in the Holy City of Jerusalem". Tel Aviv is currently Israel's globally recognized capital.

The final vote tally on Dec. 21 showed 128 U.N. members supporting the resolution, which opposes Trump's decision to declare Jerusalem as Israel's capital. No Caribbean nation voted to oppose the resolution and five - Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada and Guyana - supported it at the ballot.

"We are simply going according to previous United Nations decisions on the matter and respecting the international laws," Dominica's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit told listeners to state-owned radio station **DBS**

about the reasons behind his country's decision.

Barbados Foreign Affairs Minister Maxine McClean told the online publication **Barbados TODAY** the Freundel Stuart administration had also remained "consistent on the matter."

"We have always supported a two state solution, a negotiated solutions and from our perspective the (Trump) decision does not facilitate that."

Six Caribbean countries - Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago - were present but listed among 35 nations which abstained from the vote.

St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia were among 21 nations declared absent when ballots were cast at U.N. headquarters in New York.

Nine countries, including the U.S. and Israel, voted against the resolution.

REBUFF

The rebuff of Trump started before the vote on the



Haley's threats largely ignored at U.N.

resolution. On Dec. 6 he, following through on a promise to supporters, declared Jerusalem as Israel's capital and vowed to build a U.S. embassy there, an act no other country has carried out since the city's status is considered unsettled. Jerusalem is considered a key point of debate over who should control the land - Israel or Palestinians.

The issue is also viewed as a key element of negotiations between the often opposing factions, with Trump's decision widely viewed as clearly siding with Israel while the U.S. claims to be a peace broker.

The U.S. openly taking sides with Israel's claim of Jerusalem as its capital set off a firestorm of outrage globally and violence erupted in parts of world over Trump's announcement.

However, the president ignored the fallout and threatened to withhold support, including financial aid, from nations which did not support his position.

"All of these nations that take our money and then they vote against us at the

Security Council or they vote against us, potentially, at the Assembly, they take hundreds of millions of dollars and even billions of dollars and then they vote against us," Trump said the day before the vote.

"Well, we're watching those votes," he added. "Let them vote against us. We'll save a lot. We don't care."

MORE THREATS

Nikki Haley, American ambassador to the U.N., also warned that the U.S. would be monitoring which nations voted for the resolution. After

the vote, Haley declared the "no vote in the United Nations will make any difference" on America's decision to switch its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. She also reinforced Trump's threats.

"We will remember it when we are called upon once again to make the world's largest contribution to the United Nations," Haley said.

"And we will remember when so many countries come calling on us, as they so often do, to pay even more and to use our influence for their benefit."

She later issued an invitation to a party for those nations which either voted with the U.S. or abstained from the ballot. It excluded all countries which supported the resolution.

"The United States will remember this day, on which it was singled out for attack in the General Assembly for the very act of exercising our right as a sovereign nation," Haley warned after the U.N. vote.

However, some Caribbean nations had made it clear they would not side with Jerusalem becoming Israel's capital.

"Any such recognition (CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)



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NEWS



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U.N. mission makes new plan to bolster rule of law in Haiti

UNITED NATIONS – The United Nations is adopting a new approach to strengthening rule of law in Haiti.

According to Susan Page, head of the new U.N. Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINJUSTH), the operation will carry out its work in an innovative way – complete with an unusually tight time-frame and a bench-marking exit strategy.

“The new mandate by the (U.N.) Security Council is to work with the Government of Haiti to strengthen its rule of

law intuitions,” Page explained recently.

“It’s also to continue to support the HNP, the Haitian National Police, and to work on justice and human rights – and that includes human rights reporting, monitoring and analysis.”

EXIT

Page said MINUJUSTH’s mandate calls for an exit strategy.

“Within two years, we can figure out how we (will exit the country), but with benchmarks



Page

for progress that can be measured,” Page explained, stating that the country team created a framework with a focus on the U.N.’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which, along with SDG 16 – to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies – is working in conjunction with the Haitian government.

“This is a way of bringing the entire country team together, along with the peace-keeping mission, to attain those goals,” Page said, adding that the Haitian government “has already signed up to be a partner in trying to accomplish this for its

own development.”

MOBILE

She said that while MINUJUSTH is almost exclusively based in the capital, Port-au-Prince, it will also have a “mobile approach” that will take teams into the field in an attempt to reach the greatest

number of people. Page said the teams will focus on peace, justice and rule of law to help the Haitian people figure out their needs, and then connect them with top-level political figures to see how the UN can help the government address those needs.

“Once they have a baseline of what the people are looking for, what they need knowledge about, we hope that this bottom-up and top-down approach will help Haiti to strengthen its own institutions with a bit of push from us,” she said.

Page believes Haiti’s political system had been less than stable, “now, all of that is settled.

“Now that Haiti has its elected officials at all levels, including at the lowest levels in the communes, we have something to work with,” she said.

- Edited from CMC.



Guyanese is NYC’s first murder victim in 2018

QUEENS, New York – A 26-year-old Guyanese national became New York City’s first murder victim of 2018, after she was reportedly stabbed to death by her husband, whose body was later found hanging from a tree in a city park.

Police believe that Stacy Singh, the 26-year-old mother of two children, who came to the United States just over five years ago, was killed by her husband, who later killed himself.

They said they are treating the deaths as a murder-suicide after the bodies were dis-

covered about three hours apart on New Year’s Day.

Police said a knife was found near her body.

A Guyana-based online publication reported that the woman was originally from the Mahaicony area, a community made up several villages on the east coast in the County of Demerara in Guyana.

‘ABUSIVE’

Police named the husband as Vinny Loknath, 46, who had been described as an abusive person.

“She stayed with him no

matter what because they had two kids together,” Singh’s brother-in-law Romain Shaw was quoted as saying. “She was hoping for him to change, but he never did. He’s such a coward.”

The couple had a five year old son and a year old daughter.

- Edited from CMC.



Singh

Caribbean rejects Trump's push for Jerusalem as Israel's capital

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

would imperil the internationally-agreed Two-State Solution, destabilize the Middle East region, and invalidate the important role of the United States as an honest broker and driver of the Israeli-Palestinian peace

process,” the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted in a statement.

McClellan added that even with the threat of sanctions Barbados had nothing to fear.

“If you look back to where we began as an inde-

pendent sovereign state in 1966 our first Prime Minister (Errol Walton Barrow) made a statement that is often referred to in which he said Barbados is a ‘friend of all and a satellite of none,’” she said.



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Caribbean nationals caught in U.S. deportation push

Caribbean nationals without criminal convictions are believed to be among thousands of undocumented residents deported from the United States under the administration of President Donald Trump.

According to reports last month, the ramped up efforts to target “illegal aliens” by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has netted almost three times the number of those with no record of law-breaking in the first fiscal year of the Trump administration.

A total of 226,119 “illegal aliens” were “removed” from the U.S. in 2017 according to ICE statistics. Close to 75 percent of that number are believed to have been convicted of crimes.

The U.S. government insists criminals remain the primary targets for deportation. However, ICE statistics showed even “Dreamers”, undocumented immigrants or Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals who were brought to the U.S. by parents at a young age and seek clearance to attend school and work, are not immune to deportation.

CONCERN

According to acting ICE Director Thomas Homan, all undocumented immigrants “should be concerned.”

“The president has made it clear in his executive orders: There’s no population off the table,” Homan said during a press conference.

“If you’re in this country illegally, we’re looking for you and we’re going to look to apprehend you.”

The Huffington Post reported: “Deportations overall were down during the 2017 fiscal year, most of which was



- File photograph
ICE stepping up search for undocumented aliens.

under Trump’s presidency, from the previous year, in part because fewer people were caught illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. But the number of undocumented immigrants without criminal convictions deported from the interior of the country rose dramatically.”

“People with no criminal convictions accounted for 17 percent of those deported after getting arrested by ICE within the country - a sharp increase since former President Barack Obama’s last full year in office, when those without criminal convictions made up 8 percent of interior deportations,” the Post added. “In total, nearly 14,000 non-criminals were deported from the interior of the country in the 2017 fiscal year, compared with about 5,000 the year before.”

According to the Post: “The Trump administration has detained undocumented immigrants who had been checking in with the government for years and had previously been allowed to remain in the country. It has also arrested people during its ‘targeted’ operations who were not the targets.”



U.S. seizes huge shipment of Jamaica-bound guns

A huge stash of illegal firearms bound for Jamaica was recently seized by United States law enforcement in South Florida.

More than 100 guns were discovered by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Outbound Enforcement Team at Miami International Airport (MIA).

The guns, plus hundreds of rounds of ammunition, were reportedly destined for Montego Bay, a city in western Jamaica which recorded over 300 murders last year.

The shipment of guns, discovered during security screening on Nov. 13, is

reportedly being investigated by law enforcement in Jamaica and the U.S. It was concealed in barrels and boxes which were listed to contain food and household items.

Among the 119 guns were 115 pistols and four rifles, reports indicated, plus 267 rounds of ammunition. Also seized were back straps for handguns, pistol grips and magazine parts.

Up to press time no arrests had been made.

- Compiled from multiple sources.



Several Jamaicans perish in New York fire

BRONX, New York – At least four Jamaicans were reported killed in one of the deadliest fires in New York that also claimed the lives of at least eight others late last month.

According to reports from the late December tragedy, Ambrozia Stewart said her 37-year-old daughter Karen Stewart-Francis died with her two daughters. They were part of a reportedly large Jamaican family living in the building.

Stewart named the children as two-year-old Kylie Francis and seven year-old Kelly Francis, adding that her niece, 19-year-old Shawntay Young, was also killed. Up to press time, her son-in-law Holt Francis was in hospital.

The fire inside a Prospect Avenue apartment building near the Bronx Zoo reportedly started on the night of Dec. 28 by a three-year-old boy who was playing with stove



Stewart-Francis



Young



Kelly Francis



Kylie Francis

corridor of the building, trapping and killing five people in a short period of time.

Among the dead are a year-old girl and 63-year-old woman.

Several victims died at Saint Barnabas Hospital and Jacobi Medical Center as a result of their injuries, officials said. At least 12 people avoided the fire by climbing down fire escapes and ladders provided by firefighters.

Up to press time, other residents of the building were still reported missing or unaccounted for, according to officials.

At least 175 firefighters responded to the initial call in three minutes and the fire was extinguished hours later.

New York City’s Mayor Bill de Blasio said the fire was the deadliest in the city in 25 years.



burners in a lower floor apartment.

In addition to Jamaica, Caribbean immigrants from the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago were also believed to be occupants of the building.

TRAP

Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro told a news conference Dec. 29 that the boy’s mother was not in the kitchen when the fire started, but she and her two children ran out of the apartment and left their door open once they realized the fire was out of control.

Nigro explained it was because the door was left open that the fire was allowed to spread quickly through the

Spring Cargo & Shipping

March is the start of the Spring shipping season. More than 500,000 Floridians identify their primary ancestry as West Indians, that is over 117% increase from 1990. Florida’s black household income for 2000 was a whopping \$32 Billion, that has continued to increase healthily over the subsequent 16 years. CT will spotlight the various shipping services available to them, via Land Air and Sea to get their goods safely home in time for the season.

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LAST BREATH: Guyanese uses final words to tell cops who shot her

NEW YORK – Police here have testified that a Guyanese-born teenager in Brooklyn used her last breaths to tell cops the name of the man who shot her, after she spurned his advances, as she struggled through an agonizing 20-minute wait for an ambulance.

Sixteen-year-old Shemel Mercurius was allegedly fatally shot inside a Brooklyn apartment last year by a 25-year-old man who wanted to date her.

Last month, at the trial of Taariq Stephens - who is charged with murdering Mercurius - the Brooklyn Supreme Court heard from the patrol cop who tried to keep her alive. The police reported that Mercurius, a junior at Edward R. Murrow High School in Brooklyn, was babysitting her three-year-old cousin on May 31, 2016 when Stephens

allegedly showed up at the Brooklyn Avenue apartment and shot her three times with a submachine gun.

HORRIFYING

Responding New York Police Department officers kicked down the apartment door to find a horrifying scene.

"There was a three-year-old male child covered in blood crying next to the victim," said Sergeant Ryan Habermehl, who testified that he immediately called the Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

"It took about 20 minutes for EMS to arrive," Habermehl testified.

Officer Kyle Thomas Daly found Mercurius, bleeding heavily, seated on a toy car and leaning against the wall, the **New York Daily News** reported.

"I put on gloves, took her



Mercurius

off the car and laid her down and began rendering aid," said Daly, who has since left the NYPD to join the Suffolk County police department in

Shirley, Long Island, a New York City suburb.

"She regained consciousness, gave me her name and date of birth. It took a very long time for the ambulance to come, about 20 minutes."

SNUB

While Mercurius was in and out of consciousness, the teen told another detective that Stephens wanted to be "boyfriend and girlfriend," but she wasn't interested, Daly said. Mercurius and Stephens

reportedly met at a daycare center a week before the murder and exchanged phone numbers.

An ambulance arrived at

6:55 p.m., and Mercurius died at Kings County Hospital at 7:57 p.m., according to testimony.

Mercurius, who lived with her aunt after moving to the U.S. four years ago from Guyana, had buzzed a friend into the East Flatbush building where she was babysitting moments before she was shot. Lona Junien took the stand to describe what she saw happening between Stephens and Mercurius when she showed up to visit her friend.

"The person pushed her," Junien, 18, said. "The person said 'Don't ever lie to me.' She was screaming, he took out the gun and shot her."

Junien admitted on cross-examination that a detective told her Stephens was the shooter before she identified him.

If convicted, Stephens faces 25 years to life in prison for second-degree murder and weapons charges.

- Edited from CMC.



Sir Lester Bird retires from Antigua's politics

ST. JOHN'S, Antigua – Sir Lester Bryant Bird, who served as the second prime minister of this



Bird

Caribbean community (CARICOM) country, has announced his retirement from active politics.

Sir Lester, who was born on Feb. 21, 1938, served as prime minister from 1994-

2004. He replaced his father Sir Vere Bird.

"I know that, in as much as my brain has much to contribute, age has taken its toll on my physical capacity," Sir Lester told the Parliament last month.

"It would be unfair to impose upon the readiness of the people of Rural East to maintain me as their representative."

- Edited from CMC.



Jamaican is Liberia's new first lady

A Jamaican national has become the first lady of Liberia following the election of her husband as the new president of this West African nation.

Clar Weah's husband, George Weah, a former FIFA soccer "World Player of the Year", won the presidency in the Liberian electoral run-off on Dec. 26.

Clar Weah, who was born in Jamaica to Jamaican parents, migrated to Fort Lauderdale, Florida in the United States where she runs a Caribbean restaurant and grocery store. According to reports, the couple met in a bank in the U.S., where Clar worked as a customer service officer.

INFLUENTIAL

"Clar, who unlike most women of Caribbean descent, dresses simply, is regarded not

only as a brilliant strategist but great canvasser as well, whose bright smile even in difficult moments is able to break barriers," reported the Punch newspaper in a recent article. "Close allies describe her as intelligent and possessing a special type of aura."

"The Jamaican wields a lot of power around her husband and could further expand her power base once he assumes office as the President of Liberia in January 2018," the Punch added.

George Weah shot to global prominence playing with some of Europe's biggest clubs. The 51-year-old played for Paris Saint Germain, Monaco, Chelsea, Manchester City and AC Milan, where he won the coveted FIFA honor and Ballon d'Or in 1995.

- Edited from CMC.



IMF probes Dominica's Citizenship By Investment

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has told Dominica that a prudent management framework of its Citizenship by Investment (CBI) revenues is key, regardless of the expected duration of the windfall with priority given to capital spending, debt reduction and saving.

Dominica is among several Caribbean countries implementing a CBI through which foreign investors are granted citizenship of the country in return for making a significant investment in its socio-economic development.

In a paper which examined the CBI before the passage of Hurricane Maria last September, the Washington, D.C.-based financial institution stated that due to the highly volatile and unpredictable nature of CBI receipts, "the policy options to allocate such revenues should be carefully examined with sufficient con-



sideration given to potential effects on the country's medium and long-term macroeconomic fundamentals".

RELIANCE

The IMF had noted that the Dominica CBI inflows had reached near 10 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), increasing the country's reliance on these revenues. It argued that that given their volatile and unpredictable nature, CBI revenues should be used prudently.

"Their use should be mindful of the chances of a

sudden stop in these flows," the IMF noted.

"It is therefore key to prioritize investment, debt reduction, and saving in lieu of current expenditure, which is typically more difficult to reverse."

It stated that to avoid the need for a sharp fiscal adjustment when the windfall revenues diminish or come to a sudden stop, priority should be given to boosting infrastructure, debt reduction and saving. The IMF claimed that based on the examples used to analyze the program, additional capital expenditure would help close the infrastructure gap and permanently raise the level of income in the economy; saving accumulation would provide for a smooth transition when or if CBI revenues come to a sudden stop.

- Edited from CMC.



Coast Guard intercepts Haitians attempting U.S. entry

PORT AU PRINCE, Haiti - The United States Coast Guard early last month repatriated 67 Haitians, whose boat was intercepted about 51 kilometers north-east of Turtle Island on the north coast of the French-speaking Caribbean community (CARICOM) country.

The Coast Guard said

that since Oct. 1 approximately 200 Haitians have tried to migrate illegally to the U.S. by sea and has renewed its warning to people not to attempt the dangerous journey since many have lost their lives on previous occasions.

"The Caribbean and the Florida straits are dangerous and ruthless for migrants who

travel illegally in overcrowded boats," warned Captain Jason Ryan of the 7th Coast Guard District.

According to the Coast Guard, between September and October 2017, 1,869 Haitian immigrants attempted to illegally reach U.S. shores by sea.



REDEMPTION: Guyanese wrongfully jailed 30 years in U.S. set free

NEW YORK – A Guyanese national who spent three decades in prison in New York on a wrongful rape and robbery conviction was found innocent last month.

On Dec. 20, the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office said that it moved to vacate the conviction of Mark Denny, 47, and dismiss the indictment after an investigation revealed faulty witness identification.

Later in the day, Denny appeared before Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Matthew D'Emic, who made his exoneration official. After the decree, it said Denny smiled and waved to his family and friends who filled the court gallery.

"I'm overwhelmed thinking of what I'll do next to get my life back on track," he said after walking out of the courthouse an innocent man.

"I have no ill feelings towards the victim," he added. "Going to prison was a

traumatic experience mentally. There's a lot of people in my position. I appreciate everyone for all they have done for me."

HORRIFIC

Denny was the 24th person to have his conviction vacated by the Brooklyn District Attorney's Conviction Review Unit. Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez said his review team examined evidence and interviewed witnesses, as well as Denny's co-defendants in the case.

"After a lengthy and extensive investigation into this horrific case, I have concluded that the cause of justice requires that we vacate the conviction of Mr. Denny," Gonzalez noted in a statement.

Denny was exonerated with the help of the Innocence Project, which had been working on his case since 2009.



Denny

"Mr. Denny has been waiting for this day for a very long time," said Nina Morrison, senior staff attorney for the Innocence Project.

"We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to District Attorney Eric Gonzalez and members of his conviction review unit for recognizing Mr. Denny's innocence and taking extraordinary steps to

right the wrongs that kept Mr. Denny incarcerated for his entire adult life," she added.

ATTACK

Denny was accused with three other defendants of a late-night gunpoint robbery and rape at a Burger King in Kensington section of Brooklyn on Dec. 20, 1987. The four were accused of forcing their way into the restaurant after closing and holding two employees - an 18-year-old woman and a male - hostage. They ordered the two employees to undress, took \$3,000 from a safe and then raped and sodomized the woman in a back room.

The report stated that the victim had a blindfold over her eyes during a portion of the attack and may have passed out.

Denny became a suspect in Mar. 1988 after he was busted two months earlier for gun possession.

According to reports, he

was arrested in a car with the three other defendants who were wanted for robbing a Manhattan Burger King.

PROBLEMS

But the problems in identifying Denny began immediately as detectives reportedly showed the rape victim a picture of Denny, but she did not identify him. Two days later, she was able to identify him in a lineup.

But during Denny's trial, the victim was vague in her description of him and his actions, the **Daily News** reported.

Dr. Jennifer Dysart, a John Jay College psychology professor whom the district attorney hired as a consultant to examine the case, said the victim's witness reliability was likely affected by her limited opportunity to see her attackers, the existence of a gun, the extreme stress from the attack

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

DAY OF INFAMY: 'December Murders' still haunt Suriname

IVAN CAIRO

PARAMARIBO, Suriname – Thirty-five years after 15 prominent opponents of the then military government in Suriname were rounded up, shot and killed at an army fort in the capital, the "December

Bouterse and 24 other suspects have gone on trial for the murders. Military prosecutor Roy Elgin has sought a 20-year jail term for Bouterse, who has insisted on his innocence.

Sunil Oemrawsingh, a relative of one of those killed,

trators to be brought to justice. Baboeram's organization is calling for "truth and reconciliation." During a recent interview with de Ware Tijd newspaper, Baboeram said Bouterse did not kill anyone on Dec. 8, 1982 nor did he gave the order to do so. He said the 20-year jail term which is being sought is an injustice against Bouterse and

claimed he had credible information that his own brother, John Baboeram, a lawyer who was among the victims, was conspiring with others to overthrow the then government in 1982.

COUP

"It is painful to hear, but my brother was conspiring to overthrow the government,"

said Baboeram.

Sergeant Major Bouterse came to power on Feb. 25, 1980, with 15 low ranking officers of the Surinamese National Army, in a coup that ousted the Henck Arron-administration. The coup was the result of a conflict that observers said stemmed from

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)



- File photograph

Surinamese protest against the Amnesty law amendment in 2012.

Murders" still provoke emotional outburst in the Dutch-speaking Caribbean community (CARICOM) country.

Last month, during a somber ceremony, wreaths and flowers were laid at Bastion Veere in Fort Zeelandia where, on Dec. 8, 1982, the 15 political opponents of the then military government of President Desi Bouterse were executed.

The 15 people, including journalists, trade union leaders, military officers, businessmen, lawyers and university lecturers were arrested at their homes, tortured in Fort Zeelandia and then shot.

said given that the trial is in its final stages, there could be at least some closure to this dark page in Suriname's history.

"This not easy," said an emotional Oemrawsingh, adding that the victims were fighting for democracy, justice and truth when they were killed.

Dew Baboeram, whose brother was one of the victims, was quoted in the media as saying that neither he nor the members of the "Committee of Victims and Relatives of Political Violence" had been invited to attend the annual memorial service.

For the past 35 years there have been calls for the perpe-

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FEATURE



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TARGET BLACKFACE: Is Dutch celebration tradition or racism?

AMSTERDAM, The Netherlands – University of the West Indies (UWI) Professor Verene Shepherd, who in 2013 spoke out against the Dutch tradition of Zwarte Piet, has revealed that since then she has continuously been the target of hate mail from people in The Netherlands who oppose changes to the embattled character blackface character.

Zwarte Piet, or Black Peter, is said to be the black-faced helper of Saint Nicholas. The role is played by white people who use black paint or heavy black make-up to blacken their skin. They also wear curly wigs, accented red lips and large earrings.

The explanation is that his skin turns black from the soot from chimneys he climbs through to deliver gifts for children.

Opponents have pointed out the memory of this character is tied to the colonial history of The Netherlands, as the nature of the relationship between Black Pete and St. Nicholas is one of servitude and inferiority of blacks to whites.

Speaking as a former member of the United Nations Working Group of Experts on



Zwarte Piet

People of African Descent (WGEPAD) at a Human Rights Day event organized by UN Jamaica last month, Shepherd said at a certain moment there was so much mail coming in for her that it crashed the university's servers.

She explained that at the end of a visit to The Netherlands in 2013 she said Zwarte Piet is a racist stereotype of black people.

"He is not just a nice, jolly man. Maybe in the onset of the Sinterklaas tradition people did not realize that people of African descent would have problems with it, but this is the 21st century and people have indicated that they have a problem with it. Then it is time to talk about a change,"

she said then.

BACKLASH

The response was immediate, harsh and laced with racism and contempt - from white Dutch people - for the outspoken black U.N. envoy.

Dutch people who revere Zwarte Piet as a treasured tradition voiced their disagreement with Shepherd

in vile ways. She was told to mind her own business and stay out of theirs.

At the Human Rights Day event, Shepard explained her stance on the age-old tradition has not changed.

"The Zwarte Piet / black Pete Christmas celebration that is supposed to be a children's festival, teaches children racism from an early age," she said.

She told her audience that she continues to be abused via the Internet by people in The Netherlands and showed a series of slides of the types of letters in which she was assaulted with racial slurs and images in which she was ridiculed, some as recent as Oct. 2017.

"This image in which I

have been "blackpainted" speaks volumes," explained Shepherd as she showed images that portrayed Barack and Michele Obama and French Guiana-born Christiane Taubira, the former France minister of justice, as mon-



Shepherd

keys.

"But I guess I am in good company, based on these images in European media."

HATE

Shepherd said there was a time, shortly after she spoke out in 2013, that she would get as many as 80 letters a day from people in The Netherlands.

"My e-mail account at the university had to be closed

down for about two years because it crashed the system," she said with a grin.

Shepherd also addressed other examples of what she called "the global environment in which we live today and the racist practices that still

endure." She mentioned cases that she worked on in Canada, Portugal, Sweden and Australia.

"Australia and Canada are two countries that have been lauded for their multi-cultural and open arms policies and strategies," she said.

She also spoke of the persecution of the Rohingya people of Myanmar, the ongoing modern slavery practices that have been discovered in Libya and even

broached the subject of discrimination in her native Jamaica.

- Edited from CMC.



DAY OF INFAMY: 'December Murders' still haunt Suriname

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

a move by the soldiers to establish a trade union.

Despite initial support for the coup, opposition soon mounted as Surinamese became disgruntled with the policies of the military government. There were several attempts to overthrow Bouterse's government. In 1982, Suriname's then most powerful trade union De Moederbond organized several general strikes and when the then Grenada Prime Minister Maurice Bishop made an official visit to the Dutch-speaking country, striking workers of the national

power company interrupted the power supply, leaving a mass meeting of Bouterse in the dark.

While Bouterse's rally suffered from a power outage, there was no such problem for De Moederbond, which organized a rally on the other side of the capital attracting a large crowd. Bouterse had vowed then to send Cyrill Daal, chairman of De Moederbond, the bill for the rally and that Daal could keep the change. A few weeks later Daal was shot dead with 14 other men.

BLOCK

Since Bouterse came to

power through democratic elections in 2010, he has made several attempts to stop the criminal case that began on Nov. 30, 2007.

In April 2012, the Amnesty Law was amended so suspects of the "December Murders", as it is known here, would no longer be prosecuted. This law was set aside by the courts and In June 2016, Bouterse invoked Article 148 of the Constitution, which gives the government authority to instruct the prosecutor general to stop a criminal trial if that is in the interest of national security. That attempt was also squashed by the

Court of Justice.

On June 28, 2017, the prosecutor general sought a prison sentence of 20 years against Bouterse.

A 20-year sentence was also demanded against six other suspects.

Ruben Rozendaal, who according to the prosecutor should receive a 10-year sentence, committed suicide last month.

Of the 16 military officials who participated in the Feb. 1980 coup, only six are still alive.



REDEMPTION: Guyanese wrongfully jailed 30 years in U.S. set free

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

and the time lapse between the incident and the identification process, according to the Daily News.

Gonzalez said he did not fault the police investigators or the victim, noting "little was known back then about memory retention and retrieval, and their effect on eyewitness identification."

FACTORS

The district attorney said other factors contributed to vacating the conviction. He

said Denny's fingerprints were also not found at the crime scene, the Daily News reported. However, it noted that two of his co-defendants' prints were recovered at the Burger King.

One defendant, Raphael James, was convicted by a jury and was sentenced to 16 to 48 years in prison and the third co-defendant, Eddie Veira, admitted his involvement and pleaded guilty.

Denny's co-defendants all told the DA's conviction review unit that Denny was not involved.

The defendant whose case was dismissed even admitted his culpability to the Conviction Review Unit, but maintained Denny wasn't there, Gonzalez said.

Denny was convicted in 1989 and sentenced to 19 to 57 years in prison. He always maintained his innocence throughout - even through parole hearings.

Gonzalez said Denny staying committed to his innocence and refusal to participate in a sex offender program likely hurt his parole chances.

Even with his innocence established, Denny still faces legal hurdles, the Daily News reported. As a child, he came to the United States from Guyana as a lawful permanent resident. However, while in prison he was ordered deported due to his convictions. The Cardozo Law School's Immigration Justice Clinic in Manhattan is working to re-open his case and prevent his removal from the U.S.

- Edited from CMC.



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'HYPOCRITE-IN-CHIEF': Trump's ramps up anti-immigrant push

MIAMI, Florida - On Friday night, Dec. 8, 2017, I listened to the United States' Hypocrite-In-Chief Donald J. Trump rile up his minnows in Pensacola, Florida with his favorite topic – immigrants.

This was not a president speaking to Americans, but a candidate against civil rights speaking to an audience who love to hate immigrants.

Trump, seemingly not happy with the ramped up ICE raids happening across the country and his administration's decision to end temporary protected status (TPS) for many immigrants, including the Haitians he lied to while deporting over 5,000 of them last year, went back to his favorite subject – the wall.

The wall is coming, he



FELICIA J. PERSAUD

said, turning around to wave as his largely white base, mainly from Florida and Alabama, chanted: "Build the wall, build the wall!"

The scene sent chills down my back as I thought for a moment of being trapped in that auditorium of anti-immigrant racists. This was not the America I had come to know in the past 20 years. No, this looked like Stalin's Russia or Hitler's Germany and I felt like an ethnic minority about to face a cleansing from my adopted homeland.

DOG WHISTLE

But Trump was not done. "We want the strongest borders you've ever seen. We're gonna have such borders. We'll have borders on top of borders," he said to applause from the audience, who obviously loved it.

And it went on. "One by one we are finding the illegal alien drug dealers, the gang members, the thieves, the criminals and the killers preying on our chil-



Trump

dren, preying on everybody, and we are throwing them the hell out of our country or we are putting them in prison," Trump continued, before spending several minutes on what he called the injustice of the "not guilty" verdict of the Mexican immigrant recently cleared of killing Kate Steinle.

Then came the "Make America Great Again" push, an obvious wink, wink and nod, nod to those who, like Roy Moore, know what that statement truly means.

"It's time for Congress to adopt a pro-American immigration agenda. Every mem-

ber of Congress should be asked where they stand on these issues. Blocking funds to sanctuary cities. I don't want to give sanctuary cities money. Passing Kate's law to put repeat offenders behind bars for a long period of time," said America's 45th president as his fans cheered him on and he smiled a sickening smile that made my stomach churn with fear and disgust all at once.

BASHING

But he was not done. The immigrant bashing continued.

"Increasing the number of (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) officers, who are fantastic, and border patrol officers so we can dismantle vile criminal gangs

like, as I said, MS-13, animals," said Trump. "As I said, I am ending chain migration. We want a system that is merit-based. They come in on merit. They don't come in on a lottery system."

There was more, but I will end it there from Florida. Because after the blatant bashing of the human rights of immigrants, the very next day, America's hypocrite-in-chief had the audacity to show up to open the new civil rights museum in Jackson, Mississippi.

On Saturday, Dec. 9, 2017, Trump had the audacity to Tweet: "It was my great honor to celebrate the opening of two extraordinary museums

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

It's not the same. No shame in their game

Shame is a powerful feeling. Shame can let people do seemingly strange things, even making thieves return ill-gotten gains that they purloined from some poor unsuspecting soul.

Shame can even have an effect on the Devil himself, as Shakespeare penned: "O, while you live, tell the truth, and shame the Devil."

It seems shame and conscience are but two sides of the same coin, and if one is bereft of conscience, then one cannot have shame. And yet, we live in a world where shame is slowly being deleted from our lives. It has ceased to exist in many quarters and is alien to many.

There was a time when shame was an important feeling and indeed affected the way many people acted. We would often hear the phrase "Man, I feel so ashamed, I cannot look her in the eyes." Or, "That man shame-tree dead and bury," meaning the person has no shame.

Shame was felt and it affected what steps the person would take from then on. Back in the day, even simple acts would shame people, like being rejected on the dance floor.

MEMORY

Shame resonates and is remembered. I will never forget when American sprinter Marion Jones admitted to her drug cheating. She tearfully spoke on television about how



ashamed she was of her actions.

In the old days people would be punished by being shamed in public and made to walk the streets stark naked while being jeered by a large crowd. Adultery was often punished by shaving a woman's head, affixing a scarlet letter on her clothing and making her walk down the street while being mocked.

Now all those actions bring no physical pain, yet the emotional anguish, all because of shame, was huge, often scarring the person for life. That's why Shakespeare said: "Let life be short, else shame will be too long." Shame can last for a long time.



TONY ROBINSON

Shame may no longer be a big part of people's lives today, but there are cultures that even now are conditioned, guided and affected by shame. Shame and conscience go hand in hand. Add honor to the mix.

The Japanese have a deep sense of honor and also shame. They will take their own lives because of shame. That's why Japan has the highest rate of suicides in the world, topping 30,000 every year. This stems from centuries of people feeling shame for actions they deemed unworthy.

CHANGE

Even now, students who fail exams commit Harakiri – ritual suicide – as they felt they brought great shame and dishonor on their family and ancestors.

Years ago a Japanese restaurant owner committed

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

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VIEWPOINT



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Blacks, latinos woefully under-represented in Trump's Cabinet

WILLIAM REED

The United States ranks among the second-tier of countries when it comes to education. We spend significantly more on education than other First World countries.

American blacks' education and institutions are rife with problems. More than 60 years after Brown vs. Board of Education, America's education and schools are separate and unequal.

A leading indication of President Donald Trump's attitude toward blacks' education is revealed in promises he made to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). In his administration's early days, Trump signed an executive order to strengthen HBCUs. Trump said: "With this executive order, we will make HBCUs 'a White House priority'."

The top jobs in Trump's administration are mostly vacant. There is a lack of senior level African Americans in Trump's government. For him and us to move on up, Trump

needs to put added emphasis on filling more Cabinet level jobs with blacks.

UNDERREPRESENTED

Political party operatives on either side of the lectern admit that blacks and latinos are woefully under-represented across Trump's government. Blacks outside Trump's political and social circles worry that increasing complications, scandal and scrutiny surrounding this White House means even less diversity and effort in the administration's filling high-ranking government positions.

Enterprising blacks like Armstrong Williams could give Trump's Education Department help reaching blacks as he did promoting ex-President George W. Bush's "No Child Left Behind" law. Proud and black Republicans, such as Williams, could give this administration pointers on how to step forward to facilitate learning and/or acquisition of knowledge, skills values, beliefs, and habits for and among blacks.

Trump's Cabinet is the



DeVos

richest in history, and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos is one of its most affluent members. Heiress of the Amway fortune with her husband Rick DeVos, Betsy has a record of positive economics and impact on blacks. Richard DeVos's listing by Forbes as having a net worth of \$5.1 billion, makes him America's 88th wealthiest individual.

Betsy DeVos has the standing to lead Trump to higher consciousness, recognition and respect among blacks.

CRITICISM

Trump has been criticized for lethargy not filling hun-

dreds of vital sub-Cabinet positions that set tone and direction across government and its agencies. While Democrats have been slow with confirmations to stall Republicans' legislative agenda, Trump's administration has struggled with just putting forth nominees.

Appointment of a couple hundred blacks in senior level positions would set the management tone, direction and insight across Trump's government.

No matter what the party partisans are saying, so far Trump has done more for black economic progress in six months than ex-President Barack Obama did over eight years.

The other issue that is critically important to blacks' and Hispanics' economic progress is good schools. Through the influence of Betsy DeVos, "No president has done more to advance school choice so that every child can attend a quality school public or private". In cities like Washington D.C. and Milwaukee, 90 percent of

children in such programs are black.

HELP

The Trump administration can help blacks grow and prosper through timely and effective appointments of blacks to senior and sub-Cabinet positions. Trump and DeVos could utilize blacks they already have in place. An example is Dr. Leonard Haynes, a distinguished black Republican whose career has been increasing blacks' access to high-quality education options.

President Trump's pick to lead the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities calls HBCUs "entrepreneurial institutions". Johnathan Holifield has an established private sector track record and will represent historically black colleges in greater access to grants and economic inclusion.

Edited from an article by William Reed, publisher of "Who's Who in Black Corporate America".



'HYPOCRITE-IN-CHIEF': Trump's ramps up anti-immigrant push

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

the Mississippi State History Museum & the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. We pay solemn tribute to our heroes of the past & dedicate ourselves to building a future of freedom, equality, justice & peace."

Say what?

Black lawmakers and leaders are right to protest and stay away from the hypocrisy of Trump's presence at the historic Civil Rights Museum. But while they are right about his obvious attacks on blacks in America, they also should not forget his

assault on immigrants too.

We must all stand together and call out the hypocrisy of Donald Trump and his attack on the civil rights of all against him across the country because his duplicity knows no end.

Edited from News Americas. Felicia J. Persaud is CMO at

Hard Beat Communications, Inc., which owns the brands NewsAmericasNow,

CaribPRWire and Invest CaribbeanNow.



It's not the same. No shame in their game

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

suicide because people got sick after eating at his place. The shame was too much for him to bear.

When you look at American politics, and how politicians cursed Donald Trump, then ran to him like lapdogs when he beckoned them for political posts, it exemplifies shamelessness.

Some persons will steal a ton of money, serve time in prison, yet emerge and be back in the public spotlight on television and radio as if nothing ever happened.

People will do other types of crimes and not even hide it. They even justify their actions. Maybe that's why there's so much stealing and corruption, because people have no sense of honor, conscience or shame.

SEX

When it comes to public sex, there is no shame either. It's said that the Lord bestowed shame on mankind after Adam and Eve disobeyed Him in the Garden of Eden. At least that's what's in the Bible.

Whether it's true or not is moot. What is true though, is that most people are ashamed of their own nakedness. At

least they used to be. With this nakedness comes sex and most people used to be ashamed to have sex publicly.

Not anymore. Now some extroverts are proud to film their sex acts and broadcast it all over the Internet. There are some American stars who became famous after releasing sex videos.

I was mystified by a story I read about a woman who took her lover to her matrimonial home and made love to the man while her husband sat in the living room. The husband, when asked why he allowed this shameless behavior, admitted that it was her house, he wasn't working and she called the shots.

There is a new type of shame called Internet shaming. Apparently even young people, who have no sense of shame in other areas, feel shame on the Internet. Some are fat-shamed, sex-shamed, ugly-shamed. They feel a deep sense of shame if those things are exposed online.

In this era of no shame, there are still persons who shame easily. For others, it's no big thing.

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Being more creative in 2018

Those with creative or artistic aspirations know that consistently staying motivated and inspired is easier said than done.

Whether you're a songwriter, a poet or a visual artist, these tried-and-true habits and new tools can help you to create your best work in the new year.

'Me time' - A little bit of "me time" goes a long way. Carve out some space each week for your own pursuits beyond the time spent working on projects.

Learn where and when you do your best thinking, brainstorming and reflection. Is it on a morning walk through the park? Do you need complete silence? Don't be afraid to request some solitude from loved ones.

This may also be a good opportunity to disconnect from your devices for a bit. Leave your phone off or at home so you aren't tempted to distract yourself.

Innovative tools - New technology can actually inspire

you to be more creative, revolutionizing the way you plan, design and write by hand.

For example, many creative people are turning to devices called eWriters, electronic tablets which combine the functionality of notepads, sketchbooks, memo books and more, and which offer unique features you don't get with traditional pen and paper.

Be sure it's comfortable, away from distractions and brightly lit. Make it a space you want to spend time. Add flowers or plants, artwork and other items that inspire you.

Get inspired - Who do you most admire? You may get inspired by learning more about your greatest artistic heroes.

- Edited from *StatePoint*.



American model murdered in Jamaica

An aspiring American model was brutally murdered in Jamaica recently.

According to reports, Désirée Gibbon was found with her throat slashed on a rural road in the Caribbean island in November.

The 26-year-old from Queens, New York was reportedly in Jamaica to work to make enough money to attend school in Europe.

Gibbon reportedly last spoke to members of her family on Nov. 23, Thanksgiving Day in the United States. She



Gibbon

was due to return to the U.S. early last month. Her family was left in shock by her murder.

"The brutality is what killed me," Cali Gibbon, her Jamaican father, told the *New York Daily News*. "She was beaten and had her throat sliced open."

Andrea Cali-Gibbon, her mother, said: "(There) are just no words for this tragic event."

Gibbon reportedly appeared in beauty pageants and worked as a model from an early age.

"She loved life and wanted everyone to be happy and successful," her mother noted.



ECCO unable to pay music royalties on time

CASTRIES, St. Lucia - The Eastern Caribbean Collective Organization for Music Rights (ECCO) says it is unable at this time to make any payment of royalties to its members scheduled for the final quarter of this year.

"Several reconciliation actions must be completed before any such distributions can be made and the reality is, the process has been well established and cannot be bypassed," ECCO Chairman Martin James said in a video posted on the social media.

James said the process is likely to be completed by Jan. 10, following which payments

can then be processed by month end.

"This unfortunate occurrence is unavoidable at this time and as such, the board would like to assure all its members that measures are currently being implemented to ensure that this is never repeated," James said.

Last month, ECCO announced the dismissal of the Chief Executive Officer Steve Etienne following an investigation into the financial operations of the organization.

- Edited from *CMC*.



Jamaican dancehall star Ninjaman gets life in prison for 2009 murder

Convicted Jamaican dancehall star Desmond "Ninjaman" Ballentyne has been sent to prison for life.

The sentence was handed down last month when the deejay appeared in the Home Circuit Court for the Mar. 2009 murder of Ricardo "Trooper" Johnson

Ninjaman and two other people, including his son, were found guilty of murder in November. He is to serve 25 years before becoming eligible for parole. He was given 20 years for shooting with intent and life imprisonment for murder.



Ninjaman

The other two accused, Ballentyne's son Janiel and Dennis Clayton, were also given life sentences, with 15 years before being eligible for parole.

THUMBS UP

When the sentence was announced, Ninjaman gave the thumbs up sign and his attorney. His attorney Valerie Neita-Robertson had earlier indicated they would be appealing the verdict

The seven-member jury deliberated for more than three hours before returning the guilty verdict against Ninjaman, his son and.

Ninjaman was found guilty of murder and shooting with intent, while his co-accused were convicted of murder after the jury heard testimony from the main witness whom the prosecution

named only as "Witness A".

Ninjaman was arrested in 2009 and remanded in custody for three years before being offered bail.

DISPUTE

Director of Public Prosecutions Paula Llewellyn told reporters that the murder had its foundation in a domestic dispute between two tenants that escalated on Mar. 16, 2009 and continued the following day.

Ninjaman rose to prominence in the 1980s and during his career he had several hits, including the first titled "Cover Me", featuring Tinga Stewart. Other notable hits included "Murder Dem" and "Permit To Bury".

- Edited from *CMC*.



Man accused of killing Rihanna's cousin to re-appear in court Jan. 31

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados - A 23-year-old man is scheduled to re-appear in court on Jan. 31 after he was charged with the murder of the 21-year-old cousin of Barbadian-born international singer Rihanna, last month.

Shawayne Dashawn Williams was not required to plead to the indictable offense when he appeared before Magistrate Douglas Fredericks in the District "A"

Magistrates' Court earlier this month. He is charged with murdering Tavon Kaiseen Alleyne, who was shot several times as he walked through a track leading to his home on Dec. 26.

Alleyne's murder prompt-



Rihanna

ed Rihanna to call for an end to gun violence in her country where 30 murders, including 23 gun-related, were recorded last year.

"RIP cousin ... can't believe it was just last night that I held you in my arms!" she wrote to her Instagram. "Never thought that would be the last time I felt the warmth in your body!!! Love you always man!"



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~ A CARIBBEAN TODAY SPECIAL FEATURE

Miami adds Caribbean twist to MLK Day Parade

- File photograph

Past floats, like this one, have celebrated the slain civil rights leader.

A Caribbean twist will part of this year's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Parade in Miami, Florida.

The parade takes place Jan. 15 along N.W. 54th Street on a route from N.W. 12th Avenue to N.W. 32nd Avenue.

It ends with a celebration at Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Park.

The parade will feature marching bands, athletes and cheerleaders on foot, floats, cars and fire trucks carrying local leaders. Caribbean carni-

val dancers will also take to the streets with a dance and music performance.

At the park, revelers will be able to enjoy food, activities for kids and a variety of vendors and entertainment.

**FIU's tribute in January**

Florida International University in South Florida has lined up several events this month to pay tribute to the late Martin Luther King Jr. The following is a listing of some of those events:

Jan. 12, 8 a.m. – MLK Commemorative Breakfast at the Graham Center Ballrooms. Social activist Valarie Kaur is the scheduled keynote speaker.

Jan. 15, 8 a.m. – MLK Day of Service

Jan. 15, 8 a.m. – MLK Parade

Jan. 17, 10 a.m. – Robert

M. Coatie MLK Youth Forum and Peace Walk at Wolfe University Center Ballrooms

Jan. 17, 7 p.m. – MLK Dinner at the Graham Center Ballrooms

Jan. 18, 5 p.m. – Opening reception MLK @ The Frost Museum

Jan. 22, 7 p.m. – MLK Evening with the SAS Graduate Fellows at Graham Center.

For more information, call **305-348-2436**.

**Deerfield Beach plans four-day MLK celebration**

The City of Deerfield Beach, Florida has planned a variety of events this month to pay tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The four-day long event will run from **Jan. 12-15**, with many of the events to be staged at the Oveta McKeithen Recreational Complex, 445 S.W. Second St.

It will feature a weekend carnival, games and liver entertainment. On the final day, **Jan. 15**, starting 10 a.m., there will be a parade and

awards ceremony.

The day before the parade, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., will be the staging of the second Annual Choir Competition. Each entered choir will have 15 minutes to perform its best songs. A panel of judges will then decide the winner, which will perform "Lift Every Voice and Sing" at noon Jan. 15.

For more information on the events, call **954-480-4429**.

**Oviedo to host parade Jan. 15**

Oviedo, Florida will host a MLK Day Parade on **Jan. 15** to honor the slain civil rights leader.

Starting at 10 a.m., the parade will leave Oviedo High School and travel east on Broadway Street to Round Lake Park.

Following the parade, there will be a family fun day from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Round Lake Park. That will include games, live entertainment, vendors and food truck.

For more information, call **407-971-5590**.

**Lauderhill to host old school fest**

The South Florida City of Lauderhill, home to a large Caribbean American community, will host the Martin Luther King/Super Bowl Weekend Old School Soul Fest.

The event will be held at **7 p.m. Feb. 3** at the Lauderhill Performing Arts Center, 3800 N.W. 11th Place.

The music concert is

expected to feature several top "old school" performers, including Midnight Star, Howard Hewitt, Old School Gang and The Deelee. South Florida groups, including Old School Gang, are also scheduled to perform.

For more information, call **954-777-2055**.

**Miami National College Fair**

Martin Luther King Jr.'s insistence on education opportunities for minorities will take the spotlight next month when representatives from nearly 200 colleges and universities participate in the 2018 Miami National College Fair in South Florida.

The fair, scheduled for **Feb. 25**, is being presented to allow the college representatives to meet with students and parents on subjects such as

financial aid, planning, admission and testing requirements.

The fair, which has free admission, will be held from noon to 4 p.m. at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Miami Airport & Convention Center, 777 N.W. 72nd Ave. There is a cash fee for parking.

For more information, call the fair's hotline at **305-995-1739** or visit www.nacacnet.org.



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Salt fish cook-up, ideal 'hurricane' dish

MINNA LAFORTUNE

Many Caribbean victims of recent hurricanes have found it difficult to get decent meals.

Cooking for people living in Dominica, Cuba, United States Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, St. Martin, St. Maarten, Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands remains difficult.

So basic foods will have to suffice. To do this people have resorted to so-called "hurricane" or "rainy weather" foods. One example is cook-up salt fish with flour dumplings and green bananas or plantains. Here's the recipe:

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb. salt fish (cooked and shredded)
- 1 large onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 4 medium tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 cup ketchup
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 3 cups flour
- 1/2 dozen green bananas or three green plantains
- Scallion

METHOD

In a medium size Dutch pot, sauté onions, tomatoes and garlic. Add salt fish. Mix



Salt fish cook-up

thoroughly and add ketchup. Simmer for six to eight minutes, then add scallion and black pepper.

Put a large pot on the stove with water.

When the water begins to boil, add flour dumplings and peeled green bananas or plantains.

Make flour dumplings by kneading flour and cornmeal in a bowl and make into small round balls and then flattening in your palm and add to the same pot.

Add salt to taste.

Cook until done.

Serve dumplings and bananas/plantains with the cooked-up salt fish.

- Edited from *News Americas*. Minna LaFortune is a trained Caribbean caterer.



Sorrel still sweet post-holidays

Thanksgiving and Christmas are over and the leftovers are all eaten up. Yet there's always room for a tasty beverage.

So here's the recipe sorrel drink, an all-time Caribbean favorite:

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs. dried or fresh sorrel
- 1 lb. fresh ginger
- 2 quarts water
- sugar to taste
- 2 cups port wine
- 1 cup Jamaican white rum
- 8-12 pimento grains

METHOD

Wash sorrel. Wash ginger. Grind the ginger in a blender. Add ginger mixture to the sorrel. Add pimento grains. Add water.

Bring mixture to a boil. Allow to stand overnight.

Strain and sweeten with



Tasty sorrel drink.

sugar to taste.

Add rum and wine (alcohol is optional).

Serve with ice cubes.

- M. LaFortune. Edited from *News Americas*.



U.S. lifts ban on D.R. fruits, vegetables

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic – The United States has lifted a ban on the entry of fruits and vegetables from seven provinces in the Dominican Republic.

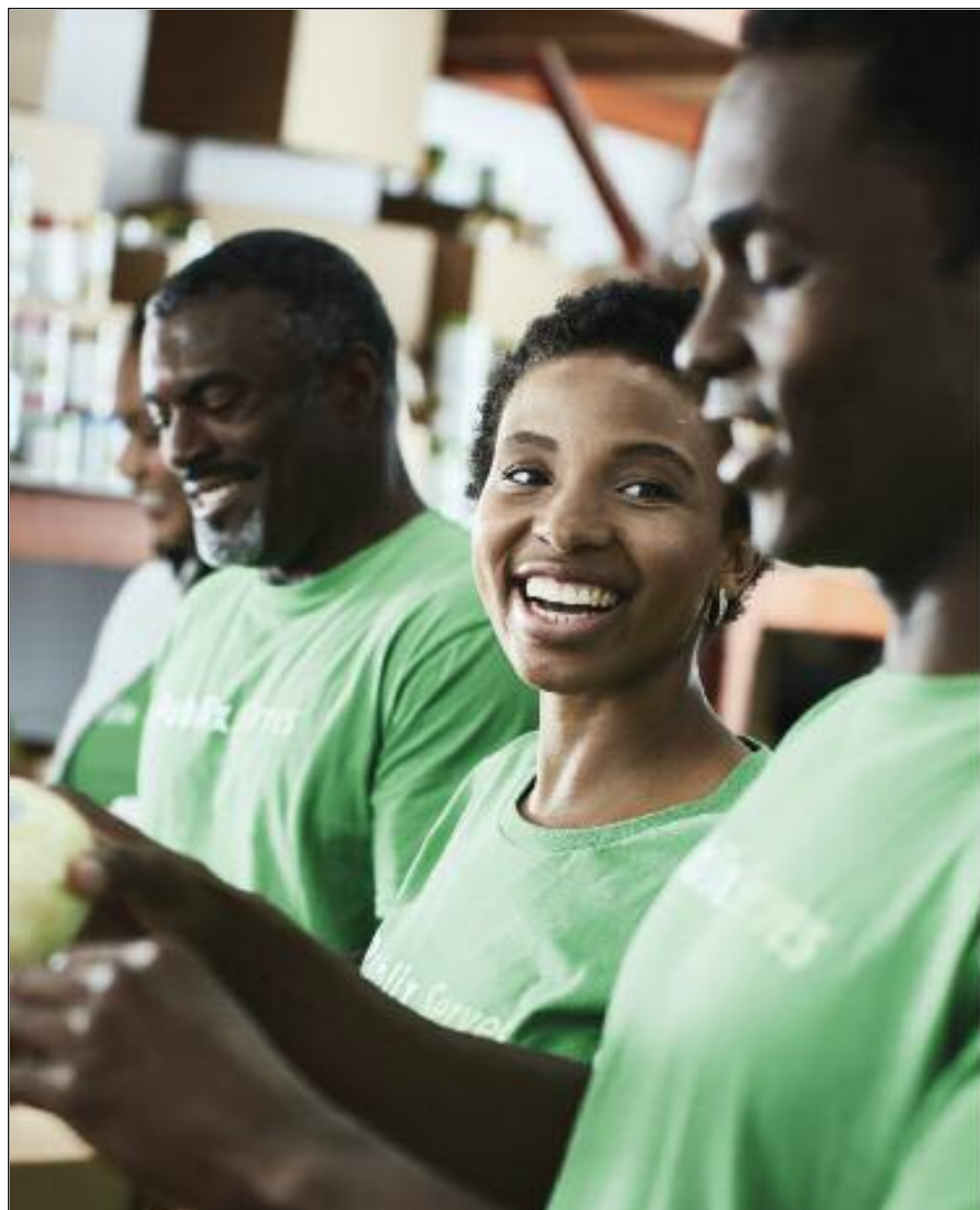
In a recent statement, the Agriculture Ministry revealed that the ban on produce from the east region provinces was lifted on Dec. 1.

The measure completely opens the region's fruit and vegetable exports, and that of the entire country, into the U.S. market.

"With the provision recognizing the declaration of the Dominican authorities and the Ministry of Agriculture, that the country is free of the Mediterranean fly, whose out-

break was detected in the town of Punta Cana, La Altagracia province and reported in 2015," the Agriculture Ministry noted.

In 2016, the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service lifted the ban in Santo Domingo and the National District.



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U.S. Supreme Court returns DACA documents dispute to lower courts

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States Supreme Court has returned a dispute over documents for young, undocumented Caribbean and other immigrants to the lower courts.

The justices on the court indicated last month that U.S. federal courts in California had moved too fast in ordering the Trump administration to disclose documents concerning its decision to end a program known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA, which protected some 800,000 immigrants from deportation.

In an unsigned opinion, the justices instructed the lower courts to consider the administration's arguments on two threshold legal issues before requiring that the documents be turned over.

DISCRETION

The administration contends that its decision to end

DACA was within its lawful discretion and that the courts are in any event without jurisdiction to review the matter.

"Either of those arguments, if accepted, likely would eliminate the need for the district court to examine a complete administrative record," the Supreme Court's opinion read.

Should the courts reject those arguments, the opinion added, they should, nonetheless, consider requiring fewer documents to be produced and allow the administration to present arguments about whether particular documents are privileged.

There were no noted dis-



Decision over DACA is still up in the air.

— File photograph

sents from the court's opinion, which appeared to be the product of a compromise and was in contrast to the Supreme Court's first order in the case on Dec. 8, when the justices split five to four along ideological lines.



Jamaican American among CNN's 'Young Wonders'

A Caribbean American teenager is among CNN's "Young Wonders", part of the United States-based television network's recognition of "Heroes" who have done outstanding work to help others.

U.S.-born Haile Thomas, whose parents are from Jamaica, was honored during the nationally broadcast 11th Annual CNN Heroes All-Star Tribute awards last month.

Born in Texas, Thomas lived in Tucson, Arizona, before moving to New York. She is a certified integrated health coach who turned 17 on Dec. 23.

Thomas became interested in healthier eating at age eight after her father was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes in 2008.



Thomas

Her family worked on making his diet healthier and reportedly reversed his condition without medication in a year.

At 12, Thomas founded The HAPPY (Healthy, Active, Positive, Purposeful Youth) Organization, which focuses on teaching children how to eat healthy, and has reportedly impacted more than 8,000 kids at health classes and camps. She has spread her message of healthy eating across the U.S. and internationally.

PRAISE

Thomas has received praise for her work and passion in fighting obesity by numerous high profiled people, including former U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama.

"Haile is an example for all of you, what your little, powerful voices can do to change the world," Obama once said.

A salad created by the teen, which included quinoa, black beans and corn, was among the winning entries at the White House Kids' State Dinner hosted by Obama in 2012 as part of the first lady's "Let's Move!" campaign.

Thomas accompanied Obama to the State of the Union Address in 2013.

INSPIRATION

According to Thomas, her mother Charmaine inspired her to cook, which she started to do around age five. Along with her sister Nia, she started "Kids Can Cook", a YouTube channel in 2009. In 2016 she graduated as a health coach from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, reportedly the youngest ever to do so.

Thomas has appeared in numerous national television shows and magazines, including "The Dr. Oz Show", "Food Network", NBC's "Today", "Teen Vogue" and "O, the Oprah Magazine".

During the CNN Heroes ceremony, Thomas was asked by host Kelly Ripa which foods she did not like. She said "No offense to Jamaicans," but she didn't care much for "boiled dumplings", a popular Jamaican staple.

"We want to make sure we educate kids while they are still very young, so they can soak in the information and build lifelong habits and even influence their parents," Thomas said in an interview with "Eatrightchef".

During the ceremony, a video clip of Thomas interacting with her family and other children was shown. She was one of five "Young Wonders", which recognizes outstanding youth. CNN honored 10 Heroes of the Year.



Consulate resumes Jamaica passport process

The collection and processing of passport applications at the Consulate General of Jamaica in downtown Miami, Florida resumes this month.

The service had been temporarily suspended on Dec. 18.

The consulate was closed Jan. 1.

For more information, call the Consulate General at 305-374-8431 or e-mail contactus@jamaicacgmiami.org, consularinfo@jamaicacgmiami.org or info@jamaicacgmiami.org.



DOWN TO BUSINESS



Christopher Denny, right, vice president for service and sales support at Victoria Mutual Building Society, greets Howard Berger, vice mayor and commissioner of the South Florida city of Lauderhill, during the recent Jamaica USA Chamber of Commerce (JAUSACC) Business Expo at the Lauderhill Performing Arts Center. The expo allowed VMBS to interact with Jamaican and United States-based businesses or individuals and encourage financial independence through the savings and mortgage options offered by Victoria Mutual in Jamaica.

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CAN WE TALK?

Peter A. Wobley,
Publisher

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HEALTH



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Resolve to better organize your medical information

A fresh new year presents a great opportunity to re-organize your medical information and files as part of a greater effort to prioritize your health and wellness in the coming year.

From veterinarian bills to your children's dental x-rays, these tips can help you get all your ducks in a row.

Be discerning - While most paperwork related to medical treatments is important and worthy of saving, there are some items that can be tossed. Be discerning or you will quickly be overwhelmed.

Keeping a shredder on hand can eliminate any concerns you may have about discarding potentially sensitive material.

Make it convenient - It's all too easy to skip filing paperwork until it gets out of hand. Keep your filing cabinet near your home's landing area where mail comes in, so you can handle each item as it arrives.

Make labels - Clear, concise labeling is a must where effective filing and organization is concerned.

Lock it up - It's always a good idea to securely store sensitive personal information. Consider using a filing



- Photograph © stickasa/stock.Adobe.com

Keeping proper files can help you prioritize.

cabinet that locks. Just remember where you put the key!

Whenever you visit the doctor, be sure to bring a pad of paper and something to write with, or a device on which you can jot down notes quickly. Be sure to date and label your notes and consider filing this along with any other information received from the health care provider that day, so that it's easy to refer to, as necessary.

Take notes - Whenever you visit the doctor, be sure to bring a pad of paper and something to write with, or a device on which you can jot down notes quickly. Be sure to

date and label your notes and consider filing this along with any other information received from the health care provider that day, so that it's easy to refer to, as necessary.

Learn your history - If you are not well acquainted with your family's medical history, resolve to learn it. You never know when an accurate record will come in handy.

Getting your medical information organized may seem like an annoying chore at first. But once you have a system in place, maintaining it will be smooth sailing.

- Edited from *StatePoint*.



Ways to turn your weight loss resolution into a reality

If you have a lot of weight to lose in the new year, it may feel like an insurmountable challenge, especially if you have struggled with weight loss before.

Here are a few ways to turn your resolution into a reality:

Get moving - There are more ways than ever to get moving these days - from video games that encourage movement to online portals that allow users to try out different local exercise classes commitment-free.

The most important thing is to find activities you enjoy doing, so it never feels like a chore. Whether it's taking a dance class or going for a bike ride, you can stay motivated if it's fun and takes your mind off the fact that you are actually exercising.

Rethink portion control - Portion control is fundamental to weight loss. However, the typical diet can often leave you feeling hungry or dissatis-



- Photograph © nenetus/stock.Adobe.com

Take on the battle of the scale.

fied.

To adapt to healthier

The most important thing is to find activities you enjoy doing, so it never feels like a chore. Whether it's taking a dance class or going for a bike ride, you can stay motivated if it's fun and takes your mind off the fact that you are actually exercising.

potion sizes, consider a weight loss balloon, which is placed inside the stomach during a short, non-surgical procedure and remains there for six

months, doing what most diets cannot do. It helps you feel full and lose weight by taking up space in the stomach, and slowing the digestion of food, helping dieters lose up to three times the weight of diet and exercise alone.

This weight loss aid was designed for those who tried other weight loss programs, but were unable to lose weight and keep it off.

Get help - Most major endeavors gain momentum with help. Weight loss is no exception. Be sure to seek out resources and tools to aid your efforts, as well as support from friends, family and professionals.

Many weight loss programs help their users by offering interactive support, free recipes and other resources.

Losing weight sustainably and for good can be simple with smart strategies and the right support. So, this year, don't just resolve to lose weight, actually do it.

- Edited from *StatePoint*.



U.S. clears Dominica of rodent-spread Hanta Virus

ROSEAU, Dominica - The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States says there is no positive case of the unusual Hanta Virus spread by rodents in hurricane-battered Dominica, according to Chief Medical Officer Dr. David Johnson.

In November, health authorities said they were awaiting confirmation of a preliminary test to determine whether the island had registered its first case of Hanta Virus, even as an epidemiological investigation had not found similar cases on the island.

Dr. Johnson said there had been no cases of the virus in the Caribbean in the recent past and "the studies we have seen and working with our other creditable buddies including the Pan American Health Organization, we were able to confirm that there is no case circulating in the region certainly between 1998 and 2016 and 2017."

The disease does not spread from person to person. The mode of transmission of the virus is similar to leptospirosis. Rodent infestation in and around the home remains the primary risk for the virus exposure.

NO MICE

But Dr. Johnson, speaking on the state-owned DBS radio, said that "the way it is transmitted (is) through a special type of mice not found in the region."



Hanta

"That is why when we got preliminary results with regards to Hanta Virus we had to seek confirmation from a reputable source ... the Centres for Disease Control in Atlanta and no one can doubt the reputation of CDC."

"So I am happy to report that we got back results from CDC indicating that that case was negative for Hanta Virus disease. So we can say with absolute certainty now that there was no case, let me repeat no case of Hanta Virus circulating in Dominica," Dr. Johnson said.

Early symptoms of the virus include fatigue, fever and muscle aches, especially in the large muscle groups - thighs, hips, back, and sometimes shoulders. The symptoms are universal. There may also be headaches, dizziness, chills, and abdominal problems, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain.

- Edited from *CMC*.



Tips to refresh yourself

If you planned a new year's resolution, instead of simply resolving to lose weight or drop a clothing size, consider placing a more positive spin on your objectives.

Whether your stated goal is to try new sports and hobbies or to get in touch with nature, you can better refresh yourself this new year with resolutions that help you get in shape while appreciating your surroundings and having fun.

Try something new - Testing out new sports and hobbies doesn't need to require a great deal of time or financial commitment. There are plenty of ways to dip your toe in the water.

Thanks to online marketplace coupon services, it's easy to find discounted access to local experiences like orienteering and rock climbing classes, fishing excursions, white water rafting journeys and more. Consider giving your fun and fitness goals a recharge by trying out something completely different.

Make more of it - Whether you're hiking, biking, skiing or trying any other new outdoor sport, consider making the most of your excursions with tech gear that enhances the experience and keeps you safe.

Get competitive - Having a race or competition ahead on the calendar can be the motivating force that drives you to get off the couch, get fit and enjoy the outdoors.

Whether it's a 10 kilometer obstacle race or a triathlon, training for such a competition can have cascading effects, leading to new healthy habits beyond more frequent workouts, such as getting more rest and hydration and eating a healthier diet. Completing your goal can be a truly rewarding experience.

In the new year, think beyond the scale. Refresh your body and mind with new experiences that lead to healthy habits.

- Edited from *StatePoint*.



New year steps to health

How do you keep resolutions this new year? Think simple, sustainable changes.

Follow these four steps for a healthier you, inside and out:

Stick to your workout -

After the holidays, the gym is filled with people who have resolved to incorporate exercise routines into their lives. Come February, the novelty of the new year wears off, life gets in the way and, according to U.S. News & World Report, 80 percent of resolutions fail by the second week of the month.

Instead of jumping from no routine to a seven-days-a-week commitment, introduce workouts to your schedule in small doses. Dread cardio or weight machines? Find something that you'll look forward to, like a cycling class, yoga or outdoor pursuits.

Choosing activities that you enjoy will increase your chances of sticking to your resolution.

Eat smarter - According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most Americans are falling short of their fruit and vegetable intake goals and most eat only half the recommended amount of fiber.

To increase your consumption of essential nutrients, create a grocery list packed with fruits, vegetables, protein and whole grains. Plan meals for the week to ensure you stick to a whole-food menu. Keep ingredients on hand for meals you can make in a pinch, so you're not tempted by fast food on a busy day.

Try frozen salmon fillets, which you can cook without thawing, or eggs, low-fat cheese and veggies for a quick-baking frittata.

Freeze individual servings of chopped fruits and vegetables in re-sealable bags to create quick and delicious smoothies each morning in a high-powered blender.

For a satisfying, energy-boosting snack, use your blender to pre-make dried fruit chia bars or white chocolate peanut butter energy balls.

Stress less - Stress can



Try a new diet in the new year.

have adverse effects on minds and bodies, as insomnia, weight gain, anxiety and depression are all potential related risks. While it isn't always avoidable, simple changes will help you manage tension.

Sometimes, stress can be solved with some "me time". Treat yourself to a massage or manicure, soak in a hot bath, or unwind with a nature walk. Connecting with others can help, too. Plan a brunch with your best friend or a date night with your significant other.

Feeling overwhelmed with work and family life? Build out a to-do list or calendar to feel more in control of your busy schedule, then cross items off the list when completed.

Practice positivity - A sunny outlook can affect your wellbeing. Keep a gratitude journal by writing down something good that happens each day. On bad days, you'll be forced to focus on the positive aspects of your life.

One of the best ways to improve your happiness is by giving others a boost. Volunteer with a charitable organization or donate to a favorite cause. Practice doing something kind daily.

This new year, take small steps to help you feel happier and healthier.

- Edited from StatePoint.
★

Surgery for Bahamas P.M.

NASSAU, The Bahamas – Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis was scheduled to undergo "minor" surgery early this month, according to a statement from the Office of the Prime Minister.

The statement gave no indication as to the nature of the surgery, indicating only that Minnis, a medical practitioner, would undergo the surgery at the Princess Margaret Hospital.

Minnis led his Free National Movement (FNM) to office in the May 10, 2017 general elections, winning all but four of the 39 seats in the Parliament.

The statement noted that Deputy Prime Minister K. Peter Turnquest would act as prime minister in Minnis's absence.
★

Beware! Mumps is contagious, dangerous

Mumps is a contagious disease that is caused by a virus. But it can be prevented by a vaccine given routinely to children.

Before the United States mumps vaccination program started in 1967, mumps was a universal disease of childhood, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Since the vaccine era, there has been a more than 99 percent decrease in mumps cases across the U.S.

However, mumps outbreaks can still occur in highly vaccinated communities, particularly in close-contact settings such as schools, colleges and camps. Florida and the Caribbean recorded mumps cases among children and adults during 2017. However, high vaccination coverage helps to limit the size, duration and spread of mumps outbreaks.

Mumps spreads through droplets of saliva or mucus from the mouth, nose or throat when an infected person coughs or sneezes, or on items touched by a person carrying the virus.

SYMPTOMS

Mumps typically starts with fever, headache, muscle



A vaccine can prevent mumps.

aches, tiredness and loss of appetite. Subsequently, most people will have swelling of their salivary glands. This is what causes the puffy cheeks and a tender, swollen jaw.

If untreated, mumps can cause serious complications, such as swelling of the brain (encephalitis), swelling of the tissue covering the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and deafness.

Mumps can be prevented with MMR vaccine, which also protects against measles and rubella. The CDC recommends children get two doses of MMR vaccine, starting with the first dose at 12 to 15 months of age, and the second dose at ages four to six years. Teens and adults also should also be up to date on their MMR vaccination.

MMR vaccine is safe and

effective. The mumps component of the MMR vaccine is 88 percent effective on average when a person gets two doses, and 78 percent effective on average with one dose.

Children may also get MMRV vaccine, which adds protection against varicella (chickenpox). This vaccine is only licensed for use in children 12 months through 12 years.

Other ways to prevent mumps are to wash hands often and thoroughly, stay home when sick and clean objects touched by a person who is ill.

For more information, visit Florida Department of Health at www.floridahealth.gov/mumps or CDC at www.cdc.gov/mumps.

- Edited from article submitted by the Florida Department of Health in Broward County.
★

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New travel warning system to affect Caribbean nationals living in U.S.

Caribbean nationals living in the United States are being asked to get accustomed to a new system of communicating security risks by the U.S. government when they travel abroad.

The Department of State said, effective this month, it will be taking steps toward "improving" its communication with travelers leaving the U.S. The measures are aimed at protecting U.S. nationals



abroad by providing "clear, timely and reliable safety and security information worldwide," according to Carl Risch, assistant secretary of state for consular affairs.

The new plan adapts a

The measures are aimed at protecting U.S. nationals abroad by providing "clear, timely and reliable safety and security information worldwide"

four-tiered advisory system that assigns each country a distinct security level, which will serve to alert travelers from the U.S. The designations are as follows:

- Level 1** - Exercise normal precautions
- Level 2** - Exercise increased caution
- Level 3** - Reconsider travel
- Level 4** - Do not travel.

'SECURITY'

The levels do not stop people traveling from the U.S.

The new plan adapts a four-tiered advisory system that assigns each country a distinct security level, which will serve to alert travelers from the U.S.

to those designated countries unless the government had previously stipulated such action.

According to Risch the new country designations were based on "security conditions" only, highlighting risk factors including civil unrest, crime, health, natural disaster, terrorism and events such as elections or protests.

The changes came about, according to Risch, because potential travelers public didn't fully understand the State Department's current system.

"We wanted it to be an easier to understand system," said Risch.

Details of the new plan, including specific country-level designations, are expected to be revealed this month.

- Multiple sources, including CNN, contributed to this story.



St. Lucia to host food, rum festival this month

St. Lucia will host a food and rum festival Jan. 12-14 in attempt to boost its tourism industry.

"We are historically a rum drinking people," Tourism Minister Dominic Fedee declared during the press launch of the "St. Lucia Food and Rum Festival" last month.

"I believe that rum gives our destination that platform to find expression and meaning in its authenticity, in its culture."

Fedee acknowledged that over the years, the main stakeholders had started shying away from the St. Lucia Jazz Festival, forcing the island to re-consider its promotional strategy.

"We had to begin asking ourselves a very serious question and that question is: 'Whether St. Lucia could afford to continue spending EC\$14 million (one EC dollar = US\$0.37 cents) on a festival which did little for publicity for the destination, or was it more of a cultural showpiece, or was it an event that was more targeted towards the Caribbean market?'"

Fedee said as a result, St. Lucia developed the "Soleil Summer Festival" with the rum and food festival as one of the initiatives.

ALTERNATIVE

"The intention still remains the same and it is within that effort and it is in keeping with that goal to drum up publicity for us as a tourism destination," Fedee said, adding that the Caribbean has been guilty of presenting itself as a destination of sun, sand and sea, but has neglected a lot of the other elements of the destination and "who we are as a people."

"We really are a rum-producing people and historically we really are a rum drinking people," the minister added, "and rum is a very proud and main part of our heritage, and this festival will better refine and leverage the tremendous asset that exists in culture, in food and in showcasing to the world our heritage."

- Edited from CMC.



Dominica promotes post-hurricane recovery

Discover Dominica Authority (DDA) and the Ministry of Tourism and Urban Renewal, together with other private and public sector stakeholders and partners, have been working to assess the readiness of Dominica to receive visitors following recent hurricanes.

DDA has launched a new blog site, <http://dominicaupdate.com>, to provide regular

updates on key visitor related products and services.

Updates to be included on the site range from accommodations, access, things to do, volunteering and volunteerism, as well as information of the relief efforts and responses to frequently asked questions.



TOP SELLER



Jamaica's Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett presents the award for top-selling travel agent to Lindsey Johnson, of Tropics Travel Agency LLC in Kentucky, United States, during the Jamaica Tourist Board's "Fly Me To The Moon" weekend recently in Ocho Rios. At right is 2017 Miss Universe second runner-up Davina Bennett of Jamaica. The JTB celebrated its top selling travel agents with a three-night getaway to Moon Palace. The agents were largely responsible for the more than four million visitors that Jamaica anticipated hosting in 2017.

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Caribbean soccer stars earn regional honors

Caribbean nationals were among the finalists for top honors in 2017 awarded by CONCACAF, soccer's governing body for North America and Central America and the Caribbean.

Jamaica's goalkeeper Andre Blake, who plays for Philadelphia Union in Major League Soccer (MLS) in the United States, finished runner-up in two major categories. Blake was third behind Costa Rica and Real Madrid goalkeeper Keylor Navas for "Male Player Of The Year". Mexico's Hirving Lozano was voted second.

Blake then finished second behind Navas for "Goalkeeper Of The Year". He led Jamaica to the final of the CONCACAF Gold Cup, where the Reggae Boyz were beaten by the U.S., although Blake was voted the best goalkeeper of the tournament. Haiti international midfielder Wilde-Donald Guerrier, who plays for European club Qarabag FK, was selected in the CONCACAF "Male Best XI".

Meanwhile, Kimbell Ward of St. Kitts finished third for "Male Referee Of The Year".



Canada's top players boast Caribbean connection

Two players with strong ties to the Caribbean have received the top individual honor from Canada Soccer, the game's governing body in that North American country.

Kadeisha Buchanan and Atiba Hutchinson, whose parents are from Jamaica and Trinidad, respectively, were last month voted 2017 female and male senior "Canadian Player of the Year".

Hutchinson, 34, represents European club Besiktas JK and Canada's senior national team. Besiktas has qualified for the final 16 of the UEFA Champions League.

Buchanan, who plays for FCF Olympique Lyonnais in France, was winning the player of the year honor for the second time in three years.



Expanded Caribbean Club championship to 'fuel' region's soccer ~ CONCACAF

FLORIDA – The Caribbean Club Championship is being expanded, adding a second tier, which will result in 12 amateur soccer clubs vying for a place in the CONCACAF League and Champions League.

The announcement was made here last month by CONCACAF, soccer's governing body for North and Central America and the Caribbean.

The first tier of the championship will comprise eight professional clubs from Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominican Republic and Haiti. It will off Jan. 31.

Tier will feature a club each from Grenada, Aruba, Guyana, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Cayman Islands, Guadeloupe, Curacao, Bonaire and Martinique. That competition begins in April.

"CONCACAF is united behind restructuring (soccer) in the confederation in a way that benefits stakeholders throughout the region," said CONCACAF President Victor Montagliani.

"The new, expanded Caribbean Club Championship is both the result of our efforts and additional fuel for the



Montagliani

growth of the game in the region."

CLUBS

Jamaica's Arnett Gardens FC and Portmore United, T&T's Central FC and W Connection, along with Haiti's Racing FC and Real Hope and Atlantico FC and Club Atletico Pantoja of the Dominican Republic, will be the eight clubs contesting tier one.

W Connection FC and Atlantico FC will play hosts to two four-team, round-robin groups, with the two group winners and the two second-place finishers advancing to the final stage later in the year.

The overall winners qualify

directly for the Champions League.

However, the runners-up and third place finishers will head into the CONCACAF League, while the fourth-place finishers will clash with the tier two champions in a play-off, to determine the third club that will represent the Caribbean in the CONCACAF

League.

The clubs competing in the second tier will be SV Deportivo Nacional of Aruba, Weymouth Wales FC of Barbados, Real Rincon of Bonaire, Bodden Town FC of Cayman Islands, Curacao's RKSV Centro Dominguito, Grenada's Hard Rock Sports Club, Guadeloupe's USR Sainte-Rose, Guyana Defence Force, Club Franciscain of Martinique, Cayon FC of St. Kitts, SVG's Avenues United FC and Suriname's Inter Moengotapoe.

- Edited from CMC.



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