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THE MULTI AWARD WINNING NEWS MAGAZINE WITH THE LARGEST PROVEN CIRCULATION IN FLORIDA GUARANTEED

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The administration of United States President Donald Trump has announced several immigration actions as the country copes with the COVID-19 pandemic. Trump and his cohorts seemed almost gleeful they will be able to enact even more restrictive policies, page 9.



Jamaican actress Audrey Reid rose from the adversity of being born in an inner city Kingston neighborhood to become a star. The "Dancehall Queen" has appeared in numerous plays and films. Now she's among the outstanding performers featured in Caribbean Today's "Women In Business", pages 14-16.

COVID CRISIS

~ The novel coronavirus has spread rapidly across the globe, infecting more than a million people and killing thousands. Caribbean nationals in the U.S. have not escaped COVID-19's wrath. The pandemic has:

- Grounded travel between the U.S. and the Caribbean, **page 4**
- Put the lives of Caribbean Americans on the frontline – including medical professionals - in danger, **page 7**
- Disrupted the lifestyle of people and cost millions of jobs, **page 9**
- Shut down sporting competitions worldwide – including the Penn Relays and Olympic Games - denying Caribbean athletes a chance to shine, **page 12**

ALSO ...

- Slowed down U.S. immigration enforcement, **page 2**
- Forced the U.S. government to spend more than \$2 trillion to compensate for the losses, some of which will benefit Caribbean nationals, **page 3.**

INSIDE

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BRIEFS

Haiti names new prime minister

President Jovenel Moise last month named Environment Minister Jouthe Joseph Haiti's new prime minister, replacing Jean Michel Lapin.

Moise said Joseph is being called upon "to form, as soon as possible, a government of openness and consensus, capable of responding to the emergencies of the day." However, Opposition political parties, which have been demanding Moise's resignation, said they would not recognize the new prime minister.

No Guyana election results

Guyana is still waiting for the results of its general and regional elections, held over a month ago in the Caribbean nation.

Up to press time, the official vote-count from the Mar. 2 elections remained unknown, a result of drawn out political and legal battles. The Guyana Elections Commission said it was awaiting

the outcome of the various legal matters at the High Court before it takes any "further actions."

Congresswoman quarantines office

The Brooklyn, New York office of Caribbean American United States Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke has gone into self-quarantine after a staff member tested positive for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) last month.

As a result Clarke, daughter of Jamaican immigrants who represents the predominantly Caribbean 9th Congressional District in Brooklyn, said the office followed guidance from the Atlanta, Georgia-based U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- Compiled from various sources.



COVID-19 cools ICE on Caribbean deportations

GORDON WILLIAMS

Some Caribbean nationals facing deportation and other actions from law enforcement in the United States are getting a reprieve - for now - after the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agreed to "temporarily" scale down those processes as the country battles the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Beginning Mar. 18, ICE said it will only deport unlawful immigrants convicted of crimes or who pose a danger to society.

The decision is part of a plan to cut the volume of deportees to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 to immigrants, the public and ICE agents.

"To ensure the welfare and safety of the general public as well as officers and agents in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic response, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) will temporarily adjust its enforcement posture," a posting on ICE's website stated. "... ICE's highest priorities are to promote life-saving and public safety activities.

"ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) will focus enforcement on public safety risks and individuals subject to mandatory detention based on criminal grounds. For those individuals who do not fall into those categories, ERO will exercise discretion to delay enforcement actions until after the crisis or utilize alternatives to detention, as appropriate," the agency added.

According to ICE, it will also "temporarily permit the filing of Form I-246, 'Application for Stay of Deportation or Removal', through the mail accompanied by money orders, certified funds, or



Pandemic slows immigrant arrests, processing.

requests for fee waivers only."

TARGETS

Currently ICE, has 37,000 immigrants in its custody across the U.S. Hundreds are believed to be Caribbean nationals. More than half of those are believed to have a criminal background, although there is uncertainty how many have committed serious crimes.

However, ICE said it would continue to investigate immigration cases and enforce the laws. Among the areas to still receive the agency's attention are "child exploitation, gangs, narcotics trafficking, human trafficking, human smuggling," ICE noted.

ICE also said it "will not carry out enforcement operations at or near health care facilities, such as hospitals, doctors' offices, accredited health clinics, and emergent or urgent care facilities, except in the most extraordinary of circumstances."

That will enable undocumented immigrants to seek medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic without being arrested.

"Individuals should not avoid seeking medical care be-

cause they fear civil immigration enforcement," ICE noted.

TIMELINE

ICE said it has also revised the timeline for aliens to report for their initial check-in with local field offices. That means some undocumented immigrants will be allowed 60 days after they were released to report. That matter has been a cause for concern to several areas in the U.S., including the City of Miramar, Florida, home to a large Caribbean community. Caribbean American Mayor Wayne Messam last month wrote to ICE asking for suspension of the agency's appointments in the South Florida city due to the the virus.

"In light of the rapid global spread of COVID-19, individuals that report to immigration detention facilities under the custody of ICE are at risk for an outbreak," Messam.

Through Mar. 24, ICE had not confirmed any case of COVID-19 infection among its detainees.



Biden vows support for immigrants if elected president

Former United States Vice President Joe Biden promises to reverse what he believes are some anti-immigrant policies implemented by President Donald Trump, which impact Caribbean and other nationals in the U.S., if elected to replace Trump in the White House.

In a conference call last month attended by Caribbean Today and members of the Black Press Association of Florida (BPAOF), the current Democratic Party frontrunner in the Nov. 2020 presidential race praised immigrants' contribution to the U.S. and outlined the priority of policies he would implement if elected president.

"Immigration reform would be the first bill on my desk," said Biden. "The whole idea that immigrants cost us is wrong. They are building America."

Biden added he would invest in smart border security, increase the number of immigration



Biden

judges to speed up cases and end immigrant family separation. He also said he will support temporary protective status for those unable to return to their home country.

VIRUS

Biden revealed measures he would have taken to tackle the current novel coronavirus pandemic raging in the U.S., which has infected and killed

thousands.

"A person would receive complete coverage concerning anything associated with the coronavirus," he said. "I will also reinstate all cuts made by the Trump administration to Medicare and restore all coverage for Medicaid recipients."

Biden said he would also support a Medicare public option, if an applicant is qualified, and bring down prescription drugs cost.

He blasted voter suppression, an issue which has plagued minority communities in the U.S., including some with heavy Caribbean American populations.

"This is not who we are," he said.

Biden also pledged to support historically black colleges and universities, by providing \$70 billion to them over 10 years, double Pell grants, from \$6,000 to \$12,000.



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Caribbean nationals will get cash relief from U.S. to counter coronavirus, but undocumented left out

GORDON WILLIAMS

Close to half million undocumented Caribbean nationals living in the United States will not benefit from cash relief offered by the government to counter fallout from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

While the \$2 trillion stimulus package approved by the U.S. Congress and signed by President Donald Trump on Mar. 27 offers financial aid to legal residents who fall into a certain income group - including \$1,200 for individuals, \$2,400 for couples and \$500 per child - there is no direct payout planned for those who live in the U.S. without legal authorization.

The U.S. government stimulus is aiming to ease financial stress for residents hit hard by the virus, especially those who have lost their jobs and businesses and are faced with dwindling resources. Government spokespersons said the first payments of the cash relief may not get to recipients before next month. However, Caribbean nationals know the check should, literally, be in the mail.

"This will be a big help if I get laid off," a Caribbean American man from North Carolina told *Caribbean Today*. "The

money will come in handy."

FRINGES

Yet while there will be a silver lining in the darkening clouds of COVID-19 hanging over Caribbean nationals in the U.S., those undocumented could be pushed further to the outer fringes of normal society. An estimated 475,000 Caribbean nationals, already living in fear of being caught and deported, are among the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. Most fall into the government's income bracket to receive cash relief. Yet it's unlikely they'll get money, although many work in vital industries and pay taxes. Unauthorized U.S. residents are generally not eligible for federal aid.

"It's undocumented workers that are still in the fields, still in the factories, still the janitors in the buildings, still looking for work as day laborers," S.G. Sarmiento, campaign director for the National Day Laborer Organizing Network, told *CNN* last month.

Estimates by the Tax Policy Center indicate about 90 percent of U.S. residents, a huge chunk of Caribbean nationals among them, will qualify for full or partial relief payments. Quali-

cation will be determined by federal income tax returns filed with the government. The deadline for filing taxes in 2020 has been moved from April 15 to July 15.

THRESHOLD

Payments will be not be made to individuals making more than \$99,000 a year and will be phased out for persons with an adjusted gross income of more than \$75,000. Caribbean nationals are in that grouping as well.

"I won't be getting any money," a Jamaican-born attorney living in Maryland said last month. "I guess I make too much."

Caribbean nationals who choose to receive tax returns through direct deposit are likely to get stimulus payments sooner than those who request their returns via paper check.

The stimulus package also includes boosts for small and large businesses in the form of low interest loans, possible grants and extended paid leave for employees who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Loans will also be available to large corporations, plus funding for medical equipment to fight the pandemic.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

U.S. sending ships to Caribbean on anti-illegal drug trade mission

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The administration of United States President Donald Trump is sending warships to the Caribbean claiming it is an effort to stop the illegal drug trade.

The move, announced by Trump on April 1, came a week after the U.S. charged Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and other senior officials in the country with "narco-terrorism". It accused them of flooding the U.S. with cocaine and using drugs as a weapon to undermine the health of Americans.

A reward of \$15 million has also been offered for information leading to Maduro's arrest.

"We must not let the drug cartels exploit the (coronavirus) pandemic to threaten American lives," said Trump in making the announcement at the White House.

"Today, the United States is launching enhanced counter-narcotics operations in the Western Hemisphere to protect the American people from the deadly scourge of illegal narcotics."

PARTNERSHIP

Trump said the U.S. is co-operating with 22 nations, enabling the U.S. Southern Command to "increase surveillance, disruption and seizures of drug



Trump

shipments and provide additional support for eradication efforts which are going on right now at a record pace.

"We're deploying additional Navy destroyers, combat ships, aircraft and helicopters, Coast Guard cutters and Air Force surveillance aircraft, doubling our capabilities in the region."

The U.S. deployment came two days after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo offered to lift crippling sanctions against Venezuela if Maduro and Opposition Leader Juan Guaidó agreed to a power-sharing deal. Under the U.S. plan, Maduro would step aside and a transitional council would govern until fresh elections.

The Venezuelan govern-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

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GROUNDED: Virus pandemic stalls U.S.-Caribbean travel, some stranded

GORDON WILLIAMS

Caribbean nationals in the United States have been warned not to leave the country as the U.S. government ramps up efforts to stave off the rapidly spreading and deadly novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The U.S. State Department on Mar. 19 raised its travel alert to Level 4: Do Not Travel, which urges “U.S. citizens to avoid all international travel due to the global impact of COVID-19.”

For Caribbean nationals eager to go to the region, that meant they would likely stay put in the U.S. Dozens of seasonal hotel workers, for example, were last month left stranded at an airport in Atlanta, Georgia after missing the Mar. 24 cut-off date to return to Jamaica.

However, many Caribbean nationals in the U.S. had started to cancel plans to visit the region weeks before governments announced clampdowns on travel last month. They were aware they could contract the virus in the Caribbean, which has reported dozens of infections and multiple deaths. Several social media sites carried videos of near-empty airlines on their way to the Caribbean.

“(Caribbean nationals) are fearful of not being able to come back into the U.S. if they travel to the Caribbean (under Level 4),” explained Jamaican American Earl Forbes, a New York-based travel agent.

“People have also been changing their mind on travel to the Caribbean because of the measures implemented by the Caribbean countries.”

SPREAD

COVID-19 has spread to all 50 states in the U.S. and more than 200 countries across the globe. Hundreds of thousands have been infected and thousands killed by COVID-19.

Caribbean nationals living in the U.S. have expressed caution about travel to the region, especially since several countries there have warned them to stay away as well.

“Right now, because of the different U.S. measures and Caribbean countries’ measures, they cancel trips to the Caribbean right away,” said Forbes.

“They don’t want to run the risk of being quarantined in the Caribbean. Plus the attitude in almost all the Caribbean countries is they are not allowing foreigners to come in.”



-File Photograph

People scrambled to get home, but for some it was too late.

On Mar. 17 Guyana announced the closure of its international airports for 14 days. Effective Mar. 21, Jamaica shut down its air and seaports “to incoming passenger traffic” for 14 days. On Mar. 26, Antigua and Barbuda closed the V.C. Bird International Airport to flights from North America and Europe.

DIFFICULTY

For those already in the region, the Level 4 alert meant they could have difficulty returning to the U.S. Several Caribbean

nationals have been quarantined in the region following their arrival from the U.S., United Kingdom and other countries. The U.S. government has also informed U.S. residents abroad to stay where they are as well.

“Many countries are experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks and implementing travel restrictions and mandatory quarantines, closing borders, and prohibiting non-citizens from entry with little advance notice,” the Level 4 travel alert noted.

Infections in the Caribbean

have spiked upwards over a short period of time. In Jamaica, for example, the number of coronavirus cases was one or two on Mar. 10. By month-end, the nation had recorded at least 30 cases and one death.

However, five Caribbean nations were listed among the 20 safest in the world in the event of a pandemic. The **Miami Herald** newspaper in the U.S. recently credited Jamaica and Puerto Rico for quick, effective steps to restrict the COVID-19 spread.



AGs fight Trump’s bid to undermine U.S. asylum for Caribbean immigrants

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A coalition of 19 attorneys general from around the United States has challenged the administration of President Donald Trump’s efforts to potentially undermine asylum protections for thousands of Caribbean and other immigrants.

In an amicus brief supporting the plaintiffs in *U.T. v. Barr*, the coalition pushed back against an interim final rule in which it said the U.S. government is “effectively ignoring asylum

claims by sending people - many of whom are fleeing violence and persecution - to third countries that have signed asylum cooperative agreements with the federal government.

“Not only does the rule harm asylum-seekers, but it deprives states of the valuable economic contributions made by immigrants - including asylees and asylum-seekers - who join workforces across the country, start entrepreneurial ventures, and pay

millions of dollars in taxes each year,” the coalition noted in a statement.

NO COMPASSION

New York Attorney General Letitia James, who is leading the coalition fight, said “the president and his administration are once again showing their lack of compassion and humanity by endangering the safety of asylum-seekers fleeing for their lives.

“Instead of making it harder for immigrants to flee persecution, danger, and great peril, the administration should be welcoming these individuals, who provide extraordinary contributions to America’s culture and economy,” she said. “Our coalition will continue fighting for these asylum-seekers and the founding principles of our nation which have always welcomed immigrants.”



James

In the amicus brief, filed with the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, the coalition highlighted the “irreparable harms” the rule will have on states and asylum-seekers.

THREAT

“In particular, the rule threatens the states’ economies, undermines state-funded legal service

programs and contravenes the states’ interests in keeping families together,” said the coalition, stating that “welcomes thousands of asylum-seekers each year, adding that “the rule directly threatens these individuals by forcing them into dangerous circumstances in third countries that are not equipped to handle their claims.”

The amicus brief is the most recent in a number of actions James said she has taken to safeguard asylum protections for Caribbean and other immigrants. In February, James fought a similar Trump administration rule that will bar thousands of people from asylum if they do not apply in a third country while en route to the U.S.

- Edited from CMC.



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U.S. sending ships to Caribbean on anti-illegal drug trade mission

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

ment, has, however, called the deployment a “diversion” from the current pandemic spreading around the U.S. and the world.

Venezuela has experienced economic collapse. Inflation was 800,000 percent last year. Close to five million people have left the country.

Guaidó, who has accused

Maduro of being unfit for office, has won the support of the U.S. and European Union.

- Edited from CMC.



Caribbean nationals will get cash relief from U.S. to counter coronavirus, but undocumented left out

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

However, the stimulus package did not cover additional access to emergency medical

care and testing for the virus for immigrants without legal permanent residence status in the U.S. They include enrollees in the Deferred Action Childhood

Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) programs.



~ A CARIBBEAN TODAY SPECIAL FEATURE FOCUSING ON COVID-19

How, where can you pick up the novel coronavirus?

Scientists have shown that airborne particles could spread the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), at least in certain settings.

Airborne particles are not the same as respiratory droplets. They are much smaller and linger in the air. Scientists say they can travel long distances and can be breathed into the lungs.

Respiratory droplets tend to



Sneezing is one way the virus is passed on.

be far bigger, but travel shorter distances before falling to the ground.

There's likely low risk of infection via aerosols for the average person. But they can stay suspended in the air for several hours and are a major reason medical workers are at high risk.

Once in the air, the particles can be dispersed by air currents from ventilation or fans, which help them move beyond their immediate space. Other activities, such as walking and door opening, can also further facilitate particle travel.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

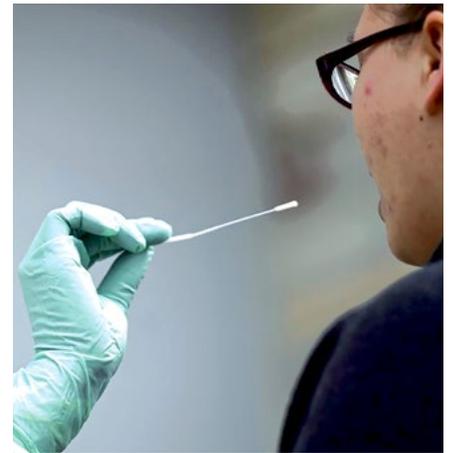
Florida testing for COVID-19

Several entities in Florida are offering testing for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Below is a partial list of those offering the service:

The City of Miami, Florida has loosened age requirements for its drive-through testing at Charles Hadley Park and its in-home testing service for homebound residents. Both testing services are now open to residents ages 45 and older who are experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19. Testing is by appointment only. Call **305-960-5050** to request an appointment. For updates on the city's response to COVID-19, visit www.miamigov.com/coronavirus.

Broward Health is extending mobile, drive-through testing. To register, call **954-320-5730** between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. to receive further instructions.

Community Health of South Florida, Inc. (CHI) will test its patients at its Doris Ison Health Center between 9 a.m. and noon Monday through Friday via a drive through set up. Patients should call **305-252-4820** before



Several entities are offering tests.

visiting the center.

The Amelia Earhart Park in the City of Hialeah is now a COVID-19 drive-through testing center for Northwest Dade residents ages 65 or older who are experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Testing is done Monday through Saturday from **9 a.m. to 5 p.m.** Residents can call **305-COVID19 (305-268-4319)** to schedule an appointment.

- Compiled from various sources.



New terms define novel coronavirus pandemic

A new set of words and terms have spread alongside the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). It's important to understand what they mean. Here are some definitions:

Community spread – Cases of the virus that have an unknown origin and cannot be traced to international travel or known contact with someone who is sick.

Essential jobs – These are required to keep society running. Employees who are required to report to work, even when everyone else has been ordered

to stay home. Generally includes hospital staff, law enforcement, people who work at gas stations, grocery stores and pharmacies.

Flatten the curve – Slowing the spread of the disease because if everyone gets sick at once it will overwhelm the hospital system.

Incubation period – The amount of time between contracting a virus and showing symptoms. For COVID-19, this is between two and 14 days. Those infected can spread the disease before they show symptoms.

Immunocompromised – A person whose immune system has been weakened to the point their body may not be able to fight off normal illnesses, let alone a serious one like COVID-19.

Isolation – Separates people who are sick with COVID-19 from others in order to stop the spread of the disease.

Lockdown – When all nonessential activities get shut down, with nonessential employees being ordered to work from home.

Mild symptoms – For (CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

COVID-19: What is it?

COVID-19 is the specific illness related to the current epidemic.

The acronym, provided by the World Health Organization, stands for "coronavirus disease 2019", referring to the year the virus was first detected. The name of the virus is SARS-CoV-2.

The global COVID-19 outbreak is considered to be a pandemic, meaning it affects a wider scale than an epidemic.

MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) is another type of coronavirus. You may hear this viral respiratory illness mentioned along with SARS. In both instances, the acronyms themselves refer to the illnesses, while MERS-CoV or SARS-CoV refers specifically to the physical viruses.

The word "novel" means

'Coronavirus Self-checker' bot

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is offering an online "Coronavirus Self-checker" for people concerned they may have symptoms of the disease.

The CDC says its bot, available on CDC's website, is to help users make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care and "is not intended for the diagnosis or treatment of disease or other conditions, including COVID-19."

The electronic guide introduces itself as "Clara" on the CDC's website. Clara asks a series of questions to establish the



A new virus is spreading.

"new". A novel coronavirus is a strain that hasn't been detected in humans before. The virus responsible for the current epidemic is often called the novel coronavirus.

Visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov.

- Edited from CNN.



level of illness being experienced by the user or the person they are asking questions on behalf of. It also establishes their location, whether they are in a long-term care facility and if they have been in contact with someone with COVID-19.

Recommendations range from calling 911 immediately to staying at home and calling their health care provider within 24 hours. Clara also points to the relevant state's health department for further advice.

- Edited from CNN.



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SPRING HEALTH



~ A CARIBBEAN TODAY SPECIAL FEATURE FOCUSING ON COVID-19

WARNING SIGNS: Symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if infected

What are the telling signs that you may have the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19?

The main symptoms can appear anywhere from two to 14 days after exposure to the virus, according to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Here's what you need to know about possible symptoms:

• FEVER

Average daily temperature is 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit (37 degrees Celsius), but it goes up and down during the day. So 99.0 degrees or 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit is

not a fever. Take your temp in the late afternoon and early evening.

• COUGH

Coughing is another key symptom, but it's not just any cough that indicates possible COVID-19 infection. It should be a dry cough that you feel in your chest, which is bothersome, coming from the breastbone or sternum.

• SHORTNESS OF BREATH

Shortness of breath can be a serious manifestation of COVID-19. It can occur on its own, without a cough. If your chest becomes tight or you begin to feel

as if you cannot breathe deeply enough to get a good breath, that's a sign to act, experts say.

If the shortness of breath is severe enough, you should call 911.

CDC also lists emergency warning signs for COVID-19 as a "persistent pain or pressure in the chest", "bluish lips or face" - which indicates a lack of oxygen - and any sudden mental confusion or lethargy and inability to rouse. Get medical attention immediately.

• FLU/COLD SYMPTOMS

COVID-19 symptoms can

resemble the flu, including headaches, digestive issues, body aches and fatigue, which can be severe. Other symptoms can resemble a cold or allergies, such as a runny nose, sore throat and sneezing. A possible sign you might have COVID-19 is if your symptoms, especially shortness of breath, don't improve after a week or so but actually worsen.

• WHAT TO DO

The current guidance - and this may change - is that if you have symptoms that are similar to the cold and the flu and these are mild symptoms to moderate

symptoms, stay at home and try to manage them with rest, hydration and the use of Tylenol. That advice does not apply if you are over age 60 or if you are pregnant. Anyone with concerns about coronavirus should call their healthcare provider, according to the CDC.

In general, COVID-19 infections are riskier if you have underlying health conditions, such as diabetes, chronic lung disease or asthma.

- Edited from CNN.



How, where can you pick up the novel coronavirus?

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

Respiratory droplets land quickly after being dispelled from an infected person.

CONTACT

Is airborne transmission the most likely method of getting COVID-19? No. If so, there would be higher numbers of infected. COVID-19 appears to spread to roughly two to 2.5 people for every one person who is infected.

The most common mode of transmission is still theorized to be through coming in contact with respiratory droplets. The transmission of respiratory droplets

can occur when they are either coughed into the hands or onto a high-touch surface, and then transferred by the hand to the nose or mouth of the recipient.

Coronaviruses can live a few days on hard surfaces, and do well on skin. They do less well on porous surfaces like cardboard or fabric.

As an aerosol gas, suspended in air, the virus could hang around for up to three hours. On plastic and stainless steel, the virus was viable for up to three days, experts said. The virus seems to disintegrate a little faster on stainless steel than on plastic.

Researchers found that the

virus sticks around for much less time on copper — about four hours. Paper, it was suggested, is also probably less likely to host the virus.

People can contract COVID-19 just about anywhere. This is why officials urge people to stay home.

Whether a given surface is infected depends on who walked by and coughed or sneezed. Persons coughing or sneezing may not know they're passing around the virus.

Information compiled from multiple sources, including Huffington Post.



New terms define novel coronavirus pandemic

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

COVID-19, these can be misleading. A mild case of the virus may seem like a cold or it could include symptoms as serious as fever, cough and pneumonia — but not to the point you need to be hospitalized. Roughly 80 percent of COVID-19 cases are believed to be mild. The rest are "serious" or "critical".

Pandemic — A sharp increase in the number of people sick with the disease, which has spread globally.

Quarantine — Used for people not sick with COVID-19, but have been exposed to someone who is. It keeps people who might get sick separated from

others.

Social distancing — Keeping a distance of at least six feet from other people and avoiding gatherings and unnecessary travel to limit the spread of the disease.

Stay in place — Also called "shelter in place", this means no one is allowed to leave their home, except to run errands such as grocery and pharmacy shopping.

Ventilator — A machine that moves breathable air into and out of the lungs for patients unable to breathe sufficiently on their own. The most critical COVID-19 patients need ventilators.





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DANGER: Caribbean American nurses risk all in virus fight

Nearly 30 years ago, Jay* left her home in a Kingston, Jamaica garrison community for the United States cloaked in uncertainty by what lay ahead.

Life “a yard” had been rough. Jay bounced between jobs and sold small items while raising four, occasionally five, children. Heading to New York City (NYC), she left behind the fear of violence - from gangs and law enforcement - that left her stressed over the kids’ future.

In NYC, she returned to school and became a nurse. Her children joined her. Two daughters followed her career path. But neither inner-city Kingston, where the sound of gunshots put Jay to bed and jolted her from morning slumber, nor NYC’s tough streets prepared her and daughters for the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

“It’s super, super dangerous,” said Jay, who works at a hospital in the Bronx flooded by COVID-19 patients. “Never seen anything like it.”

By the end of March, New York’s COVID-19 infections were close to 70,000, with the death toll approaching 1,500. It will get worse, according to Governor Andrew Cuomo.

DANGER

The danger isn’t just to the lives of sick patients, although shortage of tests for the virus and



- File photograph

Not all medical staff have personal protective equipment.

ventilation equipment to treat them was worrisome enough. Jay is aware of make-shift field hospitals, built in Central Park, stadiums and elsewhere to accommodate patient overflow. She knows about refrigerated trucks used as morgues as the death toll mounts. Jay’s “scared” lack of protective gear, including masks, gloves and gowns, has put medical staff, like her and her daughters, at high risk too.

“They (the hospital) have no personal protective equipment (PPE), none,” she said. “They’re telling me we’re to work with COVID-19 patients without masks.”

Late last month, a nurse at Jackson Health System in Miami, Florida died from compli-

cations of contracting COVID-19. Another nurse with Caribbean roots reported she had to secretly get a test for COVID-19 at her NYC hospital after feeling symptoms and being denied a test by her bosses. Days later, the nurse told a television network, her test returned a positive result for the virus, meaning she had been tending to patients while infected. She is now under quarantine.

Positive COVID-19 tests had been recorded for a dozen of nurses at the University of Illinois by the end of March. Overseas, more than 60 doctors in Italy had reportedly died from the virus. New York Congresswoman Grace Meng echoed Jay’s desperation over COVID-19’s impact in America’s largest city in a Mar. 30 **Twitter** post.

“A nurse at my elmhurst hospital ... called crying,” Meng tweeted. “She told me they cry everyday bc they know they’re gonna die. They’re begging.”

Medical staff normally uses equipment like masks and gloves once per patient, then dump them. According to Jay, staff is

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

Windrush review blasts U.K.’s deal for Caribbean immigrants

LONDON, England – A new report has found that Britain’s Home Office showed “ignorance and thoughtlessness” on the issue of race in relation to the people who came from the Caribbean and other Commonwealth countries during the period dubbed the “Windrush” era.

The review of the Windrush era, released last month, followed a declaration by London that some of those who came to the United Kingdom were wrongly told they were here illegally.

The independent report sharply criticized Britain’s Conservative government for the way it treated long-term United Kingdom residents who were wrongly caught up in a government drive to reduce illegal immigration.

The report said the U.K. Home Office exhibited “institutional ignorance and thoughtlessness” towards the issue of race and the history of the mostly Caribbean immigrants involved that are “consistent with some definitions of institutional racism.”

It said that here was a “profound institutional failure,”



Those who came on the ship were insulted, a report stated.

which turned thousands of people’s lives upside down, and that warnings about the “hostile environment” policy were “not heeded.”

APOLOGY

Wendy Williams, the lead writer of the report and a former senior police officer, called on the government to provide an “unqualified apology” to those affected who belonged to the “Windrush generation” named for the ship Empire Windrush, which in 1948 brought hundreds of Caribbean immigrants to Britain.

The Caribbean nationals had come to Britain, which was then seeking nurses, railway workers and others to help it rebuild after (CONTINUED ON PAGE 8)

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CARIBBEAN POT: Ackees Jamaican Cuisine serving up grandma's cooking

DAWN A. DAVIS

Old fashioned Caribbean cooking is becoming a welcomed addition to busy South Miami.

Ackees Jamaican Cuisine, a full-service restaurant opened last November in Cutler Bay, is serving dishes reminiscent of grandma's cooking back in the day, back on the island.

"The authenticity of what we are trying to bring back to the community is in the eating," owner Tousant Taylor explained to **Caribbean Today** recently.

"In the ackee and salt fish, the calaloo and salt fish, yam and banana you can actually smell and taste the coconut oil. It reminds us of our grandmothers' cooking on the three stones with the dutch pot."

Taylor, now retired, was a successful financial planner with his own practice for decades. Back then, he worked with fledgling small businesses, helping them manage assets. He also managed restaurants in Miami. So Ackees, while a new challenge, is not an unfamiliar venture.

VOID

The restaurant is located in the bustling business district, dotted with banks, car dealerships, insurance companies, fast-food restaurants and nearby Southland Mall. It's an area Tay-

lor knows well and, he believes, a locale in need of good Caribbean food.

So he chose the area to fill a void, explaining that before Hurricane Andrew in 1992 there were several good Jamaican restaurants frequented by the community. After the hurricane many residents moved north, to Fort Lauderdale, forcing some businesses to close or relocate as well.

According to Taylor, there are currently small take-out Caribbean eateries, but no full-service establishments in the area. So he scouted real estate and finally closed on his current location: 19349 South Dixie Highway. With a seating capacity of 88 in 2,500 square feet, Ackees offers dine-in, take out and delivery through Uber Eats.

"Full service means from you walk in the door you'll hear 'welcome to Ackees,'" Taylor explained. "We seat you, we give you a menu, we have servers who take your order and take care of you. And, importantly, everything on the menu is available all day, everyday."

"On Sundays we open from 8 a.m. with our breakfast specials like ackee and salt fish, boiled banana, dumplings, cornmeal porridge. We also recently added an American buffet to the Sunday breakfast specials, including grits, hash browns, scrambled



Taylor

eggs, sausages and it has started to take off."

AFFORDABLE

In addition to flavorful dishes, keeping prices at a reasonable cost is a key part of the formula that is driving business at Ackees. Taylor explained the economy is putting a strain on families and, for that reason he is trying to keep Ackees' meal prices affordable for the average family.

For example, his \$5 lunch specials are complete meals, including drinks. On offer are jerk, brown stew or curried chicken, curried goat, or oxtail - all available with rice and peas or boiled food and vegetables. Ackees is also offering new dishes, called

the Hungry Man Box. This \$3.75 meal is a smaller version of the \$5 meal that also comes with a drink.

Patrons are picking favorites.

"Oxtail and jerk chicken are our best sellers," said Taylor. "We smoke and grill our jerk, using a particular charcoal because of the flavor it gives the food. We use quality products, and will not make any changes because something is cheaper. It's about keeping the food authentic and maintaining quality."

CHEF

The taste has a lot to do with the person behind the stove, Taylor added. Chef Sadikie has

been with the restaurant since its inception. The story of how Taylor found him is inspiring.

"One day I was driving around the neighborhood and noticed a man with a sign that said 'Jerk Pork' with an arrow pointing down the road," he recalled. "I turned down the street and met a gentleman selling jerk out of his house. So, I tasted his food and it was really good."

"I told him I was looking for a chef and invited him to come for an interview at my new restaurant. He said he has never worked in a restaurant, but has been cooking with his family and going to jerk fests for the past 10 years."

"While talking to him cars started to line up at his house. So, that told me that this young man had something going for him. He did show up for the interview and I hired him to be our chef."

"I'm glad I did," said Taylor.

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



Windrush review blasts U.K.'s deal for Caribbean immigrants

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

the devastation of World War II. They and subsequent Caribbean migrants came from British colonies or ex-colonies and had an automatic right to settle in the U.K.

Williams, who is also a lawyer, said "members of the Windrush generation and their children have been poorly served by this country."

"They had every right to be here and should never have been caught in the immigration net," she said.

Speaking in the House of Commons, Home Secretary Priti Patel, said there was "there is nothing I can say today which will undo the pain, the suffering and the misery inflicted upon the Windrush generation, adding

"what I can do is say that on behalf of this and successive governments, I am truly sorry for the actions that spanned decades and I'm sorry that people's trust has been betrayed."

Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott told the Home Secretary that "people will believe her apology when they see her genuinely seek to implement the recommendations in the review."

INSULT

Abbott, whose mother was a member of the Windrush generation, said for those affected "it isn't necessarily the money, the inconvenience or the tragedy of being deported, it is the insult to people who always believed they were British."

Theresa May, who was

prime minister when the scandal came to light, added her own apology to the Home Secretary's.

"They (the Windrush generation) should not have been treated in this way," she said.

The 275-page report noted that the "root cause" of the scandal can be traced back to legislation of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, some of which had "racial motivations." Williams wrote that "race clearly played a part in what occurred" and that some failings could be indicators of "indirect discrimination."

"The factors that I identified demonstrate an institutional ignorance and thoughtlessness towards the issue of race and the history of the Windrush generation."

"These aspects were among

those included in the elements of the definition of institutional racism considered in the Macpherson inquiry (which looked into the murder of Stephen Lawrence)."

Williams said she had spoken to former home secretaries Amber Rudd - who resigned over the affair in 2018 - May, Alan Johnson and Jacqui Smith.

Among 30 recommendations, the review said the Home Office should set up a full review of the hostile environment policy, appoint a migrants commissioner, develop a program of cultural change for the department and establish a race advisory board.

- Edited from CMC.



DANGER: Caribbean American nurses risk all in virus fight

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)

being asked to wear a mask for a shift, wash it off, place it in a plastic bag, then use it on the next shift.

At the end of last month, Cuomo predicted PPEs would still be in short supply. Ventilators too. On Mar. 29, Mayor Bill deBlasio predicted NYC would run out of medical supplies in a week. That could leave Jay, her daughters and other medical staff more exposed.

WORRY

Tee*, one of Jay's daughters who works in a NYC hospital emergency room and lives with her husband and two children, is worried too. She suffers from asthma, a pre-existing condition which makes exposure to COVID-19 even more dangerous. But she turns up for work when she's called and able. The sight of patients in desperate need is her motivation.

"They're just dying in the

ED (emergency department)," Tee said.

By the end of March, New York's death toll from coronavirus had soared past 1,000. Jay's compatriots have not escaped infection.

"Caribbean people in large numbers are getting (the virus) too," she said.

On her last shift, towards the end of March, Tee said she saw a Jamaican woman struggling on a ventilator. It's the same story in most places in the U.S. But Ca-

ibbean nationals remain on the frontline of the anti-COVID-19 fight.

"You get scared," said Jay, "but you just have to go to work. People need help. It's what we're trained to do. There's no choice."

- Gordon Williams. * Names changed on request to protect identity of the healthcare workers who were not authorized to speak on record.



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Publisher

MARILYN CHIN
Account Executive

LORNA ASENCOR
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Production/Graphic Design

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Trump uses COVID-19 pandemic to take fresh immigration action

The administration of United States President Donald Trump has announced several immigration actions as the country copes – belatedly – with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trump and his cohorts seemed almost gleeful late last month that they will now be able to enact some of their more restrictive policies yet.

1. Immediate repatriation and asylum seeker ban

The U.S. took the step of barring entry to migrants illegally crossing the southern border, as well as blocking entry to asylum seekers. The Department of Homeland Security Acting Secretary Chad Wolf says the DHS will now suspend entry of all migrants “seeking to enter the U.S. without proper travel documentation” at both the northern and southern border.

Immigrants who are apprehended at the border will either be quickly removed or repatriated to their country of origin.

As Trump gleefully put it: The border will be sealed off “mostly, and even beyond, but mostly during this global pandemic.” Anyone without documents along the southwest border would immediately be removed without any process.

2. Global visa suspension

As of Mar. 18, the U.S. State Department announced it has cancelled all routine immigrant and non-immigrant visa appointments, effectively prohibiting new authorizations to travel to the U.S. Only emergency appointments will be allowed.

3. Some - not all - deportations halted

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) has said it will not cease arrests and deportations, but will instead focus enforcement on public safety risks and individuals subject to mandatory detention based on criminal grounds. For those individuals who do not fall into those categories, the agency says it will exercise discretion to delay enforcement actions until after the COVID-19 crisis or utilize alternatives to detention, as appropriate. ICE has also not indicated it intends to pause flights. It will still detain individuals. It's also screening detainees for a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher before they are placed on planes and sent back to their country of origin.



- File photograph
U.S. immigration enforcement has not ceased, even as the novel coronavirus rages.

4. USCIS in-person interviews suspended

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has suspended all routine in-person services, including biometrics, legalization and naturalization interviews and swearing in of citizens.

5. ICE halts social visits to detainees

ICE has announced a halt to social visits by family members, attorneys, advocates or anyone else to detainees at its national detention facilities.

6. H-2A and H-2B visas

The State Department resumed processing H-2A and H-2B visas, but this is limited to returning workers who can have a visa interview waived.

7. Pause on refugee admissions

The U.S. government has paused all refugee admissions through at least April 6.

8. Some immigration courts closed

On Mar. 18, the Executive Office of Immigration Review announced it had postponed all hearings for non-detained immigrants and closed 10 additional immigration courts.

9. In person check-ins canned

As of Mar. 17, the ICE has suspended in-person check-ins by immigrants considered a “low priority” for removal. The agency said it would give newly released immigrants at the border 60 days to check-in rather than 30.

10. Unaccompanied children

The Office of Refugee Resettlement said it has stopped placing unaccompanied alien children in homes or shelters in California or Washington beginning Mar. 10.

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



Coronavirus pandemic disrupts Caribbean life in U.S., region

GORDON WILLIAMS

No joke: On April 1, about 1,000 persons died from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the United States.

The American Dream is turning into a horrific nightmare for Caribbean immigrants and others in the U.S., their lives disrupted by the fallout of the deadly COVID-19 outbreak and consumed by fear and near-panic.

The pandemic has also forced Caribbean countries into drastic action to protect their nationals, implementing quarantines, curfews and travel bans that prevent some from leaving and bar others who want to return home.

Up to press time, COVID-19 infections worldwide were had moved beyond a million, with at least 51,000 deaths. In the U.S., those infected surged past 350,000 and nearly 10,000 deaths.

On Mar. 13 President Donald Trump declared a national emergency in the U.S., after initially downplaying the threat of COVID-19. Up to Mar. 31, the president had not implemented a nationwide stay-in-place order.

By Mar. 26 the U.S. had become the country with the most known cases of COVID-19, surpassing in infections and deaths China, where COVID-19 was first detected late last year. Italy has recorded the most deaths.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, a key member of Trump's coronavirus task force, has predicted the U.S. could – in a best case scenario – record hundreds of thousands of infections and up to 240,000 deaths.

CHANGE

The Caribbean has not escaped the virus. Dozens of infections have been reported throughout the region, with multiple deaths by Mar. 31.

Meanwhile, Caribbean nationals have also been, like other residents of the U.S., forced into a dramatically altered lifestyle, confronted with forced shut-downs of businesses and schools.

By press time, more than 90 percent of U.S. residents was under official orders to stay home. They face widespread restrictions on crowd gatherings, which rules out attendance to church, sporting events, parties and other types of away-from-home activities. Big city U.S. streets, once bustling with activity now look like ghost towns. Caribbean consulates closed to walk-in traffic. Caribbean nationals have now become more familiar with phrases like “social distancing” and “flattening the curve”.

“The best thing we can be doing is to stay at home,” Oliver Mair, Jamaica's consul general in Miami, which has responsibility for 13 states in the southern U.S.,



The pandemic has hit most places across the globe.

plus The Bahamas and Cayman Islands, advised. “... Tan a yuh yard.”

By late last month the bottom was dropping out of the U.S. economy. The stock market tumbled. Thousands of Caribbean nationals are among the victims of massive layoffs as companies slashed staff to keep pace with shuttering businesses.

On Mar. 26, the government announced 3.3 million new unemployment claims in one week (Mar. 15-21), the highest number of people losing their jobs in a week in U.S. history. The number catapulted to 6.65 million claims for Mar. 22-28. U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell declared last month the U.S. “may well be in a recession.”

Legal Caribbean immigrants, like others however, will likely get some relief from a \$2 trillion government stimulus package authorized late last month.

‘NIGHTMARE’

Caribbean nationals in the U.S. also face the horror of lack

of adequate testing, equipment – such as ventilators – and medication for COVID-19 treatment as hospital's overflowed with critically ill patients. There were widespread shortages of equipment for medical staff as well, and doctors and nurses worried they'd be infected while tending to patients. Some have died. Meanwhile, people hesitated to conduct routine tasks, like going to the grocery store.

Fear over the size and scope of the pandemic ramped up as March ended. A severe backlog of testing meant no one knew how widespread COVID-19 really is. That uncertainty, plus absence of an immediate solution like a vaccine, further shook the foundation of the Dream.

“This is a nightmare,” said a devastated Jamaican woman who lives in South Florida. “Who knew we would have to live like this?”

The heightening stress seeped into family life. For Caribbean nationals with school-age children, the scramble to (CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

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FAKE NEWS: The Beauty you behold may not be exactly as it seems

The laws of attraction are vital to survival and continuation of most species. Male sees female and likes what he sees. Female sees male and likes what she sees.

It's a pure and honest expression between two entities. Mankind, however, is a different species, a breed apart. We are often confused by what attracts one person to another.



TONY ROBINSON

Far too often we'll see a beautiful woman out with a man who looks like a toad and, despite what the cynics say about her being attracted to his money, there are genuine cases of a real and true attraction. How can this



be? Surely that must rank as a fake.

The fact is, many women

are not driven by an attraction to good looks as most men are and will easily be attracted to a man

who is not tall, dark or handsome.

BALANCE

But the universe knows how to equalize and balance nature. Some women are attracted to power - real or imagined - and will be drawn to any man who exudes such. Is that fake or is it genuine? I say fake, for the attraction is not pure, but based on other factors with an ulterior motive.

Most men do not share that form of attraction and are mainly drawn to beauty. I have seen men chase after models and beauty contestants, but rarely pursue a so-called ugly academic.

What you see in a woman now is not what you get. They have taken fake to a new level. She'll have a full lustrous head of hair, cascading over her shoulders, full breasts, shapely

butt, lashes long and wavy like palm fronds and pale green eyes. Even her calves are shaped like an athlete's. Most men would be attracted to that sort of beauty. But alas, the lass is fake. Still, he'll be drawn to her, take her home. Come the light of morn, he'll get a rude and startling awakening. The green contact lenses are out, the weave or wig is off. So too the fake butt, lashes, stuffed breasts and fake calves.

Then there are men who are deemed to have no looks, yet always seem to attract the finest women. That's because women are also attracted to caring, sensitive, charming men who make them feel special.

But who are we to judge?

seido1yard@gmail.com



Coronavirus pandemic disrupts Caribbean life in U.S., region

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

hire affordable care while they work - even from home - posed only part of problem. Vacations to the Caribbean were abruptly cancelled and those scheduled to travel endured long waits to recover trip expenses.

Scanty shelves in many supermarkets, as families desperately tried to secure basic items like food during the pandemic, also became familiar to Caribbean nationals in the U.S., many who left the region to avoid similar circumstances. Most were willing to follow common

medical advice for protecting themselves from the virus, including regularly washing hands and staying off the street.

Life, they conceded, will be different in the U.S., at least for a while.

"The pandemic has disrupted the lives of all of us," Ram Ali,

Guyana's honorary consul for Florida, told *Caribbean Today* late last month.

TRADITION

Yet some were not immediately ready to ditch longstanding traditions.

"We still gather to play domino games, no virus can stop that," said a Jamaican living in New York in mid-March, just as that state was becoming the epicenter of the pandemic. "But we try and wash our hands before the game."

By the end of March many Caribbean nationals admitted the rapid spread of the virus, mostly through air and touch - causing pain, cough, fever and respiratory illness that can lead to death - had them worried. It tested their fortitude.

"I don't know if we're scared," said Ali. "We're very deeply concerned about our health and the health of family and friends. It's affecting everybody. We have challenges."

The level of concern of Caribbean nationals over the spread and danger of COVID-19 fell in line with the U.S. population overall, meaning it started lukewarm but rapidly heated up. A *HuffPost/YouGov* poll published Mar. 24, showed 88 percent admitted their daily life had changed to some degree. An *Axios/Ispos* poll called the change in American lifestyle during the pandemic "unprecedented."

DECISIONS

Caribbean American policy makers in the U.S. also had to make adjustments during the pandemic.

Wayne Messam, mayor of the City of Miramar, home to a large Caribbean community, late last month appealed to the U.S. Immigration and Customs

Enforcement (ICE) to suspend appointments for immigrants, including those from the Caribbean. Messam said the spread of COVID-19 could risk the health of those with ICE appointments as they waited.

"... The immigration enforcement process as it exists, threatens the well-being of immigrants who have to check-in, the residents of Miramar and Broward County as well as immigration and customs enforcement officers and staff," Messam stated.

Meanwhile, support from the U.S., which many Caribbean nationals in the region rely on heavily, has slowed, according to sources in the shipping industry. One Florida company representative admitted the flow of goods to the Caribbean is steadily drying up.

"People can't go out to buy stuff to ship anymore since the pandemic," the rep told *Caribbean Today* in mid-March.

"Over the past three weeks I am seeing an average of 40 percent (less) in freight for (Caribbean) destinations. You can see (the decline) in the cargo section at the airport. On a busy day like a Monday, you can't find a parking spot. Now there are parking spaces to spare."

As March drew to a close, Caribbean nationals hunkered down in the U.S., bracing against the pandemic's continuous onslaught and predictions of much worse to come. Governors complained about lack of support from the Trump administration, months after COVID-19 took a stranglehold in the U.S. As the nation wobbled, words of encouragement appeared the only comfort.

"At this time ... we say faith over fear," said Mair. "Peace over panic."



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'Miss Lou' lecture series launches in June

The premiere of a lecture series focusing on a Caribbean cultural icon will be held in South Florida.

The "Hon. Louise Bennett-Coverley Memorial Lecture Series", honoring the works of the late Jamaican, is scheduled for **2 p.m. June 20** at the Broward County West Regional Library in Plantation.

Presented by the Louise Bennett-Coverley Heritage Council, the event will be part of the library's Caribbean

Heritage Month celebrations, and feature Jamaican poet Lorna Goodison, recipient of the "Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry - 2019".

The lecture series will offer a forum to examine the influence and significance of West African, European and Asian retentions on, among other things, the cultural and historical make-up of the Caribbean diaspora.

The library is located at 8601 W. Broward Blvd.



Miss Lou

Women writers dominate Caribbean literature prize

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad – Seven women are among nine writers from the Caribbean who have been long-listed for the 2020 OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature.

The winner of the overall prize of \$10,000 will be announced on May 2 during the National Gas Company Bocas Lit Fest here.

The OCM Bocas Prize recognizes books in three genre categories - poetry, fiction and literary non-fiction - published by Caribbean authors in the preceding year.

United States-based Trinidadian Lauren K. Alleyne's "Honeyfish" was commended by the judges for "the refusal of silence this book issues with its references to the dangers faced by the Black body in America" in the poetry category. "Skin Can Hold" by Trinidadian-Scottish poet Vahni Capildeo was called "compelling, dazzling".

In fiction, the judges said Haitian American Edwidge Danticat's "Everything Inside"

"comprises profoundly resonant short stories." In her book, "A Tall History of Sugar", the judges said U.S.-based Jamaican Curdella Forbes



Danticat

"delivers an innovative and poignant novel." In "Moments of Cooperation and Incorporation", Jamaican Erna Brodber offers six connected essays that study links between African Americans and Jamaica between 1782 and 1996. "Shame on Me", by Guyanese Canadian Tessa McWatt, also received praise.

Others on the list include Barbadian Aaron Kamigusha's "Beyond Coloniality" and Richard Georges of the British Virgin Islands' publication "Epiphania".

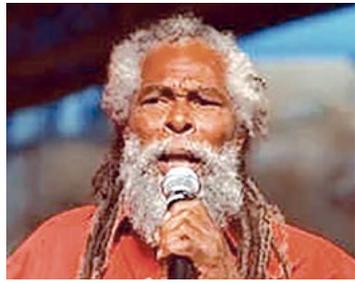
- Edited from CMC.



Legendary Jamaican singer Bob Andy is dead

Singer/songwriter Bob Andy, the voice behind several popular hits in the 1970s including "Young, Gifted and Black" in a duet with Marcia Griffiths, died late last month at his home in Jamaica. He was 77.

Andy, born Keith Anderson, helped to start the group The Paragons in the 1960s. He left



Andy

the group, but penned several well known songs, including "Fire Burning" and "Check It Out". In 1978 he had a starring role in the movie "Children of Babylon".

Andy was awarded Jamaica's Order of Distinction national honor in 2006.



Caribbean carnivals called off due to COVID-19

Two major events in the Caribbean have been called off due to the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

The government of St. Lucia said it has postponed Carnival 2020, which was scheduled for July 15-22, after taking into

account the economic and public health implications associated with the virus.

The United States Virgin Islands (USVI) has also postponed its "Carnival on St. Thomas", scheduled for April 3 to May 4 for the same reasons.

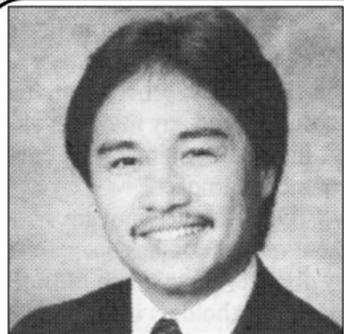
USVI Commissioner of Tourism Joseph Boschulte said the decision was made in keeping with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.



JAMAICAN IDOLS



Jahzan McLaughlin, left, an 18-year-old Jamaican who said she and her mother Zandriann Maye were homeless in the United States, impressed during a recent episode of "American Idol". The two did Clean Bandit's "Rock-A-Bye Baby". Jahzan followed with a solo performance of Demi Lovato's "Warrior". Judge Katy Perry said of Jahzan: "There is something real interesting in your voice." She advanced to the next round of competition.



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FALSE START: Coronavirus shuts down competition for Caribbean stars

GORDON WILLIAMS

The cream of Caribbean athletic talent will not be in action anytime soon following the shut-down of multiple major sporting events this year - in the region and globally - due to the rapid spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

The decisions by Caribbean nations followed lockstep with major sporting organizations after the virus, which started in China and has infected hundreds of thousands, hit the U.S. and more than 200 nations worldwide.

Most countries last month suspended their professional and amateur competitions, in disciplines ranging from track and field, cricket and soccer, all hugely popular with Caribbean nationals.

In the Caribbean, competitions were either cancelled outright or suspended until a later date. They included the regional first class cricket tournament, local soccer leagues and track and field meets.

The Olympic Games, the largest platform to showcase Caribbean talent, particularly in

track and field, was last month suspended until July 23-Aug. 8, 2021 in Japan.

ON THE WAY

Also hit was the Penn Relays in the U.S., which has attracted thousands of Caribbean school and professional stars - plus a massive fan base - for decades.

At first, Jamaica's government asked school athletes, a major attraction at the annual meet in Philadelphia, to withdraw. That was followed by Penn Relays' official announcement on Mar. 16 that the April 23-25 meet, which would have been the 126th staging, was off.

"Based on the current novel coronavirus pandemic, we cannot host an event in late April without putting our participants, spectators, officials, volunteers, and staff at risk," Dr. M. Grace Calhoun, director of recreation and intercollegiate athletics at the University of Pennsylvania, noted in a press release.

The "Penns" website noted organizers "Will look to host a substitute track meet at later date."

Also "postponed until further notice" was the 2020 CARIFTA Games, which features the best of Caribbean track and field stars under age 20. The meet was scheduled for April 10-13 in Hamilton, Bermuda.

Several nations had already held trials to select their teams. However, the 2020 edition was called off, with organizers citing the protection of Caribbean athletes and spectators from the coronavirus as the reason.

"This decision was not taken lightly but in the best interest of all stakeholders against the backdrop of the rapidly evolving situation with regard to the COVID-19 across the globe and supported by the World Health Organization declaring a global pandemic, which has led several countries, regardless of size, political ideology or wealth, to



Regional teams have always been a major attraction at "Penns".

close their borders, cease travel and stop mass gatherings," Mike Sands, president of the North American, Central American and Caribbean Athletic Association (NACAC), explained in a statement.

Meanwhile, Jamaica cancelled its annual ISSA Boys

and Girls Championships for high schools. Known as "Champs", it is possibly the biggest track and field meets of its kind in the world. The 2020 edition was scheduled for late March. The government last month locked down schools across Jamaica.

Track and field wasn't the only sport disrupted. The Caribbean's first class cricket season, for example, was suspended. Trinidad and Tobago's two men's soccer international friendly matches against Canada last month were called off and Jamaica postponed its end-of-March game against Catalonia in Spain in addition to suspending its local premier league.

"This has set us back in a huge way," said Jamaica Football Federation President Michael Ricketts last month, "but it is a pandemic and it is affecting the entire world."



Jamaica's women advance to historic high in soccer ranking

Jamaica's Reggae Girlz, the toast of South Florida's Caribbean American community on their way to the women's World Cup last year in France, have advanced to their highest ever ranking by FIFA, soccer's governing body.

Jamaica late last month moved up one place to 50, the best ranking by a Caribbean nation and the Girlz' best FIFA ranking.

The United States remains the highest ranked nation in the world, followed by Germany and France. The Netherlands and Sweden round out the top five.

Haiti (64th), Trinidad and Tobago (72nd) and Cuba (88th) were the only other Caribbean nations to be ranked in FIFA's top 100. The next ranking is expected in late June.



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BRIEFS

Caribbean women fail in U-20 WC soccer bid

All Caribbean teams which participated in the final round of qualifiers, which began in February and wrapped up last month, failed to advance to soccer's Under-20 World Cup.

The best finishers from the region included quarterfinalists Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. The Dominican Republic and Haiti advanced to semi-finals, but did not make the final, which would have guaranteed a spot in the World Cup.

Windies women bow out T20 World Cup

The West Indies women bowed out of cricket's Twenty20 World Cup, failing to make the semi-finals last month.

West Indies finished third in Group B with three points and a single win. The Caribbean team was the 2016 champion. Host Australia, England, India and South Africa advanced from the group stage.

Caribbean soccer club champs called off

The CONCACAF Caribbean Club Championship, which was scheduled for next month in the Dominican Republic, has been postponed due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Five clubs were scheduled to participate: Arcahaie FC (Haiti), Cibao FC (D.R.), Club Atletico Pantoja (D.R.), Waterhouse FC (Jamaica), and the to-be-confirmed 2020 Caribbean Shield champion. A new date for the tournament will be announced.

FIFA takes control of T&T soccer

Soccer's world governing body FIFA has appointed a normalization committee to run the affairs of the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association (TTFA) in an attempt to restore governance and financial stability to the beleaguered organization.

- Compiled from various sources.



TASTY TREAT: Suriname's pom is delicious on birthdays



In Suriname, pom is a traditional dish made especially around birthdays. Here's how to make it:

INGREDIENTS

- 1 whole chicken (about 2 to 3 lbs.)
- 1 lb. of salt pork or chicken sausage
- 3 lbs. pomtajer or taro root)
- 4 tomatoes – peeled and chopped
- 2 onions, chopped
- 1 bunch flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- 2 cubes chicken bouillon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- juice of 1 orange
- juice of 2 lemons
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed

- 1 habanero (whole)
- 1 tbs. sugar
- 8 tbs. butter, divided
- salt
- pepper

METHOD

Cut the chicken into pieces. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg.

In a pan with three tablespoons of butter, fry the chicken pieces and chicken sausage (sliced) for a few minutes. Set aside.

In the same pan, add three tablespoons of butter and sauté the onions for about eight minutes. Add the tomatoes, garlic and parsley.

Add the chicken and chicken sausages and cover with water. Add the bouillon cubes and the hot pepper. Cook covered over medium low heat for 25 to 30 minutes. Drain the cooking liquid into a bowl and set it aside.

Peel and rinse the pomtajer. Grate the pomtajer by hand or with

a food processor. Mix it with some of the cooking liquid from the meat as well as the orange and lemon juices to make a sticky dough. Add sugar.

Spread half of the pomtajer mixture in a well-greased baking dish. Spread chicken mixture on top and then cover with the rest of pomtajer. Most pom recipes ask for the chicken to be kept with the bones. Removed the bones and cut it into smaller chunks.

Pour the remaining juices over the top, two tablespoons of butter and bake for two hours: One hour covered at 425 F and one hour uncovered at 350 F.

Pom should be done when the top is brown, and a golden-brown juice comes out when poked with a knife.

- Edited from *News Americas*.



British Virgin Islands' favorite is fish and fungi

One of the most popular dishes in the British Virgin Islands is fish and fungi. Here's to make it:

INGREDIENTS

The fish

- 2 1/4 lbs. firm white fish (cleaned and limed)
- 1/2 tsp. Accent seasoning
- 1 cup water
- 1 tsp. margarine
- 1 medium onion, cut into large chunks
- 1 small tomato, chopped
- 1 1/2 tsps. vinegar
- 4 1/2 tsps. lemons or 4 1/2 teaspoons lime juice

- 1 lime, sliced

Fungi

- 5 ounces cut okra
- 3/4 cup fine yellow cornmeal
- 1 1/4 cups boiling water
- 1 tbs. butter
- 1/8 tsp. salt pepper

METHOD

The fish

Put all the ingredients into a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Cover and reduce heat, simmering for 20 to 30 minutes or until the fish flakes with a fork.

Garnish with sliced lime.

The fungi

Bring the water to a boil and add the okra. In a separate bowl, blend two tablespoons of the cornmeal with about six tablespoons of water.

Pour into the pot with the boiling water and okra and let cook for one to two minutes until okra is tender. Slowly pour the rest of the cornmeal into the pan, stirring constantly. Add the butter and salt and pepper, continuing to cook for five minutes.

Serve hot on side with fish.

- Edited from *News Americas*.



Sweet, tasty pine tarts

Pine tarts is a popular snack or dessert recipe from Guyana. Here's how you can make it at home:

INGREDIENTS

Pineapple filling

- 425g pineapple chunks (or fresh pineapple chunks)
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 tsp. cinnamon powder
- 1/4 tsp. ginger powder
- 1/4 tsp. grated nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla essence

Pastry

- 1/2 cup salted butter (soft)
- 1/2 cup of vegetable shortening
- 2 3/4 cups plain flour
- 2 tsp. sugar
- pinch of salt
- 1 egg (for the egg wash)
- 3/4 cup ice cold water

METHOD

The filling

If you are using fresh pineapple, peel and cut the pineapple into large chunks and transfer into a food blender. Pulsate for a minute until there are small lumps. Measure out two-and-a-half cups of pineapple from that to use in the filling.

If using pineapple from a can, take the fruit and half of the juice and pulsate in the blender until you have small lumps.

Place the fruit into a sauce pan with the remaining juice and the spices and sugar. Simmer slowly for 30 mins under a low to

medium heat or until the mixture thickens to a jam like consistency. Keep stirring regularly to avoid it burning. When ready, remove from the heat and set aside to cool down completely.

The dough

Place the flour, butter, salt and sugar in a bowl. Mix until it forms a crumbly texture. Then little by little add the cold water until you can form a dough.

Knead the dough to a smooth log (about a foot long), wrap in cling film and refrigerate for between 30 minutes and four hours before use. When ready to be used, leave the dough out the fridge for about 30 minutes to get to room temperature.

Assembling

Cut the log into one-inch thick rounds, flour your work surface and roll the dough out into a six inch circle.

Place one-and-a-half tablespoons of pineapple filling in the middle of the circle and brush the edges with egg wash. Fold the corners of the dough into the middle, to form a triangle. ensure the ends are sealed, you can use a fork to do this.

Brush the top with egg wash. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes or until golden brown.

Serve warm or cold.

- Edited from *News Americas*.



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WOMEN IN BUSINESS


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~ A CARIBBEAN TODAY SPECIAL FEATURE

MARIE GILL: Jamaican helping to build by boosting small businesses in U.S.

DAWN A. DAVIS

Obtaining \$4.9 billion in contracts and financing for minority-owned businesses since 2000, Marie Gill has been a force in small business development in South Florida and the Caribbean.

Passionate about creating wealth in underserved communities by helping small and medium-sized firms grow to international competitiveness, Gill views her work as a calling.

Executive director of M. Gill & Associates Inc, the Jamaican-born entrepreneur is a contractor for the United States federal government. She works on behalf of minority and women-owned businesses, to get technical assistance and funding earmarked for this sector through the U.S. Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA).

According to Gill, MBDA is charged by the U.S. Congress to provide help to ethnic minority businesses. It establishes centers across the country. Some states have multiple centers. The government requires the centers to serve a certain number of minority businesses by providing

technical assistance, help find financing, get certified as minority businesses so they can do business with the federal, state and, local government agencies. Centers like Gill's also help these businesses write plans and develop marketing strategies. The expected return on investment is minority businesses scaling up, creating jobs and becoming viable enough to contribute to the economy.

'LIFE'

"That's my life," said Gill while seated in a comfortable armchair in her Miami office. "It's my passion to help small businesses, and it all started back in the 1970s when Jamaicans were leaving the island for America in droves."

She had an epiphany back then.

"Maybe I can go to the U.S. to help facilitate them," she said. "I had been to the U.S. before and had an idea how to navigate in this new environment."

How did Gill get so involved in the minority business sector? Having lived in the U.S. prior to the 1970s for a few years, she noted that during Jimmy Carter's



Gill

presidency some neighborhoods, including the one in which she lived, received funding from his administration for neighborhood revitalization. She learned the ins and outs of doing business with local government, including how to secure various kinds of funding from banks. Gill said she went along with neighborhood activists to city commission meetings and other local gatherings and earned their respect.

She went back to Jamaica, but later returned to the U.S. armed with the knowledge she

needed. But, like most immigrants to the U.S., she worked for others before starting her entrepreneurial venture. Gill got a job with the MBDA in Miami. Her first task at the agency was licking stamps for a big mailing campaign. But, as she declared, "I had a good attitude."

FOOTHOLD

As she looked at the companies to whom the letters were addressed, Gill became determined to learn more about them and their importance to the MBDA. She stayed with the agency for eight years, building her knowledge and eventual business. At the end of 1999, M. Gill & Associates Inc. put in a bid with the U.S. Department of Commerce to facilitate funding to SMEs. She won.

"So, as of 2000 I've been an operator," Gill said. "I got the contract and I kept bidding and winning and making my goals and exceeding my goals."

Gill's center serves close to 300 clients per year, surpassing the federal minimum by about 80. Her center has facilitated

almost \$5 billion in contracts and funding for minority businesses over 20 years.

CARIBBEAN

Gill's renewed contract with the government will now include helping businesses who trade and export goods and services to and from the Caribbean. Her strategic partnerships with companies such as EXIM Bank, U.S. Commercial Service and Enterprise Florida can play a part in the success of business connections to the region.

And, as president of the Jamaica USA Chamber of Commerce, she is well poised to be an anchor for Caribbean owned businesses stateside.

A fixture in the South Florida Caribbean community, Gill's work in the business sector has not gone unnoticed. Recently, she was recognized for service and influential role in building successful businesses in the International Women's Day and Women's History Month 2020 celebrations. Also in March, she brought together powerful women in business at her 10th annual Women Mean Business International event to their expertise and success stories.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 16)

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Small business loans available to combat COVID-19 fallout

Owners of small and medium-sized businesses negatively affected by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) are being urged to seek assistance through the United States Small Business Administration (SBA).

U.S. Representative Debbie Mucarsel-Powell, of Florida's 26th District, made the appeal during a recent webinar, explaining that the SBA has established Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) to help businesses and private non-profit organizations during the pandemic.

"I want to make sure that our local businesses know and have the resources to access these benefits," said Mucarsel-Powell. "... Small businesses are the heart of our community; when you're

hurting, we're all hurting here in South Florida."

Businesses have been hit hard by the pandemic. Many have pulled shutters and sent home employees as business, especially in the food and service industries, slowed appreciably. Businesses owned or operated by Caribbean nationals have not been spared the dramatic downturn and loss of income.

According to Victoria Guerrero, a SBA district director, the agency is offering states, which have been declared a disaster, loans for small businesses suffering substantial economic setback as a result of the coronavirus. Small businesses owners can request up to \$2 million in EIDL.

The interest rate for this particular loan is 3.75 percent - 2.75 percent for private non-profit organizations - with a term of up to 30 years. Collateral will be required from companies requesting over \$25,000. However, Guerrero said the SBA would not decline a loan for lack of collateral.

PURPOSE

"These working capital loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that could have been paid had the disaster not occurred," she explained. "The loans are not intended to replace lost sales, profits, or expansions." Funds for the EIDL come

from the U.S. Treasury, not banks. Last month, the U.S. government passed a \$2 trillion coronavirus stimulus bill expected to give direct payments to some legal U.S. residents, based on factors including income level. About \$350 million has been set aside to assist small businesses; \$500 billion for larger corporations.

Businesses can apply for EIDL online, through the mail, fax or e-mail. Interest rates would apply only on the part of the loan the company is utilizing, not on the entire loan.

Some examples of businesses that can apply for EIDLs include hotels, recreational facilities, charter boats, manufacturers, rental property owners, restaurants, retailers, souvenir shops, travel agencies and wholesalers. Businesses seeking a loan must have a physical presence in the disaster area.

The deadline to apply for SBA loans is the end of Dec. 2020.

To apply, visit www.sba.gov/disaster. For more information, call SBA customer service at **1-800-659-2955**. Hard of Hearing TTY Service: **1-800-877-8339**.

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



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~ A CARIBBEAN TODAY SPECIAL FEATURE

FLY AMI: Jamaican helps steer company in aircraft refurbishment, safety

DAWN A. DAVIS

With clients such as United, Delta, Air Canada, American Airlines, Southwest, and RyanAir, Aero Marine Interior, Inc. (AMI) has earned a reputation for being amongst the best in the aircraft refurbishment business.

Founded in 2000 by Jamaican-born Jannette Pommells-Tucker and her husband Chris Tucker, AMI provides services for commercial and private aircrafts, including interior and custom refurbishment, seat repair, windows and non-destructive testing (NDT), a critical evaluation for flaws in materials.

It's not the typical business venture. But Pommells-Tucker had a head start.

"I came to (the United States) 36 years ago with my family from Kingston, Jamaica," she explained to **Caribbean Today** recently. "My parents were both entrepreneurs and it seems natural that I would follow in their footsteps.

"So, throughout my college years I took courses that dealt with some aspect of business travel and tourism management, human resources management, and business management. They all came in handy when Aero Marine Interior, Inc was birthed October 4, 2000."

It started taking shape while the couple was dating. Pommells-Tucker said she and Chris always talked about having their own business. Chris had aviation experience so, coupled with her business background, the idea to create a company marrying the two fields was born.

To raise start-up capital, the couple decided to open a



Pommells-Tucker, right, and husband Chris

retail business, sell it after two years and put the funds towards their dream company. Within 18 months the plan came to fruition and Aero Marine Inc. began in a warehouse in Miami.

ROLES

At AMI, Chris serves as president and chief executive officer. Jannette's role is vice president and chief financial officer. She manages day-to-day operations, human resources and accounting. Her husband handles technical aspects, including communications with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

and European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA).

AMI is an FAA/EASA certified aircraft repair station, said Pommells-Tucker, meaning the company is considered specialists in servicing aircrafts registered in North America and Europe. For AMI, FAA approval took eight months, but the company was already operational before seeking approval. Required manuals, equipment and safety features were in place. Keeping certification means maintaining the standards set by FAA, which evaluates the business annually, and everything AMI renovates or

installs on an aircraft must meet FAA and EASA standards.

According to Pommells-Tucker, materials used inside an aircraft should be lightweight and have built in fire retardant elements. Materials are put through flammability tests, ensuring that if there is a fire onboard the burning process would be slower allowing passengers time to exit the plane. She explained that AMI repairs "everything that is on the interior of the aircraft."

STEPS

To work within in the indus-

try requires attending aviation school, Pommells-Tucker added, and completing an exam with the FAA to acquire a license.

"Continuing education is a must within this industry," she said.

AMI said it has 24 full-time employees and up to 50 workers based on the projects. Pommells-Tucker said the company "bursting at the seams," ready for expansion to take on any challenges the airline industry may face.

AMI services also include using radiography, infrared thermography or ultrasonic sound waves to test for defects that could compromise materials.

"In its simplest form, non-destructive testing is the X-raying of the aircraft to look for any cracks and leaks," said Pommells-Tucker. "... This is what we do for the aircraft to make sure it is safe for people to travel."

One of AMI's most notable jobs was to reconfigure aircrafts that were leased for former President Barack Obama and his Secretary of State John Kerry during a Democratic National Convention.

"Those are rare experiences and we were glad for the opportunities afforded us," Pommells-Tucker explained. "Guess we did such a good job, because we received an official letter inviting us to attend President Barack Obama's inauguration in Washington, D.C."

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



RENEE WEBLEY: An architect with style, environmental conscience

Architect and interior designer Renee Webley knew early she wanted to create buildings and interior spaces.

So Webley, a millennial concerned about the environment and how humans interact with it, decided to establish a company that would take the ecosystem and clients' needs into consideration.

RAW Design & Consulting, which she founded in 2011, provides architectural and consultation services to both corporate and private clients in South Florida. Whether it's small or large projects, Webley and her design team builds from the ground up or renovates spaces with clean lines utilizing eco-friendly strategies.

Yet, before she got there, Webley put in the work necessary to gain the experience she would need to be taken seriously in this male-dominated field.

"I started off by working at internships for a smaller

architectural office and then an interior design firm during college," she told **Caribbean Today** recently. "After college I received a position at a larger architecture and engineering firm, which jump-started the rest of my career."

'GREEN BUILDINGS'

When she started RAW Design & Consulting Webley was working as an independent contractor with several firms, providing green building design, consulting and architectural consulting/drafting services for firms that were hit by the economic recession in 2008. Today, she runs an architectural design firm with professional licenses and certifications, including LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) accreditation. In line with her design philosophy, LEED is a worldwide rating system for buildings that provides guidelines for healthy, efficient, sustainable and



Webley

cost-saving "green" buildings.

From residential additions, new construction homes, commercial interior and exterior improvements, and retail design Webley's RAW Design & Consulting is a full service architectural and design entity. The boss

is drawn to modern and contemporary styles with clean lines - perhaps because of her Caribbean heritage - which is reflected in the projects she has taken on over the past nine years.

STANDOUT

Yet one project really stands out for her. "The Tropic Isles Residence was my first huge project from start to finish that encompassed an integrative design approach and a full set of architecture and interior design services," Webley explained. "Prior to that I worked on small

renovations or home additions, but this house we completely gutted to the bones, took off the roof and added an entire second floor."

The residential project underscored the company's exper-

tise in green building techniques, innovative design approach and project management competency, Webley added.

Although RAW Design & Consulting is South Florida-based, Webley has worked on architectural and design projects throughout Florida, Texas, The Bahamas and the United States Virgin Islands.

Webley has made a name for herself in a competitive industry based on her talent, professionalism and design style. So, where does she go from here?

"I am always looking for new opportunities in the design and construction industry," she explained. "No project is too big or too small, and every project could use a thoughtful design process."

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



WOMEN IN BUSINESS



~ A CARIBBEAN TODAY SPECIAL FEATURE

DRAMA QUEEN: Jamaican Audrey Reid - accidental actress turns star

DAWN A. DAVIS

Reality's cruelty landed on Audrey Reid with a loud, hard thud when she was young.

It could have irreparably scarred Reid. Instead, she believes, it forced her towards a path which has brought fulfilling rewards.

"I think acting found me," the Jamaican star of film and stage told **Caribbean Today** recently. "And, it was a pivotal event in my life that got me on that path."

"I got pregnant quite early, at 15. When you get pregnant so early and live in the ghetto, yuh done! It's either you get a stall and sell scallion and bag juice, but you done."

Reid was born in Franklin Town, East Kingston in an environment she calls "typical ghetto runnings." She, four brothers and her single mother shared a tenement yard with one outdoor toilet with many others. It was rough life, filled with battles and tragedy. But there was inspiration and kindness too.

"My mother, Gloria May Hibbert, she was strong and resilient and always looking after her kids," Reid recalled. "The



Reid

last one, my baby brother, was killed in Franklin Town at 17.

"So, the struggle was real. And, to add insult to injury my mother, with her own children, took on the role of caring for another child, my baby girl."

'OBEAH WEDDING'

Reid and her family would eventually move to Vineyard Town, the town next to Franklin. There she met female comedian Hyacinth Clover, who lived on the adjacent street. Clover was rehearsing a new stage production. It's where Reid took solace.

"I used to go to their house to watch the rehearsal every



Reid playing one of her many roles.

night, with my baby on my hip," she recalled. "It was therapy for me; it was a kind of escape."

It also lit a passion for Reid.

"They were doing a play called 'Obeah Wedding'," she said smiling. "One night the lead actress couldn't come, so the producer, Ralph Holness, said to me 'every night you are here with your baby, come and play the part, you must know it by now'. And you know, I knew every line. That was the beginning

of my love affair with acting."

Reid said she was so good, such a natural, Holness asked her to become the understudy for the lead actress, eventually alternating her in the role. She did other plays with the producer, such as "Village Rooster", "Under Mi Nose" and "Conman". Self-confirmation as an actress came following a performance at the famous Ward Theatre downtown, Kingston.

"The crowd stood on their feet at the end," Reid said. "That's when I knew for sure that this was my path."

It was during her time at the Ward Theatre that she discovered "pantomime", Jamaica's version of live musicals on stage. Relishing in the singing, movements and costumes, Reid made a promise to herself.

"I will be in the next pantomime," she recalled.

The following year, 1984, Reid saw advertisements inviting auditions for pantomime. She applied and auditioned. She was in.

ACCOLADES

By this time, Reid's acting "chops" were getting recognition. Renowned Jamaican actor Oliver Samuels and the late Kenneth Fennel sought her out for the female lead in their play "Boy Blue". After the play's run in Jamaica, Reid began touring abroad with Samuels and the production, which went to places like the Cayman Islands, Canada and England. It was her first time leaving Jamaica and helped Reid sharpen her craft.

"Working with Oliver wasn't just about the plays," she explained. "It was like a school of acting. I learned the art of theater, knowing your position onstage, costuming, lighting and, most of all, discipline. I couldn't afford drama school, so I got my training through Oliver Samuels."

Reid was invited back to England to play the lead role "Vennette" in the popular play "Boops", a production that made her a household name amongst the Jamaican and wider Caribbean community in the United Kingdom. More productions followed, cementing her name in Jamaican theater at home and abroad.

While in England, Reid got a call from directors representing Chris Blackwell, a legendary producer often credited with the international launch of the late reggae legend Bob Marley. They wanted her to audition for the lead role in a movie to be filmed in Jamaica. Since she was always being pranked by her colleagues, Reid said she dismissed the call. But the caller was persistent, trying several times. Reid finally accepted the overture was genuine. She auditioned for the role of "Marcia", the female lead in the movie "Dancehall Queen", which became a hit. The role seemed a near perfect fit.

"Marcia was my height, she was about my age, same color, from a ghetto background," Reid recalled. "It felt like when they were writing this script they had me in mind. It just felt right for me."

"Dancehall Queen" made Reid a film star and other film roles - and accolades - followed. Reid was honored with an "International Women's Achievers Award" in Canada. She will also be lauded for her contribution to Jamaica's entertainment industry by the Queens of Reggae Island Honorary Ceremonies. Vauxhall, the East Kingston school she attended, plans to celebrate her.

In the meantime, Reid stays busy with ongoing projects. The accidental actress is on her way.

Dawn A. Davis is a freelance writer for Caribbean Today. Photographs contributed.



MARIE GILL: Jamaican helping to build by boosting small businesses in U.S.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14)

Gill's life seems an endless whirlwind of business meetings and connections. However, she takes time to unwind. As a long-standing member of the Jamaican Folk Revue cultural singing group, she performs at Caribbean functions across South Florida.

"It's my downtime," she said. "It's my big cultural give back."

Photograph and story submitted by Dawn A. Davis, a freelance writer for Caribbean Today.



June is Caribbean History Month, and this year we once again come together for this very special edition. Join Caribbean Today as we celebrate the fantastic strides that we have made and continue to make, as we pay tribute and salute the giants of Caribbean History. This is your chance to not just be a part of a most widely celebrated feature in Caribbean Today, but to be a part of a feature that will have its own special mark in Caribbean History.

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SUMMER EDUCATION



~ A CARIBBEAN TODAY SPECIAL FEATURE

ONE TWO: How math can become your childrens favorite subject



- Photograph © Antonio_Diaz / iStock via Getty Images Plus

Sharing the love of math is a good thing.

Ask kids what their favorite school subject is and fewer and fewer will say “math” as they age.

While 37 percent of fourth graders in the United States report that mathematics is one of their favorite subjects, only 15 percent of 12th graders say the same, according to National Center for Education Statistics.

At a time when a strong

math foundation is more important than ever before, you may be wondering how to keep the subject fun and interesting for kids, even as the workload grows more complex and challenging with each passing year. Here are a few ideas for infusing fun into the equation:

• **Set a good example -** Don't make math out to be a subject you don't enjoy. Whether

you're talking about the batting average of your favorite player, working out your budget or watching a news report citing statistics, you can point out the many ways in which math is used to think about the world and spark a numbers-fueled conversation.

• **Embrace a love of tech -** Your children are digital natives. So when it comes to mathematics, let them use the tech tools that feel most natural to them without limitations. You can feel particularly good about this decision when it comes to calculators.

Many calculators today are much more intuitive to use than their predecessors, allowing students to spend more time learning the joy of math rather than figuring out how to operate the device.

• **Check in -** Many students stop loving math once it gets hard. Unfortunately, a lot of students don't mention they are struggling until it's too late to easily catch up, as most lessons build on previously taught material.

Periodically check in with your student to ensure they are keeping up with their classmates. Let them know there is no shame in getting an extra bit of help. Many teachers will meet with students before or after class to offer assistance and answer questions. Study buddies, tutors and online tutorials can also help students grasp the material, achieve good grades and ultimately, continue to enjoy math.

There is no doubt about it, a love of math is a good thing. By making it approachable and offering the right tools, you can help your young mathematician continue to embrace the subject.

- Edited from StatePoint.



How, why to help students readjust during school closure

School closures have forced families nationwide to readjust to the current reality of the novel coronavirus.

However, a sense of structure is important for children's developmental growth. To create a routine for your kids that sticks, consider the following tips:

• Just because there is no formal school day doesn't mean kids should sleep in or stay up late at night. Keep the same bedtimes, wake-up routines and mealtimes you always maintained during a regular school week. Doing so will bookend the mornings and evenings with a sense of normalcy.

• Mimic a school day to the best of your ability. Use the distance-learning tools your child's teachers offer as well as other educational apps and resources to have kids focus on different school subjects.

This will help break up the day into little chunks just as would happen in the classroom. Be sure to build in time for art projects, exercise and music. Most importantly, don't forget recess. If possible, allow children to play in the backyard where they can socially distance from neighbors, or set up an area of your home for playtime.

RELAXATION

• Evenings are a good time to relax and unwind together. Play board games, watch your children's favorite movies or even use the many resources available online to enjoy a virtual walking tour of a museum, botanical garden or zoo.

This is also a good time to allow children to connect with their friends using video chat or



- Photograph © Wavebreakmedia / iStock / Getty Images Plus

Find time to help kids learn.

with family members they are not currently able to see in-person.

• For many children, screens are their greatest distraction. For this reason, one of the best ways to ensure your children stay focused on the schedule you create for them is by managing their screen time.

One easy way to do so with less direct intervention from you (since you are likely busy yourself!) is by using a screen time monitoring and scheduling tool like the OurPact app.

Get started by signing up for a free account and pairing your children's devices. From there, you will be able to manage devices remotely to create a schedule that keeps kids offline when they need to be focused on other things.

It can also be customized to allow children to visit and use only certain learning sites or apps during particular hours of the day. Because this schedule lives on the children's devices as well, you'll be giving them the comfort of a routine.

- Edited from StatePoint.





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~ A CARIBBEAN TODAY SPECIAL FEATURE

Jamaican student's invention offers hope in fight against COVID-19

An invention by a Jamaican college student could prove effective in the fight against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Rayvon Stewart, who attends the University of Technology on the Caribbean island, created XERMOSOL, which reportedly kills certain bacteria

using ultraviolet light technology.

COVID-19, which can be transmitted by touching surfaces like doorknobs, which are contaminated by the virus. COVID-19 can also be transmitted through the air. It causes respiratory illness, which some-

times leads to death.

Coronavirus reportedly can live for days on stainless steel and metal, and survive for hours on fabric.

According to Commonwealth Secretary General Baroness Patricia Scotland, laboratory tests have validated the effective-

ness of XERMOSOL to kill 99.9 percent of deadly pathogens.

"The potential impact of Rayvon's invention could now be even more important than when he first conceived it, as the world battles the frightening COVID-19 pandemic," Scotland was quoted as saying recently.

Tests have also shown XERMOSOL destroys organisms such as MRSA and E coli, and destroys viral cells such as influenza virus H1N1, she added.



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