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Celebrating Jamaica at 64

Jamaica Advances Reparations Quest As Independence Journey Continues

As Jamaica marks 64 years of Independence, the country is preparing to take another historic step in its long campaign for reparatory justice, with plans to formally petition King Charles III to refer key legal questions on slavery reparations to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Jamaica's Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport Minister, Olivia Grange, told Parliament recently that the petition will be presented on September 6th, marking the anniversary of the departure of the infamous slave ship Zong in 1781. During that voyage to Jamaica, more than 140 enslaved Africans were murdered after being thrown overboard in one of the most notorious atrocities of the transatlantic slave trade.

The petition will ask the King, in his role as Jamaica's Head of State, to refer three legal questions to the Privy Council, Jamaica's final appellate court. The questions



Jamaica's Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport Minister, Olivia Grange at the Ghana conference. (Instagram image)

seek clarification on whether the forced transportation and enslavement of Africans were lawful under common law,

whether slavery constituted crimes against humanity for which Britain bears responsibility, and whether

the United Kingdom has a legal obligation to provide reparations for slavery and its lasting consequences. Grange said the initiative has the full backing of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and complements the region's broader political campaign for reparatory justice.

The legal move represents another chapter in Jamaica's ongoing pursuit of justice more than six decades after gaining political independence from Britain in 1962.

As the nation celebrates its achievements at home and across the diaspora,

the reparations initiative underscores that for many Jamaicans, the journey toward full justice remains unfinished, with the legacy of slavery continuing to shape conversations about equality, development and historical accountability.

Grange was in Accra, Ghana in June for a historic gathering on reparatory justice under the theme Next Steps.

At that event she stated: "I proudly stood on the shoulders of the Right Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey, in the presence of his son Dr Julius Garvey, as I boldly reaffirmed Jamaica's unwavering commitment to and solidarity with Africa and her Diaspora as we continue the global pursuit of justice for the gravest crime against humanity, the transatlantic trafficking and chattel enslavement of African peoples.

"We will be unrelenting in our pursuit of truth, equity, reconciliation and repair, while paying tribute to our ancestors whose resistance, resilience and triumph made our presence possible today."

The landmark three day conference brought together Heads of State and Government, Ministers of Government, civil society representatives, historians, researchers and legal experts from more than 80 countries. It was the first major global gathering on reparatory justice since the adoption of the historic UN resolution.



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Celebrating Jamaica at 64

64 Years Of Independence - But Who Paid The Bill?

BY CARIBBEAN TODAY STAFF

On August 6, 1962, Jamaica became an independent nation as the Union Jack was lowered and the black, gold and green flag was raised.

Sixty-four years later, the nation celebrates its achievements while a new book is reigniting debate over Britain's role in slavery - and whether the conversation about reparations is far from over.

In *The Crown's Silence: The Hidden History of the British Monarchy and Slavery in the Americas*, historian Professor Brooke N. Newman argues that Britain's monarchy was not a passive observer of slavery but an active participant in building the system that made Jamaica Britain's wealthiest Caribbean colony.

Drawing on records from Britain's Royal Archives, colonial papers and state documents, Newman concludes that the Crown played a direct role in the transatlantic slave

trade and Jamaica's plantation economy.

According to Newman, the Royal African Company, chartered by King Charles II and governed by his brother James, Duke of York, transported more than 150,000 enslaved Africans to the Caribbean, with Jamaica becoming one of its principal destinations.

"Jamaica would later become Britain's most valuable Atlantic colony," Newman said during a recent public lecture. "It's developing plantation economy drove up the demand for enslaved labor."

Her research also documents how customs duties generated by Jamaican sugar and tobacco became a significant source of revenue for the British Crown, while royal officials were directly involved in administering the island's slave system.

Perhaps most striking, Newman notes that when slavery ended in 1833, Britain compensated slave owners - not the formerly enslaved. The



Historian Professor Brooke N. Newman, author of *The Crown's Silence: The Hidden History of the British Monarchy and Slavery in the Americas*.

British government paid £20 million to slaveholders, while emancipated Jamaicans received no financial compensation, no land and were forced into an unpaid apprenticeship system until 1838. British taxpayers only finished repaying that

compensation debt in 2015.

As Jamaica marks 64 years of nationhood, the publication comes as the Caribbean's reparations movement gains renewed momentum.

In June, CARICOM leaders endorsed an updated reparations

agenda, while Jamaica is preparing to petition King Charles III to refer key legal questions on slavery reparations to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Buckingham Palace has declined to comment on Newman's research, saying only that "the King does not respond to research."

For many advocates, however, the historical record continues to fuel calls for accountability.

"The historical record is clear," Newman said. "The evidence of royal involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and in slavery itself is unambiguous. It is extensive, and it is impossible to ignore."

As Jamaica celebrates another Independence anniversary, the question raised by Newman's work is one increasingly echoed across the Caribbean: political independence was achieved in 1962, but has the legacy of slavery ever truly been addressed?



GraceKennedy Foundation Highlights Kingston Harbor Cleanup Success



From left: Michael McCarthy; Professor Mona Webber; Caroline Mahfood and Professor Michael Taylor. (PHOTO CREDIT- RYAN SCOTT)

The GraceKennedy Foundation (GKF) is celebrating major progress in restoring Kingston Harbor, revealing that nearly six million kilograms of waste have been prevented from entering the historic waterway since the launch of the Kingston Harbor Cleanup Project (KHCP) four years ago.

The milestone was highlighted during the Foundation's 36th Annual Public Lecture, held at The University of the West Indies (UWI) Regional Headquarters under the theme, "The Kingston Harbor Cleanup Project: From Vision to Reality."

The project, a partnership involving the GraceKennedy Foundation, Clean Harbors

Jamaica Limited and The Ocean Cleanup, combines innovative waste interception technology, scientific research and community engagement to combat marine pollution.

GraceKennedy Foundation CEO Caroline Mahfood said the initiative demonstrates the impact of collaboration.

"This project demonstrates what can be achieved when organizations and communities work together around a common goal," Mahfood said. "Sustaining and expanding this progress will require continued national commitment."

Michael McCarthy, managing director of Clean Harbors Jamaica Limited, said the project has removed (CONTINUED ON PAGE 5B)

Jamaica Launches J\$27 Billion Hurricane Melissa Recovery Program

The Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) is launching a J\$27 billion (US\$170 million) recovery program over the next five to six years to help communities rebuild following the devastation caused by Hurricane Melissa in October 2025.

JSIF Managing Director Omar Sweeney said the initiative will focus not only on repairing damaged infrastructure but also on restoring the social fabric of communities, particularly in western Jamaica, which was

hardest hit by the storm that caused an estimated US\$9.9 billion in damage.

"That reduction in social capital that would have been caused by such a natural disaster is something that is of our primary concern," Sweeney said. "We have looked at the physical damage, but we have also mapped the communities... to develop a program of recovery."

The program will include rebuilding schools, revitalizing educational programs, restoring safe access routes and

strengthening school resources in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information.

Sweeney said the initiative is designed to improve community cohesion, livelihoods, confidence and overall well-being, while helping families recover and rebuild their futures in the wake of one of Jamaica's most damaging hurricanes in recent years.





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Building Jamaica Together: Diaspora Looks Beyond Recovery

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL

With the ghost of Hurricane Melissa still hovering, the 11th Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference took place in Montego Bay from June 14-18th. Over 1,000 delegates attended the event, which was held at the Montego Bay Convention Center.

Government officials, led by Prime Minister Andrew Holness, spoke about the encouraging recovery Jamaica has made since the Category 5 hurricane devastated the country's southwestern region last October. It caused 45 deaths and damage to roads, farms and hospitals.

The Jamaican Diaspora donated millions of dollars in assistance to the recovery effort, which Holness acknowledged. However, he stated that more needs to be done.

"We have the financing to pursue our recovery and resilience building, but now we must push forward quickly. We must focus on getting the families who are still in distress after Hurricane Melissa back on their feet. The question is how we can do it faster, better, and stronger," said Holness.

He and his ministers also addressed the continued



Panelists participate in one of several discussions held during the 2026 Jamaica Diaspora Conference in Montego Bay.

reduction in crime and perceived gains in the health and education sectors.

Eddy Edwards, vice-mayor of Miramar, attended the four-day summit as a member of the South Florida delegation. He gave his opinion on what transpired at the conference.

"There wasn't any real high point for me; a number of the speakers presented a positive image of Jamaica's development, highlighting the

resilience and quick recovery from Hurricane Melissa," he said. "Several of the panels offered ideas on opportunities to invest in real estate and other growing industries. I found the Marketplace to be a source of networking and connecting with businesses and government agencies and having one-on-one conversations to be most beneficial."

The Jamaica Marketplace, which comprised 80

government and private sector booths, was one of the conference's highlights. It offered delegates investment ideas and opportunities in areas such as real estate, agriculture and tourism.

For all the positives espoused by the government, Edwards said there was no clear-cut plan to improve the ease of doing business in Jamaica for members of the Diaspora. Or Jamaica accepting

assistance from overseas in the technical and healthcare sectors.

There were some efforts to address these concerns, but in my opinion more discussion is needed," said Edwards.

Dr. Rosemarie Lewis, a perennial presence at the conference, lauded the post-Melissa unity. But she believes that issues affecting Jamaicans overseas still need clarity.

"The biggest concerns were sustainable impact, real inclusion, trust, transparency, and engaging the next generation. Also, building resilient housing, green infrastructure, and integrating major financial institutions to produce vetted and safer execution of creating good real estate and business investments," Lewis noted.

"We kept asking, 'How do we move from talk to measurable action that actually benefits Jamaica?'"

She was encouraged that those issues were acknowledged by the government.

"The commitment to selfless collaboration was real. The conference laid the foundation; now the follow-through has to match the spirit we showed," said Lewis.



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Jamaica Unveils “Tourism 3.0” Strategy To Drive Industry’s Next Phase Of Growth

BY CARIBBEAN TODAY STAFF

Jamaica is embarking on a new chapter in its tourism development with the launch of Tourism 3.0, an ambitious strategy designed to strengthen the island’s global competitiveness while ensuring that more Jamaicans benefit from the industry’s continued growth.

Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett unveiled the vision during the opening of the Caribbean Tourism Organization’s (CTO) Caribbean Week in New York, highlighting Jamaica’s resilience in overcoming global challenges ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic to other disruptions affecting international travel.

“In every instance, the real resilience that is the essence of tourism manifested itself in Jamaica,” Bartlett said. “These disruptions have bent us a little bit, but they have not broken the spirit of the Jamaican people.”

Bartlett noted that Jamaica welcomed more than one million visitors and generated US\$1.5 billion in tourism earnings within a year of reopening after the pandemic. Before global disruptions slowed travel, the island had also achieved 4.5

GraceKennedy Foundation Highlights Kingston Harbor Cleanup Success

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3B) everything from household appliances to motor vehicles from Kingston’s gullies before they reached the harbor.

“The scale and complexity of the challenge has required practical, locally developed solutions to prevent waste from reaching the Harbor,” McCarthy said.

Meanwhile, Professor Mona Webber, head of the Department of Life Sciences at UWI Mona, said ongoing scientific research is now assessing how reduced waste inflows are contributing to the harbor’s environmental recovery.

The lecture also featured a video message from Boyan Slat, founder and CEO of The Ocean Cleanup, who praised Jamaica’s contribution to global efforts to reduce pollution in rivers and oceans.

Established in 1982, the GraceKennedy Foundation continues to support education, healthy lifestyles and environmental stewardship, with the Kingston Harbor Cleanup Project now recognized as one of its flagship sustainability initiatives.



million visitors and US\$4.3 billion in earnings under its ambitious “5 x 5 x 5” growth strategy, which aimed to attract five million visitors and generate US\$5 billion in revenue within five years.

“Now it is time for reimagining,” Bartlett said. “This reimagination has begun under the Tourism 3.0 framework.”

Central to the new strategy is investing in Jamaica’s tourism workforce. Through the Jamaica Centre of Tourism Innovation (JCTI), more than 25,000 tourism workers have received professional training and certification over the past seven years.

The government has

also established specialized academies in gastronomy and entertainment, with the

first group of Executive Sous Chefs recently graduating as part of efforts to prepare

more Jamaicans for leadership positions within the industry.

“We are ensuring that Jamaican professionals take their rightful place in the leadership of the sector,” Bartlett said.

The minister also highlighted progress under the Tourism Workers Pension Scheme, which has accumulated approximately J\$6 billion in savings since its launch two-and-a-half years ago, while initiatives to expand affordable housing for tourism workers also remain a priority.

Bartlett said Tourism 3.0 represents a broader vision of sustainable development that places Jamaicans at the center of the country’s tourism success.

“Tourism 3.0 is about building a stronger, smarter and more inclusive tourism sector, which places our people at the center of development and ensures that the benefits of tourism are shared more broadly than ever before,” he said.



Jamaica Minister of Tourism, Edmund Bartlett addresses delegates at the Caribbean Tourism Organization’s (CTO) Caribbean Week at the Intercontinental Hotel in New York on June 1, 2026. (Contributed image)

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As Jamaica celebrates its independence, we honor the resilience and enduring spirit of its people. Even in the wake of Hurricane Melissa, communities across the island, and Jamaicans around the world, continue to inspire us with their determination and commitment to one another.

We are grateful for our Jamaican partners and proud that the work of Food For The Poor began here.

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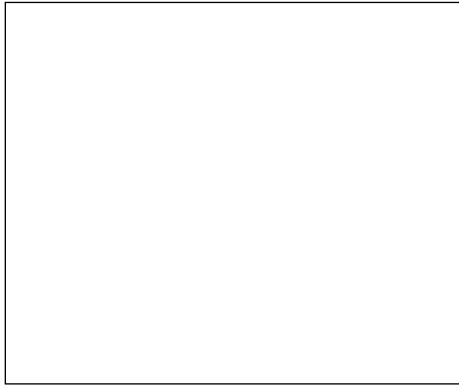
Jamaican Student Filmmaker Earns International Recognition With Award-Winning Documentary

A young Jamaican filmmaker is earning international acclaim after his debut documentary, *Tyrone*, captured top honors at film festivals across the United States and Canada.

Shavoy Alcock, an 18-year-old from Elizabeth, Jamaica, who now studies Entertainment Media at Monroe University in New York, directed the award-winning short documentary that tells the inspiring story of artist Tyrone Grant, whose life was transformed after overcoming incarceration and personal tragedy.

The 5½-minute film has quickly built an impressive list of accolades, including Best Student Documentary at the Toronto Short Film Festival, Best Documentary Short at the Los Angeles Film Awards, a Silver Telly Award, official selections at the Los Angeles International Short Film Festival and New York Short Film Festival, and most recently, selection for the 2026 Newark Independent Film Festival.

Alcock moved to the Bronx from Jamaica at age 14 and enrolled in Monroe University's Entertainment Media program despite having no previous filmmaking experience. He credits a life-changing conversation with Grant for inspiring him to pursue higher education and tell stories



Jamaican student filmmaker Shavoy Alcock has earned international recognition with his directorial debut, *Tyrone*, an award-winning documentary produced at Monroe University that has been honored at film festivals across the United States and Canada. (Monroe University image)

that matter.

Tyrone chronicles Grant's journey from growing up on the streets of New York and serving time at Rikers Island to rebuilding his life through art and becoming a respected member of the city's creative community.

The documentary was produced entirely by Monroe University students, with Zackary Padilla serving as producer, Ezekiel Ashiagbor as camera operator, Liv Coleman overseeing audio, and Darrin Tarulli editing the film. Executive producers were Dorothy Toran and Jacob Huddleston.

"Festival recognition of this caliber is an achievement many filmmakers spend years pursuing," said Dorothy Toran, Monroe University's Executive

Director of Entertainment Media and Strategic Initiatives. "For a student team to earn awards and selections across North America with a first major film project speaks volumes about their talent,

determination and commitment to authentic storytelling."

Monroe University said the documentary's growing international success highlights the strength of its Entertainment

Media program and demonstrates how emerging filmmakers can produce compelling work that resonates with audiences far beyond the classroom.



Jamaican Students Benefit From Award-Winning Art Therapy Project

BY CARIBBEAN TODAY STAFF

Students in St. Elizabeth, Kingston and Trelawny are among dozens of young people benefiting from an award-winning mental health initiative created by a South Florida teenager.

Kana Reynolds, a freshman at North Broward Preparatory School and member of the Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida, recently earned the organization's prestigious 2026 Gold Award - the highest honor in Girl Scouting - for her project, *Art for the Heart: Mindful Masterpieces for Emotional Wellbeing*.

As part of the initiative, Reynolds conducted art therapy workshops for more than 80 students in Jamaica and more than 100 students in Broward County, Florida.

Designed to make art therapy more accessible, the project

includes a free website, Instagram page, YouTube channel, and an illustrated guide featuring more



Kana Reynolds, a freshman at North Broward Preparatory School and member of the Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida, recently earned the organization's prestigious 2026 Gold Award - the highest honor in Girl Scouting - for her project, *Art for the Heart: Mindful Masterpieces for Emotional Wellbeing*. (Contributed image)

than 30 self-guided art therapy activities using painting, drawing, sculpture, collage, and mixed

media. Each lesson combines creative expression with techniques designed to reduce anxiety, improve emotional regulation, and promote overall mental wellness.

Reynolds collaborated with professional artists and faculty from Florida Atlantic University to develop the program before leading workshops in northern Broward County and Jamaica.

Her project addressed barriers that often prevent young people from accessing mental health support, including cost, location, and lack of awareness about the benefits of art therapy.

The Girl Scouts Gold Award is presented to only five percent of eligible Girl Scouts nationwide and recognizes outstanding leadership and community service projects that create lasting change.

Reynolds became the first member of the Girl Scouts of Southeast Florida to earn the Gold Award as a high school freshman.



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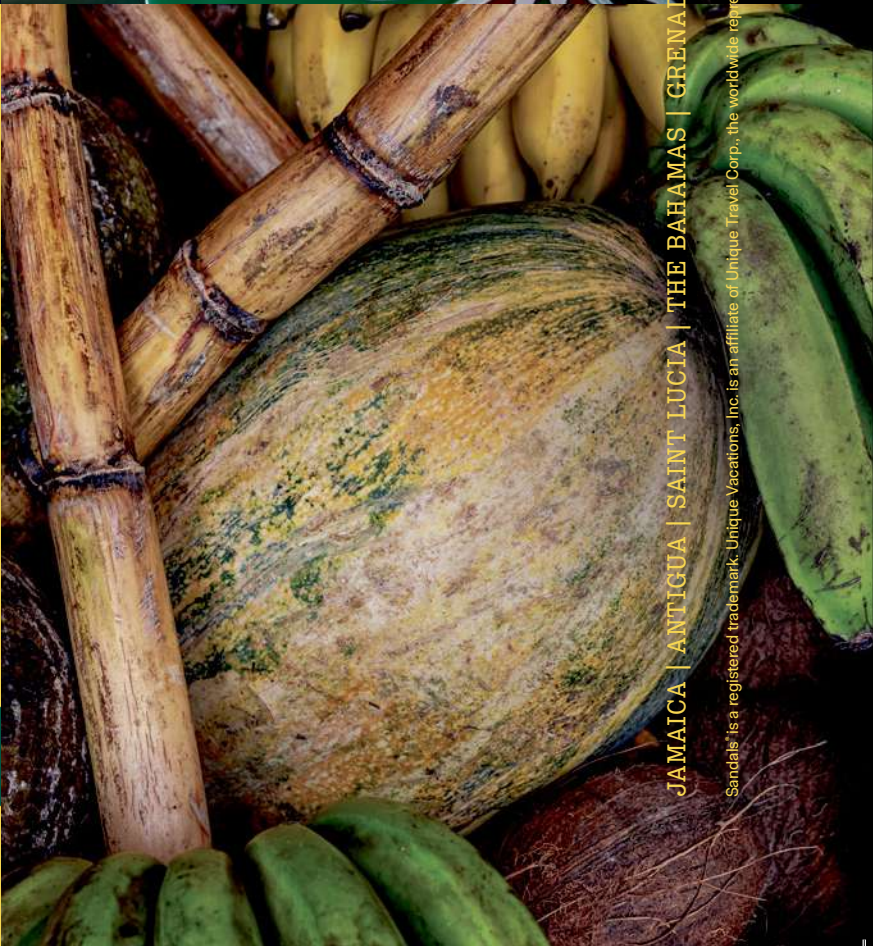
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Here's to 64 years of independence for a country bold, beautiful, and entirely its own.

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