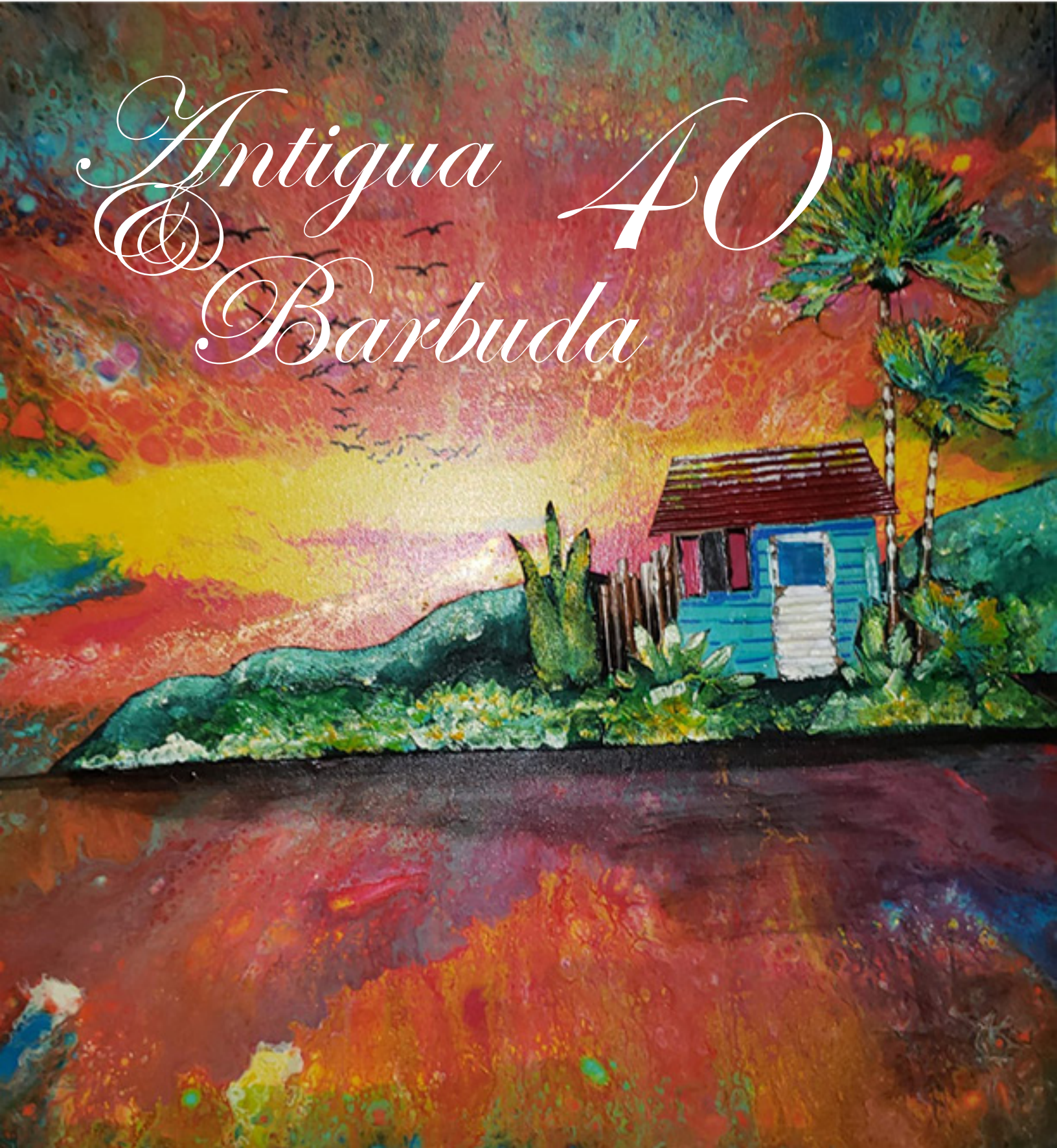




The Spectator

Vol 1. Nov 2021

Antigua 40 Barbuda





PETRA THE SPECTATOR

17.0608° N, 61.7964° W



TIME CAPULES

**SUNDAY
SPECTATOR**

17.0608° N, 61.7964° W

*COMMITTED TO SHARING
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA WITH THE WORLD*



Look to the Future Antigua Barbuda, step by step we must continue to climb together

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We started this journey 40 years ago. Powerful visioning and strong leadership have served us well for forty years. On this milestone, ruby anniversary we stand a strong people despite the myriad of issues that have restricted our ability to soar to higher heights.

One very important element for consideration is to broaden the platform for effective dialogue and open a platform for nation building conversations. We must as part of our democratic system seek out avenues to facilitate sharing, learning, even disagreeing respectfully in the interest of nation building.

I was nine years old when Antigua and Barbuda was gifted with political independence. From that time to today I have remained committed to the notion of building a better Antigua and Barbuda for us to enjoy while paving the way for future generations. Honest, open conversations about our country are an important part of nation building.

Knowledge of our history, our successes our missteps are also important components of learning. We are a product of our yesterday, our cultural norms and so many other facets.

Join me on this adventure to learn our stories, unearth the best of us, share Antigua and Barbuda with the world. We will also dig into issues of national development from time to time, ensuring we understand full the issues and contribute more than just our once an electoral cycle to the Antigua and Barbuda we would like to see.

We open this adventure with a snapshot of our paradise at 40. Consider this inaugural production a teaser. You will reflect, smile, shrug, smirk and not agree with everything presented. I do hope the pieces give you reason to pause and reflect. Feel free to share your thoughts via any of the platforms available to give feedback.

We are forty years in with room to building on the foundation already laid. Let's reason, reflect, strengthen our resilience and work towards a better Antigua and Barbuda.

Petra Williams

HAPPY



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Antigua & Barbuda in 40!

A timeline
of
major events







1981

Antigua and Barbuda becomes independent.

Bank of Antigua the eventual flagship of the Stanford Group of Companies was formed.

Antigua Recreation Grounds became the 52nd International Test Venue, hosting its 1st International Test Match, West Indies vs England. The match was drawn. Three centuries were scored including 114 (21 fours, 1 six) by Sir Vivian Richards.

1983

Antigua and Barbuda supports the US invasion of Grenada following the assassination of His Excellency Prime Maurice Bishop and the coup d'etat.

1984

ALP, led by Sir V C Bird, retains government winning the general election.

1985

Attempts to restart the sugar industry officially abandoned due to financial challenges.

1988

West Indies Cricket Board headquarters is relocated to Antigua and Barbuda.

1989

ALP, led by Sir V C Bird, retains government winning the general election.

Rt. Hon. Sir Vere C. Bird signing the Independence Declaration in 1981 at the Antigua Recreation Ground. (Photo courtesy National Museum)



Brian Lara receives “Guard of Honour” from colleagues after his record-breaking performance. (Photo courtesy Thaddeus Pryce)

1990

Vere Bird Jr, removed from public office in the wake of allegations of gun-running.

1993

Sir V. C Bird resigns as Prime Minister and is replaced by his son, Lester B. Bird.

1994

Lester Bird successfully leads ALP to another general elections.

Brian Lara’s first of two record-breaking performances at the historic Antigua Recreation Grounds (ARG). He scored 375 off 583 balls in 766 minutes, including 5 fours.

Sir Vere Cornwall Bird KNH (1910 – 1999) declared Antigua and Barbuda’s First National Hero. 1st Prime Minister & Father of the Nation.

1995

Massive demonstrations and riots erupt in protest against the Education Levy. The tax was initially designed as a short term measure to subsidise the delivery of education services. It is now a cornerstone in the provision of education services and capital expenditure.

Hurricane Luis hits the islands, claiming 75% of all homes and

setting back development by 10 years.

1997

Government establishes the National Mortgage & Trust Co. Ltd to undertake middle income housing development to address the shortage of housing.

1999

Lester Bird’s ALP wins another general election; direct hit by Hurricane Jose causes extensive damage. Sir V. C Bird dies.

2000

King Court Tackey/Prince Klaas (1694 (est) – 1736) declared Antigua and Barbuda’s 2nd National Hero.

2001

Antigua and Barbuda’s first full length feature film, *The Sweetest Mango* was released. The Howard Allen Film released by HAMA Production is a romantic comedy. The producers, Howard and Mitzi Allen became the first indigenous company in the Eastern Caribbean to produce a feature length film. They remain the most prolific film makers in the OECS region producing four films in 10 years.



Hama’s first feature film *The Sweetest Mango*. (Photo courtesy HAMA Films)



A view from Thames St. after the devastation of Hurricane Luis

Leston ‘Young Destroyer’ Jacobs captures the Carifesta Calypso Monarch Competition.

2007

World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules in favour of Antigua and Barbuda in a trade dispute over online gaming and orders the United States (USA) to pay compensation of US\$21 million annually.

2008

Sir George Herbert Walter KNH (September 8, 1928 – March 4, 2008) is declared a National Hero, posthumously. He was a former general-secretary of the Antigua Trades & Labour Union (ATLU), and founding member of the Progressive Labour Movement (PLM) and the Antigua Worker’s Union (AWU).

2003

The Government of Antigua and Barbuda launches a trade dispute claim with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) against the United States over their refusal to allow online gaming operators access to the US market.

2006

Sir Isaac Vivian Alexander Richards KHN OBE (March 7, 1952) is declared a National Hero. He is the only living National Hero. He was previously made a Knight Commander of the Order of the Nation (1999). The Sir Vivian

2004

Lester Bird concedes defeat in general election. Baldwin Spencer, leader of United Progressive Party (UPP), is sworn in as Prime Minister.

Parliament passes milestone ‘trilogy of legislation’ to improve the governance framework and mitigate against incidences of corruption. The Prevention of Corruption Act, The Freedom of Information Act and The Integrity in Public Life Act.

Brian Lara set record for the highest score in test cricket at the Antigua Recreation Grounds (ARG). The record remains intact today. He scored 400 from 582 balls; 43 fours and 4 sixes.

2005

Personal Income Tax is re-introduced after being scrapped in 1975.



2004 elected Prime Minister Hon. Baldwin Spencer (right) with the first female acting Prime Minister Dr. Jacqui Quinn (left). (Photo courtesy UPP)

Richards Stadium Is named in his honour.

Dame Nellie Robinson DNH, MBE (December 7, 1880 – April 29, 1972) declared Antigua and Barbuda’s 1st and only female National Hero, posthumously. A pioneer in education, she believe that all children should have access to education resulted in the pioneering project of the TOR Memorial School which catered to all segments of the community.

He was the country’s 2nd Premier (1971 – 1976).

2009

Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer leads the United Progressive Party to 2nd victory at the polls, albeit with a reduced majority.

Sir Allen Stanford is charged by the US Securities and Exchange Commission for investment fraud. He was alleged to have run a US\$7bn Ponzi scheme



Newly elected Prime Minister and leader of the ABLP Hon. Gaston Browne. (Photo courtesy ABLP)

2013

Antigua and Barbuda wins World Trade Organization permission to lift restrictions on US intellectual property, in a possible retaliatory response to US restrictions on the island's online gambling industry. Antigua and Barbuda launches Citizens by Investment Program allowing foreigners to acquire citizenship with a \$250,000 donation or a property investment of

at least \$400,000.

2014

The Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP) wins general elections (14 of 17 seats). Gaston Browne becomes Prime Minister Sir Lester Bryant Bird KNH (February 21, 1938 - August 9, 2021) becomes the nation's 6th National Hero. Sir Lester represented the country in athletics. He also served chairman of the Antigua Labour Party (ALP/ABLP) from 1971 to 1983. He served Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Development, Tourism and Energy from 1976 to 1991 in the ALP Administration. He became Prime Minister in 1994 until his party was defeated in 2004.

2015

Antigua and Barbuda conducts its first ever Labour Force Survey. Prior to this report, there were limited labour market statistics available for Antigua and Barbuda

2016

Team Wadadli Rowers comprised of Dr. Nicholas Fuller, Peter Smith, Archie Bailey and John D. Hall (JD) is the first team from Antigua and Barbuda to row across the Atlantic Ocean in the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge. The team also has the record (2016) for the oldest person to row across the Atlantic.

2017

The country's first kidney transplant was successfully completed at the Sir Lester Bird Medical Center (formerly Mount St. John's Medical Center). Barbuda is devastated by Hurricane Irma. A mandatory evacuation order is enforced and all residents are moved to Antigua in the aftermath.

2018

ABLP wins a second consecutive term in snap elections called on 21 March 2018, with 15 of 17 seats.



Team Atlantic Rowers making their historic arrival into Nelson's Dockyard. (Photo courtesy Team Wadadli Rowers)



Team Antigua Island Girls make history as the first all-black female team to participate in the Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Row Challenge. (Photo courtesy Gemma Hazelwood)

Team Antigua Atlantic Rowers comprising Eli Fuller, John Watt, Nico Pshoyos & Scott Potter row their way into 2nd place in the Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge and into the record books with an arrival time of 30 days.

2019

Team Antigua Island Girls comprised of Kevinia Francis, Elvira Bell, Christal Clashing and Samara Emanuel, completed the 3,000 nautical mile journey across the Atlantic Ocean. They became the first, all black female team to row across the Atlantic Ocean.

Team Antigua Island Girls comprised of Kevinia Francis, Elvira Bell, Christal Clashing and Samara Emanuel, complete the 3,000 nautical mile journey across the Atlantic Ocean. They became the first, all black female team to row across the Atlantic Ocean.

Antigua and Barbuda is adjudged the most outstanding performance in the Caribbean Secondary School Drama Festival held in

St. Lucia. The play was written and directed by Zahra Airall.

2020

The Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank Limited (ECAB) reaches an agreement to purchase The Bank of Nova Scotia (Scotiabank)'s operations in Antigua and Barbuda

LIAT enters into court-appointed administration after a high court judge grants a petition for the cash-strapped Carrier's reorganization. This action was the result of protectionist moves by Gaston Browne led administration to press ahead with placing LIAT into bankruptcy, placing a hold on the liquidation plans of other shareholder governments (Barbados and St. Vincent)

2021

The Antigua Commercial Bank (ACB) rebrands to ACB Caribbean and acquires the operations and assets of RBC Antigua and RBTT Grenada

Travis Weste and Jojo Nunes of

Team Antigua Pairs, complete their Atlantic row after 47 days, 6 hours, 57 minutes.

Kinberly Percival is the first athlete from Antigua and Barbuda to claim the top prize at the prestigious international bodybuilding event, the Arnold Classics Europe in Seville Spain.





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FROM 1971 TO 2021

Colour Party



Lt. Col. Edward Croft raising the Flag of Antigua and Barbuda at the 1981 Independence Ceremony.
(Photos courtesy Lt. Col. Croft)

Reflections with Lt. Col. Croft

It's the last quarter of 1981 and Political Independence looms. All the negotiations have been squared and the people and assets of the British isles of Antigua, Barbuda and the offshore islands in the grouping are being readied for the ceremonial occasion of November 1st when the ceremonial umbilical cord will be cut.

In the midst of preparations is the newly minted Antigua Barbuda Defense Force, the band of men tasked with executing the duties of the first ceremonial parade. Among the many events during the ceremonial parade to begin the night of October 31, 1980 is the flag raising ceremony under the direction of 2nd Lt. Edward Croft. His responsibility, ensure the Colour Party under his direction raises the National Flag of Antigua and Barbuda safely, correctly and on time.

2nd Lt. Croft and his men are fully aware of the task at hand. The raising of the Flag is the most visible symbol of the birth of the twin-island Nation. It warranted "thinking and operating with efficiency, despite the chaotic environment that may be surrounding the activity". The entire Defense Force Army band rehearsed over and again, to achieve the desired precision for the highlight event, to mark the birth of Antigua and Barbuda.

Edward Croft was likely born for a time such as this and much more. He emerged from a melting pot of hard work, discipline, culture dipped in regionalism. Born in Belize to an Antiguan mother, then reigning Limbo Queen of the World and a Kittian fire dancing father, he began life as a student of the world, on tour with his parents. Creative outlet in the disciplined environment of performance by his parents would be his foundation, layered with a willingness to accept varying positions and outlook, appreciating the value of team building while working towards his personal objectives.

Croft credits the military as the fertile ground for his professional development. The Military proved a fertile ground for the development of professional grounding. He recalls the training process which positively impacted him and others who enlisted to address soft skills such as a lack of confidence and an inability to complete basic tasks. The military provided the systems and structure to shape

recruits into accomplished, focused individuals as well as to function smoothly in a unit (teamwork). The building block for this approach is in training and inspiring the will to win.

Beyond local training scene there were countless opportunities for international training where Croft and other officers of the ABDF performed to the highest standard, returning to serve the nation in various fields.

Croft is firm on the relevance of the military to nation building, even in countries as small as Antigua and Barbuda. The nation cannot move forward if a society is in turmoil. The establishment of the Defense Force as a pillar of law and order was a part of the foundation on which the country's economy blossomed. The lead involvement of the military in the annual ceremonial functions of our independence celebrations subliminally reinforces the values of safety and security. The regional connection through the Regional Security System (RSS) serves to strengthen the region's risk management capacity. This important regional system supports regional economic development and the Caribbean brand as a safe haven worldwide.

The military value also goes beyond peace-keeping function. Whenever the country was at its lowest ebb, it was the military that complemented the national leadership and provided the necessary support to assist the country in its recovery. Post Disaster recovery is one key area where the work of the ABDF is invaluable and unsung. Croft recalls assisting his country recover from several hurricanes during his period of appointment as Operations Officer for the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) at the National Office of Disaster Services, (NODS) from 1989 to 2000. That work continues in the execution of various support roles to other national agencies up to today.

A proud Antiguan and Barbudan, Croft has never left Antigua and Barbuda for any extended period. He posits that the nation has matured nicely at forty (40). "When we look at our track record, our economic progress, we have done quite well. Yes, there are challenges and Covid is one of those challenging periods, filled with obstacles. My military trained mind is programmed to know that our country will rise again and continue to progress."

Croft reminds that “we have a history of regional leadership and though a comparatively small from a geographic and population perspective, we played important roles in many regional developments. Our leadership over the four decades have consistently married out-the-box policy formulation, with practical socio-economic development strategies which are supported with industry breaking legislative framework.”

He is particularly pleased with establishment of the UWI Five Islands Campus. “Education is the quintessential factor in the development of any society. UWI FC has brought tertiary education to the masses opening up at our doorstep opportunities for improving the quality of the nation’s human resources. It is important to position ourselves to continue to evolve, building on the legacy of our forefathers, furthering ‘Antiguanisation process’”. Tourism will remain central to our national economic growth from Croft’s perspective. He is satisfied that as a people we continue to find ways to remain competitive in the industry. He noted positively the continuous effort to refresh and expand the infrastructure and the health care services. He is excited at the prospect for the development of the Blue Economy and the recognition to continue to grow Information Technology. Technology will be the critical nexus as part of Antigua and Barbuda’s future.

The identification and expansion of available opportunities will continue to position us as a people, who ‘though little, will remain tallawah’

will work to chip away at our weak areas and build a stronger nation.

•About Lt. Col Edward Croft CMG, OBE, C.A.M.S

Lt. Col Edward Croft is the Director of the Office of National Drug and Money Laundering Control Policy (ONDCP), in which capacity he is responsible for the investigation of serious organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering offences, and the financing of terrorism, and for the forfeiture and confiscation of the proceeds and instrumentalities of crime. He is also responsible for supervision of financial institutions for compliance with their anti-money laundering and counter financing of terrorism obligations.

Having served over 34 years in the military, Lt. Col Croft brings a diverse wealth of knowledge to the financial compliance sector. His expertise in management and leadership has brought a unique element to financial compliance, and the investigations of money laundering and terrorist financing. He has also been instrumental in creating an improved culture of compliance within the financial sectors of Antigua and Barbuda and has been at the helm of the ONDCP since 2007.

Lt. Col Croft was recognised in the Her Majesty the Queen 2014 New Year’s Honour List. He was made a Companion of the Most Distinguished with the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG) and was the recipient of Oder of the British Empire (OBE), the second highest ranking British Empire Award (excluding a knighthood/damehood) for services to Youth and to National Security.



Flag Protocols

The image shows the flag of Antigua and Barbuda, which consists of a black upper triangle, a blue horizontal band, and a white lower triangle, all set against a red background. A golden sun with seven rays is positioned in the center, overlapping the black and blue sections.

Designed by Mr. Reginald Samuel in a 1966.

The seven point Golden Sun symbolises the dawn of a new era. Red: symbolises lifeblood of slave forefathers and dynamism of the people. Blue: symbolises hope. Black: symbolises the soil and African heritage. Gold, Blue and White: Antigua and Barbuda's tourist attraction - sun, sea and sand. "V": Victory at last!

The flag was adopted on February 27, 1967.

While there are no legislated guidelines governing the proper use of the flag of Antigua and Barbuda, there are international best practices which citizens and residents are encouraged to embrace.

The Flag of Antigua and Barbuda should always be:

- treated with the respect and dignity it deserves
- raised no earlier than first light and lowered no later than dusk
- raised briskly and lowered with dignity
- flown aloft and free, as close to the top of the flag mast as possible and with the rope tightly secured; and
- Illuminated if flown at night.
- It should never be:
 - allowed to fall or lie upon the ground
 - used to unveil monuments or plaques, cover tables/seats or used as a curtain
 - flown when damaged, faded or in a dilapidated condition
 - flown upside down, even as a signal of distress
 - flown from the same flag pole as another flag

Iconic Corner n



Now Indigenous



Indigenous Financial Institutions now dominate the commercial banking sector in our twin-island nation. This is a landmark transition: the new owners of the corner of Market Street & High Street - Antigua Commercial Bank and Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Bank .



Legend of King Court

by Barbara A. Arrindell

Artwork by Anson Henry (Photo courtesy National Museum)



There is no written record of most of the life of the nation's first national hero. We know him by his actions and by what little was said of him by those who accused him of attempted mass murder.

The following is therefore a piece of historic fiction. We allow our imagination to run free as we try to step into the mind of the man named Takyi, called Court and now known to many as Klaas.

He lowered his large frame and instantly felt more at peace. The Baobab was where he could see his past clearly and at times could get glimpses of his future. While sitting at the base of the tree, the man they called Court could pretend that he was back home.

He chuckled at the way he still thought of a place that he hadn't seen in more than 20 years as his home. He called it home in his own language, not in the language of Massa Kerby.

Court really didn't like to spend his time at the Baobab tree thinking about Thomas Kerby or his young son, Hamilton, who was becoming more arrogant as he grew. People often told Court that he was a lucky man. Massa let him come and go as he pleased as long as the work got done and he could account for his actions and whereabouts. Yet not a single bone in his body felt lucky.

He worried about the people who called him lucky. In his mind they had accepted permanent enslavement as a way of life. All they wanted was to spend less time in the fields, or to not get whipped so often. He tried not to be too harsh with them for he understood that it was hard for a man to yearn for freedom the way he did, if freedom is something that person had never known.

Takyi knew freedom! He had known freedom as a child without knowing that it had a name. He held on to those memories and had to believe that someday he might return to his land across the water. If he couldn't do that then he would have to find a way to live a free life here on this island. He and his people needed to find a way to free themselves of those who forced them to live this way. How could he make mentally enslaved people believe that freedom was possible?

That was his dream. That was his mission.

He could still remember the noise and fear that night when people invaded his village. His father had known that an attack was possible and had told the young Takyi what to do and where to hide. His father had told him not to show himself no matter what happened and he had planned to do that, but they found his mother and no boy could stand aside and watch what they were doing to his mother without trying.

He shook his head to try to erase the memory. Why were all the bad memories coming to the surface today he wondered. Etched into his memory was the destruction and the dead bodies of that night. He could remember being forced to walk and walk. It felt as though he had walked for weeks and they were not given much food or water so his stomach ached almost as much as his feet. Sometimes others were added to the chain of people that made that walk. They knew that nothing good would be at the

end but nothing could have prepared him for the dungeon by the seashore that he was thrown into. He estimated that he spent as much time there as he had spent walking.

Some of the others in the dark room with him spoke other languages and had marks on their body that identified them as being from other places. They had been taken from nations that were further inland. He would come to understand that some had walked for much longer than he had and that many had died as they walked. The dead or dying were simply thrown to the side of the road as the snake of human cargo walked on against their will.

He had to remind himself that his father and the other men had been training him to be a warrior and so he had to remain strong. He had to think of this as a test of his strength. He had to endure so that he could be ready to rebuild his village when he escaped or served out his enslavement years. He knew of men who had returned to his village after being enslaved. He would do the same.

How wrong he was about being able to somehow walk back to his people and continue his life. Many, many moons had come and gone since the days when he crossed the angry water. He remembered stepping on to the land and trying to walk but he fell. Others fell also. Their bodies were continuing to sway long after they were on solid ground. Men who looked like him but who wore more cloth than a man ought to, threw water from the sea on them and then carried those who were unable to walk.

Then to a new prison where he would see more sunlight and get a bit more food. A few days later he was made to walk on the Parade an area that would later be called Thames street. Many would look at him and examine his teeth and his muscles. One man would pay the asking price and he would

begin a new life in this land they called Antigua (and Barbuda).

When he was a small boy at home, chasing the wind; restricted only by the high expectations of his people, his father had told him that he was born for greatness. It was said so often that he had started to believe his father's vision. He used to believe that he would be a great leader whose battles would be spoken of for hundreds of years. Instead it looked as though he would live and die as nothing more than a white man's slave in this wretched land.

Life in Antigua (and Barbuda) as a young boy had been interesting. When he said his name; the name his father had given him, there were some who knew him and knew who he would have grown to become in his homeland. Even as a boy they treated him with reverence. The slave master on the other hand noticed his sharp mind and honesty and soon grew to trust him. He had been taught to count his enslaver's money. He understood that this was important as he was trusted to do some of his master's business.

As Court got older, Kerby began depending on him more. He didn't mind. Some might even have mistakenly said that he and Kerby were friends as his Master would sit with him to discuss the affairs of the plantation and the household. In his foolish mind he thought that at some point Kerby would see that he wasn't meant to be a slave. He was told that he was now a 35 year old man. He now knew that freedom would never be given to him. If he wanted it he would have to find a way to take it.

Perhaps the time to stop dreaming was fast approaching. Maybe it was time to start planning. There were one or two others who wanted freedom as much as he did. There were a handful of people who he could trust. Maybe he would tell Tomboy and Secundi to meet him here at the Baobab next week. They could talk, they could reason. Maybe they could even dare to plan for a time when Antigua (and Barbuda) might be free.

**“Zakyi knew
freedom!”**

**That was his dream.
That was his mission.**

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Grooming Today's Male



Four for Forty: Political Leadership in Retrospect

by Carlon Knight

The promise of our leaders at independence was that of an Antigua and Barbuda that would deliver prosperity, freedom and security to its people in a hostile world. Central to this goal would be the assurance of visionary leadership.

As we look forward to celebrating our 40th anniversary of independence, we pause and reflect on the direction our country has taken over the last four decades. Has the promise of independence been delivered? What have our leaders achieved since taking over the reins of leadership from the former colonial overlords? Have they delivered us unto the promised land or have they squandered the opportunities presented to us along with our newfound freedom?

This piece will explore these questions through an examination of the lives and contributions of the four men who have led Antigua and Barbuda since its independence.

Since attaining independence in 1981, Antigua and Barbuda has had four prime ministers: the Right Honourable Sir Vere C. Bird Sr., Sir Lester Bird, Baldwin Spencer and the incumbent Gaston Browne. Each of these men have, in their own way, shaped the body politic and development of Antigua and Barbuda during their stewardship. Each of these four decades could be characterized as separate epochs in the history of Antigua and Barbuda. Consequently, I have chosen to refer to them as:

**The Birth of a nation;
The Growth of a nation;
The period of Change
A period of Renewal.**

What follows is an examination of each period and the men who led it.

1981 – The birth of a nation: the Rt. Hon. Sir Vere Cornwall Bird becomes Antigua and Barbuda’s first Prime Minister

The Rt. Hon. Sir Vere Cornwall Bird became Antigua and Barbuda’s first prime minister when the nation declared its independence from Great Britain in 1981. This titular change was nominal as Sir Vere served as the country’s premier in the years prior to independence.

A towering figure, Sir Vere, a former Salvation Army captain and trade unionist, was born into very humble beginnings. He rose from poverty and committed himself to championing the struggles of the working poor in Antigua and Barbuda’s post-emancipation era. He led his people from a harsh existence in the canefields into a tourism-based economy. These feats earned him the affectionate title ‘Papa Bird’ as he was acknowledged by all as the ‘Father of the Nation’.

His legacy is inexorably intertwined with the labour struggle in Antigua and Barbuda. This struggle was hard fought and long. If the process of nation building was akin to a tree being planted, this period would no doubt have been one in which the hard, scorched, dry earth had to be tilled so that fertile soil could be unearthed. This period was no easy push over, but neither was he.

Arguably, Papa VC’s main accomplishment was to dismantle the power held by Antigua and Barbuda’s large landowners and transform the economy from one dependent on sugar and agriculture – a low skill and low yield enterprise – into a tourism-based economy fueled by large property developments and foreign exchange injections in the form of tourism receipts. Moreover, if tourism was going to work and be sustainable it would require an educated labour force and public utilities. In his wisdom, Sir Vere foresaw this and introduced free secondary education and implemented the necessary infrastructure to raise living standards across the twin island state.

Sir Vere ensured that the majority of lands on

**BIRD SR
BIRD
SPENCER
BROWNE**

the mainland were owned by the Government on behalf of the people as the nation moved to independence. All essential infrastructure to facilitate development: airport, seaport utility services, health and education, were pillars of the Sir Vere stewardship.

Despite his many accomplishments as a skilled and successful politician and statesman, very seldom does it occur that triumphs are unaccompanied by personal tragedy. Sir Vere's story is no different. Upon reflection, it could be perceived that he was a victim of the very accomplishments for which he was lauded. In the famous words of Sir John Dalberg-Acton, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Under his stewardship, with very little opposition and a weak institutional environment, allegations of corruption and scandals were commonplace. The political dominance he commanded and the centrality of the Bird family meant that Antigua and Barbuda became enmeshed and synonymous with the term 'Birdism' - a cult of the personality where hero worship and rule by fiat seemed routine. Democracy was new, fragile and susceptible to damage. As a leader he did much good to advance the cause of his people, but with the good came the bad. The latter may not be enough to overcome the former, but it certainly is enough to not be ignored by history.

1994 - The growth of a nation: One Bird descends, another takes flight.

Sir Lester Bird became Antigua and Barbuda's second Prime Minister in 1994 through to 2004 and consolidated the authority he enjoyed as Deputy Prime Minister, and through ministerial portfolios including finance, foreign affairs and tourism.

Sir Lester's achievements in politics and governance are numerous. The younger Bird was largely heralded as a transformative leader who sought to build on the anti-colonial achievements of his father in the struggle for the advancement of the people of Antigua and Barbuda.

His prime ministerial tenure consolidated many of the projects he had visioned and executed during as Deputy. Tourism infrastructure was further expanded with the Nevis Street pier and the dredging of the Deep Water Harbour.

The establishment of Antigua and Barbuda's premier medical facility, which is now fittingly named for him in tribute, the Sir Lester Bird Medical Center, was his brainchild. It was conceptualised and constructed during his tenure as the nation's leader.

His tenure also influenced the continued development of the human resource capacity of the nation for the development of the financial services sector, the provision of offshore services





Vere Cornwall Bird meeting with Nelson Mandela circa 1995, St. Lucia. Mandela requested to meet with V.C. Bird to personally express his appreciation for V.C. Bird's government granting Antigua and Barbuda passports to all African National Congress (ANC) officials to enable them to travel because the South African Apartheid government banned them from getting South African passports. The ANC officials could therefore travel the world and bring attention to their plight. (Photo courtesy Vere C Bird III)

1994 – The growth of a nation: One Bird descends, another takes flight.



Lester Bryant Bird, then Deputy Prime Premier of Antigua and Barbuda, arriving at Government Headquarters in Basseterre, St. Kitts, on Thursday 18th June 1981, for the signing of the Treaty of Basseterre, establishing the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). (Photo Credit: Dale Morton)

and information technology services sector, which he envisioned. This was facilitated through the expansion in enrollment at ABIIT and the introduction of tertiary education scholarships through the Board of Education in 1994.

Sadly, the period 1994 to 2004 will be remembered not just as one of increasing prosperity but also one in which significant missteps occurred. While there were boasts of wealth generation, Sir Lester also failed to address the transparency and accountability issues of his father's administration and consequently faced his own challenges with corruption and financial mismanagement.

The second Bird administration was known for its association with several unsavory characters who exploited the regulatory weaknesses and lax institutional environment of the time.

So much so that in 2004 the Antigua and Barbuda electorate decided to bring to an end the

run of the Bird family's political dynasty which ruled supreme for well over half a century.

2004 – The decade of change. Bird no more. Spencer gets in.

2004 was a watershed year for the country. In the general election that year the will of the people was made decisively clear. For the first time since 1951, Antigua and Barbuda would be led by someone who did not bear the Bird surname. Winston Baldwin Spencer, then leader of the United Progressive Party, claimed a resounding political victory. He would serve for two terms over a period of ten years.

In many ways the election of Baldwin Spencer signaled a new chapter in the history of the young nation. Spencer's election signified a return to a worker led movement and familiarity with

the principles which led the country to independence in the first place.

During his tenure Spencer sought to expand the nation's social welfare agenda. Tackling poverty and inequality were key tenets of his campaign and he made them the central focus of his administration. He introduced new social welfare programmes that would assist vulnerable families including a free uniform and free school meals programme for students and the subsidised 'Dollar Barrel' promotion in which goods from overseas could be cleared at Customs for just one dollar.

Spencer's administration also made education a top priority. His administration commissioned a review of the secondary education infrastructure needs which resulted in the renovation and expansion of existing campuses. Universal Secondary Education was also introduced. Additionally, under his leadership



more scholarships were granted to nationals to pursue higher education abroad than under any previous administration.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) transformation was also pivotal in Spencer's vision for the development of the nation. A number of ICT centers were constructed across the nation in addition to roaming ICT buses which allowed students and low income families to develop ICT skills free of cost.

Spencer's first term in office took the country down a more of a left-wing direction than his predecessor. His socialist orientation was arguably shaped by his long affiliation with trade unions and representing workers. While he created the foundation of a welfare state with the introduction of popular government programmes aimed at addressing poverty that remained prevalent, these initiatives exerted a tremendous toll on public finances. As a consequence of this, when the global financial crisis plunged the world into recession in 2008, these programmes could not be sustained. Spencer's second term was characterized by austerity measures aimed at reducing public debt and spending. By then, the goodwill of the people which he earned as a newly minted prime minister was spent and the cuts to the welfare state he engineered signaled his undoing.

Despite his administration's best efforts to generate new sources of foreign exchange, including through the Citizenship by Investment Programme, Spencer could not revive the economy which had suffered badly because of the recession.

Falling prey to accusations of bad financial management and weak leadership, Spencer's time in the limelight did not last long. The country swung back to the ABLP in 2014.



Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, addresses the general debate of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, 27th September 2012, New York. (Photo courtesy Gov't of Antigua and Barbuda)

2014 – A renewal: The ABLP is born and Browne takes charge.

The country's fourth and current Prime Minister is Gaston Browne. Gaston Browne was first elected to parliament in 1999.

While the political reflection of PM Browne cannot be completed until he has left office, some things emerge clearly from his premiership thus far. One of the most obvious is his style of management which contrasts sharply from that of his predecessors. He is seen as confident, decisive, tough and strident in his defense of the nation's interest.

He successfully negotiated

the purchase of the West Indies Oil Company in his first year in office. As a banker and financier, shouldered the responsibility of managing the public purse as finance minister. He removed personal income tax and aggressively expanded the CIP initiated by his predecessor. Browne's motto was that he desired to transform the country into an 'economic powerhouse' by making it an attractive place to do business and invest. He also spearheaded the opening of the fourth landed campus of the University of the West Indies at Five Islands and built a new secondary school.

PM Browne was also plunged into steering the country through the ongoing COVID-19

pandemic which has occupied a considerable portion of his second term. How he will ultimately deal with this pandemic is still left to be seen and may determine whether he is able to secure a third consecutive term at the helm.

At 40 years old, Antigua and Barbuda has achieved much that it should be proud of. The process of nation building is difficult, arduous and complicated. It should not be lost on any future generation just how far we have come since the era in which we were enslaved in shackles. Along the way, the men who have led our country have made bold decisions and understood that their chief objective was to abate and eliminate the squalor and deprivation that existed.

While they all tried their best, men are mortal and perfection belongs only to the gods. If Antigua and Barbuda is to grow stronger in the future it is clear that steps must be taken to address the institutional deficits which plague the nation's democracy. Future governments must commit to the highest standards of good governance possible. Strong institutions are essential for growth and a healthy democracy depends on a level playing field for all who wish to compete in the political space.

Finally, it has not escaped the gaze of the writer that there is an obvious gender imbalance as no woman has yet held the country's highest political office. We need to encourage more women to enter politics and to continue to dismantle the barriers which prevent them from climbing to their highest heights. Hopefully sometime within the next four decades we will be able to complete this exercise again referring to the men and women who have led the country.



Gaston Alfonso Browne addressing the CXC Regional Awards, Thursday, 3rd June 2021. A memorable snippet from the speech: "There are those who have deliberately taken an anti-intellectual posture and would seek to ridicule you for embracing scholarship. I urge you to embrace your intellect and to continue pursuing excellence. The Caribbean region is depending on you, to take the baton from my generation and to elevate our people to heights that our parents never dreamed of. Begin to cultivate an unshakable conviction and commitment to the advancement of the region and jealously protect our place in the world."

(Photo courtesy Gov't of Antigua and Barbuda)

The 1981 Government at Independence



Vere C Bird Snr
Prime Minister



Lester B Bird
Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister for External Af-
fairs, Economic Develop-
ment, Tourism & Energy



Keith Ford
Attorney General
and Minister of Legal
Affairs



Christopher O'Mard
Minister of Health



Ernest E Williams
Minister of Works,
Communication &
Public Utilities



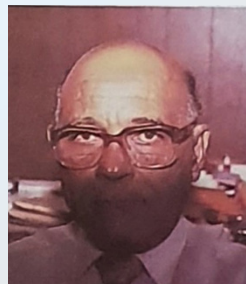
John E St Luce
Minister of Finance



Adolphus Freeland
Minister of Labour &
Social Security



Vere Bird Jnr
Adviser to Prime
Minister



Joseph Myers
Minister of Local
Government



Donald C Christian
Minister in Ministry
of Education



Reuben Harris
Minister of Educa-
tion, Youth &
Culture



Robin Yearwood
Minister of Agricul-
ture



Hilroy Humphreys
Parliamentary Sec-
tary in Ministry of Eco-
nomic Development &
Tourism



Hugh Marshall
Minister of Informa-
tion



Senator Lionel Hurst
Minister in Ministry
of Works

The Government at Independence 40



Gaston Browne
Prime Minister
Minister of Finance & Corporate Governance



Steadroy "Cutie" Benjamin
Minister of Legal Affairs,
Public Safety & Labour



Robin Yearwood
Minister of Public Util-
ities, Civil Aviation and
Energy



Molwyn Joseph
Minister of Health, Well-
ness & The Environment



Chet E P Greene
Minister of Foreign
Affairs, Immigration
and Trade



Samantha Marshall
Minister of Agricult-
ure, Fisheries &
Barbuda Affairs



Charles "Max" Fernandez
Minister of Tourism &
Investment



Melford Nicholas
Minister of Information,
Broadcasting, Telecommu-
nications & Information
Technology



Dean Jonas
Minister of Social
Transformation, Human
Resource Development
& The Blue Economy



Lennox Weston
Minister of Works



Maria Bird-Browne
Minister of Housing,
Lands & Urban Renewal



Daryll Matthew
Minister of Education
Sports & The Creative
Industries

Antigua and Barbuda: Environmental Independence at 40

by Ato J. Lewis

As we, here in Antigua and Barbuda, observe our fortieth anniversary of independence, I believe it is fair to acknowledge that we are no longer a 'fledging nation'. Truth be told, as nationals, there is a lot for us to proudly raise our banner. For most of these 40 years, Antigua and Barbuda has maintained a medium to upper medium place on the Human Development Index (HDI); and when we consider our size, both of population and economy, this is no mean feat.

But has it all been positive? Have we avoided critical missteps?

Independence is a time of reflection; as well as a time for projecting goals for the future. Our HDI, although commendable, has not come without cost. Antigua and Barbuda has been one of the regional, and possibly global trailblazers in tropical island tourism. When others were still harvesting sugar cane and banana as their primary industries, we chose to make a clean break from sugar cane and embarked on this journey of tourism. From then to now and into the foreseeable future, tourism will remain our primary industry.

The switch to tourism continued a colonial ideology of mono-culture. Mono-culture is a pathway to development that must be viewed with a critical eye. On the positive side, mo-

Marine biologist Ruleo Camacho paying tribute to Antigua and Barbuda's 40th Independence below the surface. (Photo courtesy Ruleo Comacho)

no-culture tends to come with efficiency and specialization. But if poorly managed, mono-culture can just as easily promote an unbalanced development and the type of inertia that stymies innovation.

As most of us should know, sugar cane cultivation in Antigua used up almost every square inch of viable agricultural land. One historical account described it as the land being “cleared to the hill-tops”. Whereas some may have seen this description as progress, others may realize that this also meant ecosystem destruction and environmental devastation. If you follow the global discourse on climate change and land degradation you may be aware that poor agricultural techniques, like mono-culture, not only exhaust the nutrient content of soil but can also degrade its physical structure making soils less productive and pushing them to become barren like deserts.

As I am sure most of us realize, except for a few small spaces, our vegetated areas bear little resemblance to the lush tropical forests that most Caribbean islands are renowned. This is primarily a result of the colonial era sugar cane cultivation. But more importantly, we the people of Antigua and Barbuda may never know the full extent of terrestrial biodiversity loss in our islands as a result of the poor colonial era decisions such as clearing vast native ecosystems and introducing invasive species like the mongoose.

But what is gone now may not necessarily be lost forever. In recent years, we have seen pictures of Redonda, now cleared of invasive goats and rats, transform from a barren rock to a lush island of verdant green teeming with bird life. So successful has been this island rehabilitation programme that Redonda is now recognised as a hotspot of global significance for migratory and sea birds. But what the committed few have been able to achieve in Redonda was by no means a one off occurrence.

The global model for island biodiversity restoration was developed and perfected on our fair shores. In the 1990's it was discovered the Antigua Racer snake had not been driven into extinction. There remained a small in-bred colony of less than 50 snakes residing on Great Bird Island. Through consistent efforts and committed vigilance the Antiguan Racer is no longer the rarest snake in the world. There are now over 1200 racer snakes spread over a number of our off shore islands. But the benefits of these actions are not limited to snakes. If you haven't already gone, you should go to vis-

it the off shore islands in the North East Marine Management Area. You will find them teeming with life. Lizards, snakes, increasing numbers and varieties for sea birds and vegetation will greet you. Just please remember to “take only pictures and leave only footprints”.

After you have revelled in and marvelled at these treasures, I want you to recognise that all of this could have been lost only because before 1990 nobody was looking out for the environment in those areas. The more people committed to their preservation the safer they will be. You can assist. Visit the Environmental Awareness Group of Antigua's website to learn, volunteer and contribute. Speaking of learning, here is something else you may not know about our off shore island restoration, the techniques developed in our off shore islands are now being replicated in the Galapagos to protect its famous biodiversity.

Our little twin island nation is no stranger to challenging the world to adopt greater environmental consciousness. In recent years, Antigua and Barbuda became one of the first countries in the world to ban single use plastics and Styrofoam. Before that we were (and still are) a leading voice in bringing awareness to climate change and in particular its impacts on highly vulnerable small island developing states.

The trailblazing record of Antigua and Barbuda in the environmental sustainability field is not limited to awareness raising. We also have concrete and substantial achievements. The Department of Environment was the first government agency in the Caribbean region to become a certified accredited entity to the Adaptation Fund and the Global Climate Fund. These certifications are a testament to having a high level of successful implementation of internationally funded projects.

But we cannot pretend that the totality of our nation's evolutionary journey has come without questionable steps and decisions. When we walked away from sugar cane we merely exchanged one mono-cultural industry for another, tourism. In the early days of tourism we encouraged developers to build hotels and beach cottages ‘right up the water's edge. If you were a contestant or fan of the old Secondary School game show, “Top of the Form”, you might remember the local proverb, ‘When you play warri with God, prepare to get no seed.’ Those investors who ignored the parable about building on the sand eventually discovered the folly of their

A turtle viewed on Low Bay in Barbuda.
(Photo Courtesy Mohammad Wallbrook)



ways. The Lighthouse Bay Hotel in Barbuda is just one example of how building too close to the sea can destroy a return on investment.

Nature's wrath was not exercised only on investors. Beach erosion, damage to infrastructure, shrinking mangroves result in longer travel times when roads become impassable, fewer areas for recreation and less food security for the common man. Back in the 1960s and 70s, few if anyone spoke of Environmental Impact Assessments. In fact, the term EIA did not become part of our legislative framework until 2003, with the passage of the Physical Planning Act. Although we have on record EIAs from as early as 1987, one, in particular, warned of the impacts that the construction of that section of road next to the Marina Bay Hotel which closed off the natural flushing channel of the McKinnons mangrove swamp and salt pond would have. Impacts that most if not all of us are very familiar; fish kills, stench, beach erosion and the shallowing of the pond due to deposition. One of the lesser known impacts of the closing off of the channel is that the pond began to spread inundating undeveloped properties lying between it and the road.

Just as our nation calls on the richer and bigger countries to take heed of their environmental impacts, we too must recognise that whereas our proportional contribution to global pollution levels, climate change and other forms of environmental degradation may be negligible, our impact at sub-regional and national scales can be significant to catastrophic. The decades long practice of sand mining in Palmetto Point remains a threat to the water table and any nearby infrastructure in Barbuda. Until the sand dunes are restored and stabilized, ground water contamination will remain a real threat for the people in Barbuda, resident and visitor.

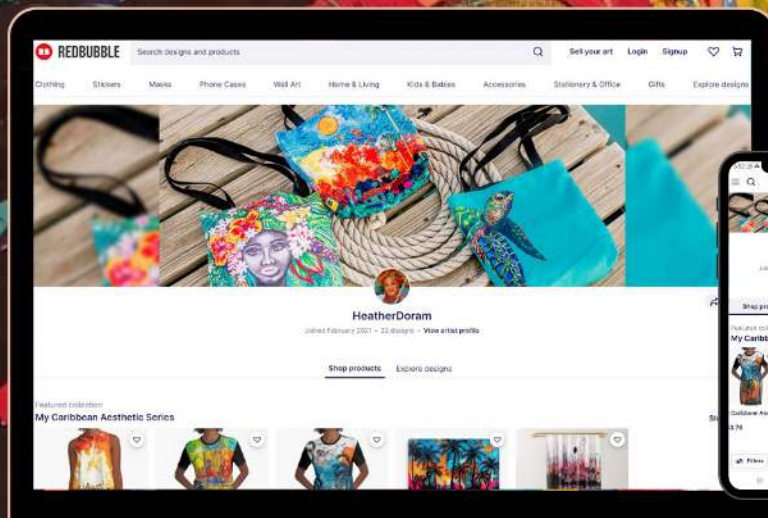
In this hyper-capitalist 21st century society,

where due to the global interconnectivity one can procure almost any good or service with the touch of a button, it is easy to trivialize the environment. In a world run on convenience, the fact that the environment, or to be more precise, maintaining environmental sustainability, is one of the three pillars of sustainable development, is for many an inconvenient truth. The current global COVID-19 pandemic has upended and destabilized many of our manmade systems. The lessons learned came at us fast and furious. Government and private health facilities made orders for medical supplies but the market was sluggish at best and simply could not respond in the worst cases. For some who had money it felt as if money had lost its power; while for others who had a little, price gouging made money a brutal master. And those who had little need to spend, they were possibly the securest of all. With concerns about food shortage many, including our own Prime Minister, realized that with global supply chains being disrupted and unreliable, money was not the key to

our nation's security and stability.

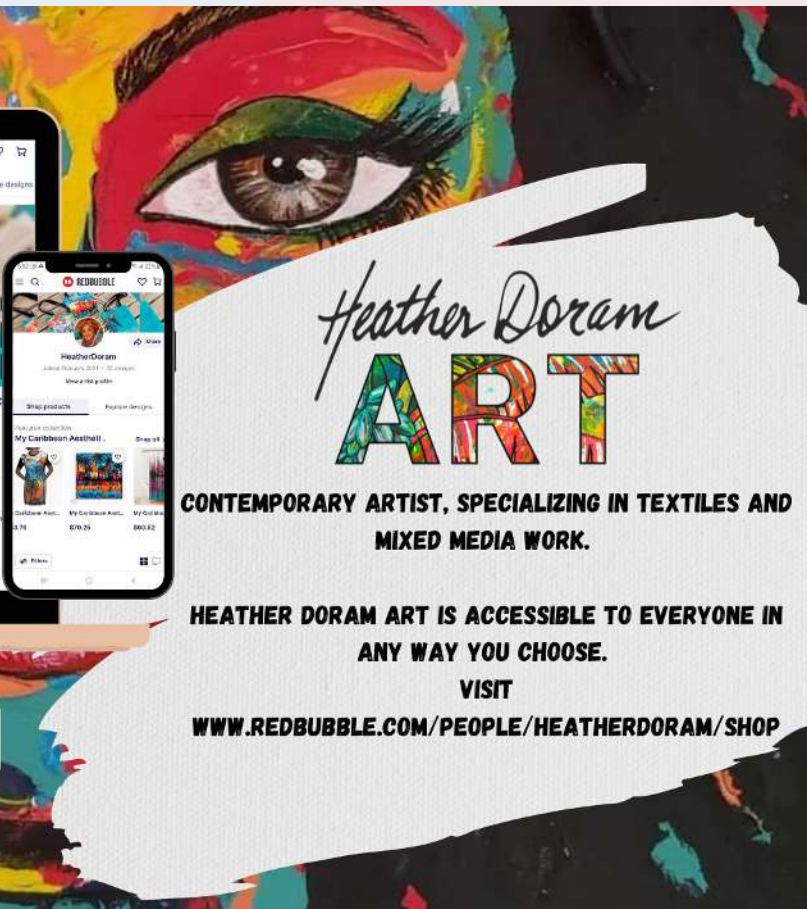
The chaos of the global pandemic has given us an opportunity to reimagine and reinvigorate Antigua and Barbuda for the next 40 years of independence. Whereas we may never reclaim the huge tracts of tropical rainforest, now more than ever we must recognise that the mainstay of our economy, tourism, is just as reliant on our environment as any other tropical destination. Show me where it says that tropical rainforests are more important than mangroves, beaches, coral reefs or seagrass beds. These features not only support our tourism but the healthier and more robust these features, they also offer food security, shelter from extreme events, entertainment and inspiration. So as we celebrate this 40th year of independence and look to the future, let us all remember that in this tropical small island developing state of Antigua and Barbuda, environmental sustainability is the solid foundation to "Resilience, Reflection and Recovery".

"let us all remember that in this tropical small island developing state of Antigua and Barbuda, environmental sustainability is the solid foundation to "Resilience, Reflection and Recovery"



🔍 Heather Doram, MFA, GCM ✕ 🗣️

@heatherdoramart



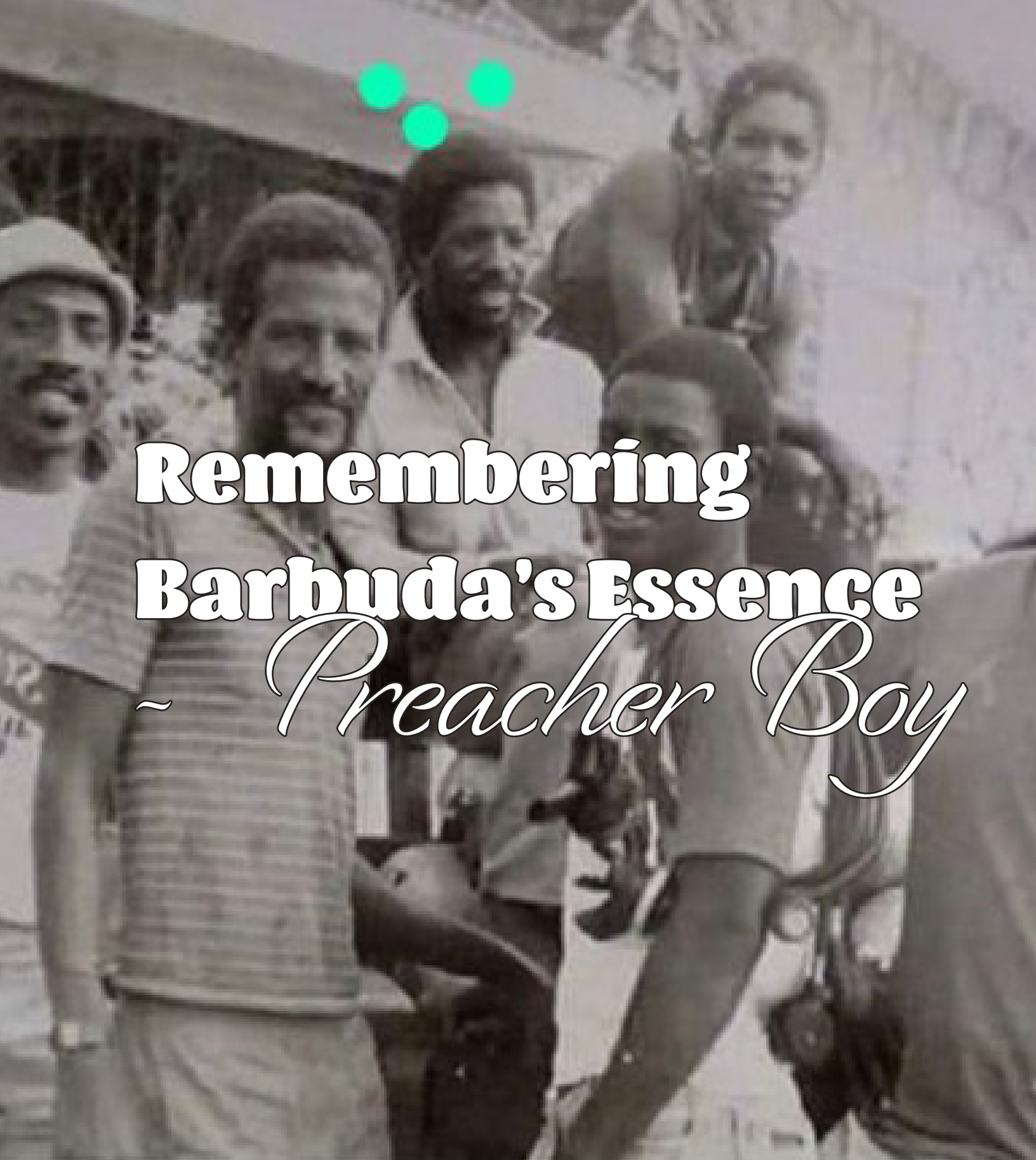
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Remembering
Barbuda's Essence
~ Preacher Boy



Walk the length and breadth of Barbuda and ask of Preacher Boy. The reply will be swift and unifying, he was a man of and for the people.

Hilroy Denfield ‘Preacher Boy’ ‘Masa’ Harris aka Brokey was a legend in his own right. Born 1954 in Barbuda Preacher Boy was immersed in all facets of life on Barbuda from a tender age. He put his youth training to productive use and into fishing as his profession, engaging in all facets of life in Barbuda.

He was a renown seaman, known to Barbudans and Antiguan, a first rate diver too. He was supplied lobster and fish to Coco Point Lodge during its operations as well as to the Barbuda Ocean Club. He was a key, influential member of the Barbuda fishing community who thought nothing of sharing his resources and the profits earned with his community.

Barbuda Council member Devon Warner reflects on Preacher Boy’s life. He is the most unselfish person I’ve ever had to deal with. Every fisherman would have benefitted from access to his boats to go fishing, especially if they were going through

a rough period.”

Preacher Boy’s generosity was legendary. He never said no to anyone. Everyone one who engaged with was positively impacted by his bright smile and giving personality. Notwithstanding his free spirit he was committed to preserving the Barbudan way of existence.

Harris was described as quality cricketer who had stint playing Club cricket on the mainland.

He was also steeped in the culture of his twin-island nation. He played steelband briefly with Harmonites Steel Orchestra. He also worked with William Lewis and Shelly Tobitt on the production of a number of calypsos.

He is counted among the top three Calypsonians in Barbuda, being central to the epic Caribana Competition of the 1990s. Goldie reflects on the fierce rivalry between Preacher Boy, Montgomery, and himself recounting engaging in intense preparation to dethrone Preacher Boy to no avail. Preacher Boy won three crowns over the course of his participation in Caribana. His participation in the cultural life of Barbuda extended to encouraging broad based participation in the festivities and general community life.

The general consensus of Barbudans everywhere is that Hilroy Denfield ‘Preacher Boy’ Harris deserves every accolade that could be conferred on him, even posthumously.

His legacy of community spirit and generous giving will live on!!!

Caribana Calypsos by Preacher Boy

Positive

South Africa Crisis

Whit Weekend

Chosen Land (Barbuda)

Caribana Again

Mary Zoo Frankie



Gun Shop Cave in Barbuda

Photo courtesy Mohammad Walbrook





The Face of Education in Antigua & Barbuda after Independence

by Jacintha Pringle
(retired Director of Education)

*“Education is not static; it is dynamic.
What was considered adequate in 1981
is now passé in 2021.”*

Education has always held my interest for several reasons, however, I think the most compelling reason is the realisation of its significance in the lives of individuals who may come from low income households. Without it, one is completely lost in this big, bad world. It is therefore important that we continue to sensitise children, especially the less fortunate in society, to the value of having a good education.

Antigua and Barbuda gained political independence from Britain on November 1, 1981. I remember this date for more than reason but most importantly because of the fact that my first child was christened on that day. My fears of not having friends come to her Christening party were allayed by the heavy rains that fell that evening, giving many persons the preferred option of attending a house party instead of being exposed to the elements at the Antigua Recreation Grounds. Enough said.

Let me begin by attempting a definition of education. IGI Global (2020), defines education as the acquisition of knowledge, skills and values that enable the individual to thrive in any environment.

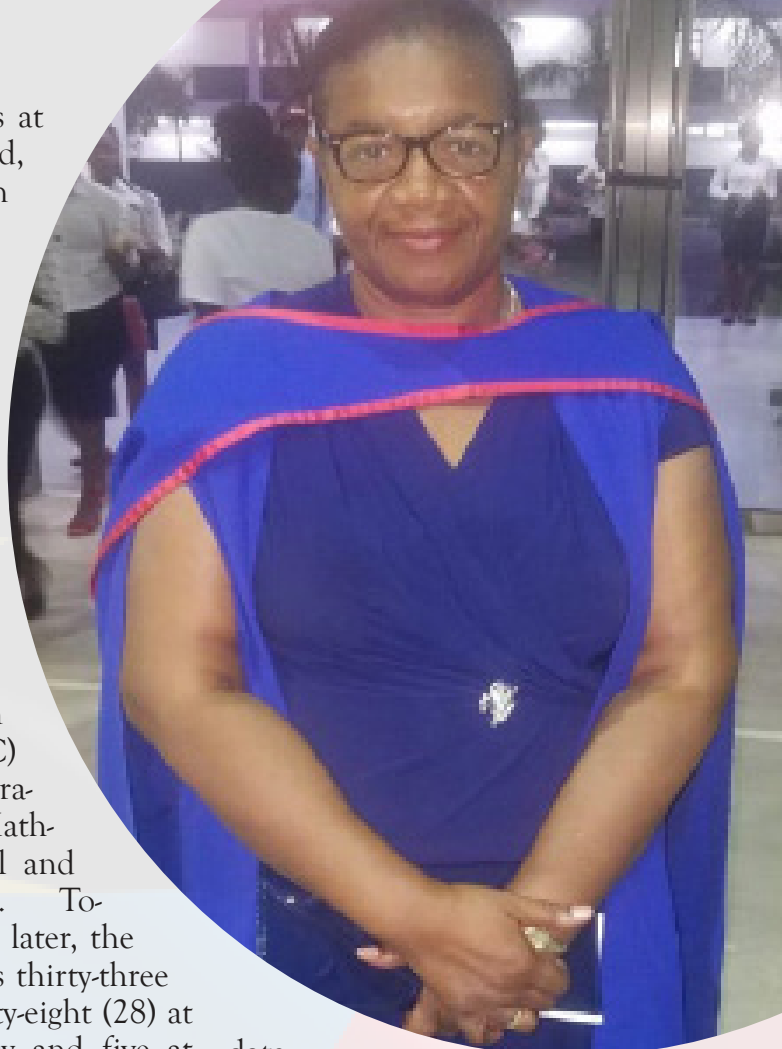
Education is not static; it is dynamic. This is the reason as to why it is always changing. What was considered adequate in 1981 is now passé in 2021. More is always being demanded because in order to remain relevant we have to be able to compete with the rest of the world. Our leaders are mindful that education is a right, not an option.

So what has changed in education since Independence? Many things!

Since 1981, the number

of subject offerings at CXC has increased, giving students in Antigua and Barbuda and the entire Caribbean, the opportunity to choose from a wider range of interests. In 1976 the Examinations Council conducted its inaugural examination for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) in English, Geography, History and Mathematics at General and Basic Proficiencies. Today, forty-five years later, the Council now offers thirty-three (33) subjects, twenty-eight (28) at General Proficiency and five at Technical Proficiency. The Basic Proficiency Level was introduced for students who were not very strong in certain areas but parents were resentful of it arguing that employers did not recognise the subject at that level so gradually the Council, in its wisdom, discontinued the Basic Level.

In days of yore, students leaving school would write a maximum of eight subjects. The more gifted ones would attempt ten or even eleven subjects at the CSEC Level. Today, students are writing as many as they choose to do (20+) and passing them to boot! Let me quickly inject here that I am not judging a child's intelligence only by his ability to pass a vast number of subjects at the CSEC Level. I would, however, be the first to acknowledge that it is quite a feat to manipulate so many subjects at one sitting. The candi-



date who does this must stand out from the crowd and must be recognised for his/her academic prowess.

And yes, there are those who question why a student would want to write so many subjects at one sitting. Why should he or she not if they are capable? To each his own.

I am proud of our Caribbean examinations. Much is demanded of our students and no one can say they are “watered down”. In troubled times, we criticise the Council but we are mindful that the Caribbean Examinations are ours, something that we can call our own.

In 1994, the government introduced the Education Levy; every person, business, employer had to contribute to the development of education in Antigua and Barbuda. There was much



The Sir McChesney George Secondary School in Barbuda.

disgruntlement. As far as I could see it was just another tax. However, very soon, citizens began to see the wisdom in the madness. As a result of the Education Levy, students in all government and private schools are able to get their textbooks free of cost. The physical conditions of schools have been improved and young nationals are able to access bursaries to assist them with their tertiary education.

As a parent of four young children, I was relieved from having to spend so much money that I did not have on so many textbooks each July/August in preparation for the new school year. As a teacher, teaching was made easier since all students now had all their textbooks. Prior to the Textbook Scheme, managed by the Board of Education, there were students who went through the entire school year without all their texts simply because their parents could not afford to furnish them financially.

When a child is enrolled into school, he or she now gets a free school uniform under the School Uniform Grant Programme (SUGP 2020). This assists parents in ensuring that

their children are properly clad for school and are not raggedy as some looked prior to this initiative.

More scholarships for tertiary education are now available through the Board of Education. Students procure scholarships at the tertiary level. Citizens of Antigua and Barbuda who wish to pursue a tertiary education may choose to apply to the National Student Loan Fund (NSLF 2008) for financial assistance. As a result of these two latter initiatives, many Antiguan and Barbudans have been able to access first and second degrees, making themselves marketable and competitive on the global scale.

Towards the end of the 20th Century, all the existing major secondary schools were refurbished

thanks to a loan from the Caribbean Development Bank. Perhaps the most satisfying for me, was the fact that finally, Barbuda was going to get a secondary school! Sir Mc Chesney George Secondary opened in September 2005. Prior to 2005, the Holy Trinity School, the lone school on the sister isle, housed both primary and secondary students. Looking back, that system was archaic and certainly placed secondary students in Barbuda at a disadvantage.

Quite apart from what the eyes could see there were certain enhancements to school plants that took place. One of these was the introduction of computers in all school offices; prior to the CDB project secretaries used typewriters to produce office documents. The CDB Project (1998)



Students of the Villa Primary School.



Students being engaged at the Golden Grove Primary School.

brought with it computers for not only school offices but also for the offices of all secondary school principals. That was a big change!

There I was with a computer on my desk but I was unable to use it. Information Technology was already a CXC subject offered at the Technical Level. Principals had to become students again in order to get with the programme. At Princess Margaret School, I remembered The IT teachers at the time, Johnston Southwell, now retired principal, and Mrs. Stacey Payne-Mascall, now a Deputy Director of Education, organised after school classes for the Principal and teachers to write Information Technology as a CXC subject in one year! That was a learning experience for which I will always be thankful.

During the period 2011/2012 the government, aware that we were moving to the age where technology would become very important, ensured teachers were trained in ICT and they were urged to integrate technology into their lessons. Dr. Edmond Mansoor, Minister of Information at the time, led this charge. Teachers were given laptops and stu-

dents received tablets with which to work. Many of these devices are still used today but many more have already crashed and teachers are anxiously awaiting the promised new batch.

No one knew that we would have been plagued by a virus like Covid-19 that would cause the lockdown of schools, making it impossible for teachers to meet their students face-to-face. While I am aware that there are teachers who are still uncomfortable when using the computer, many more are trained in using it and are able to meet students online, especially in the Google Classroom. The Ministry of Education made training available to all public and private school teachers. Kudos to Catherine Xavier and her team!

Perhaps the most impactful change that took place in the education system during this period (1981 - 2021) is the gradual introduction of Universal Secondary Education (USE) that started in 2009. It is now automatic for all students to experience secondary school education. Gone are the days when parents agonised as to whether or not their children will pass the Primary School Examination. Naturally, how well

they perform will depend on the children themselves and their parents who are to ensure that they do their homework and study for exams at all times.

I remember the various reactions from members of the citizenry. The move was nonsensical and would certainly lead to the destruction of the education system. Students would no longer work hard to achieve success was the most compelling reason why this USE should never have been introduced. Truth be told, this may be true, but who will be losing? Another popular criticism was that students who did not deserve secondary school education were being thrown into it. This would only frustrate teachers and make their work more difficult. While I would never deny that this point is valid, I hasten to say that one of the reasons why we are teachers is to make the weak strong, to empower and to develop people.

Prior to USE, fewer students wrote CXC examinations because fewer people were in secondary schools. USE affords more students the opportunity to experience secondary education and manipulate subjects at which

Students of the St. Anthony's Secondary School during the 2016 Independence Youth Rally.



they are good, especially the technical vocational subjects. Many other students gravitate to the Business subjects and do well at them.

A study was carried out on the importance of Technical Vocational Education as seen by secondary school graduates in St. Lucia and it was determined that if the school curriculum places more emphasis on Technical Vocational education, this would provide some measure of alleviation of the problem of employment which may be increased. With the emphasis on preparation for life, including employment, the technical vocational curriculum is to be more relevant, motivating

and useful to young people. Technical vocational education and training (TVET) plays a vital role in a society's economic growth and social development. It offers a sequence of courses directly related to preparing individuals for paid or unpaid employment in current or emerging occupations. Researchers of the Study, Drs. Augustin-Daniel and Mukhari posit that, "Technical and Vocational Education is often an instrument for structural change. It helps people to take charge of their lives by earning a living. Technical vocational education can be viewed as a tool for achieving national eco-

nomie and social objectives, such as encouraging and supporting priority industrial sectors.technical vocational education can generate massive social benefits such as crime reduction, health improvement that accrues to society as a whole rather than to individuals. In this regard, it is becoming increasingly common to see technical vocational education as an avenue for change in St. Lucia."

I think Technical and Vocational Education and Training can be used as an avenue for change in Antigua and Barbuda as

The 2019 Graduating class of the St. Joseph's Academy.





well because many of our students will be able to create employment for themselves and others in some of the subject areas that they may later on master (baking, sewing, carpentry, masonry, hairdressing etc.)

It was the hope that the Five Islands Secondary School would explore more work in this area. Unfortunately, this did not happen. It is my hope that this vision will be realised in the future. There is also the need to improve and expand education in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

I was very disheartened about the abortion of the Five Islands Secondary School. There was so much that could have been done for secondary school students if it had been given life. However, there is the other side of the coin. The UWI Five Islands Campus replaced the secondary school in 2019. A university in any community signals hope and

progress. Tertiary education is being made affordable for the masses. This will certainly impact social and economic growth in the next two decades.

What are the other things that have changed in education since Independence? There is now more emphasis on Early Childhood Education. Teachers who teach in this area can now access Teacher Training and obtain their Teacher Training Certificate from the Joint Board of Teacher Education (Mona and Cave Hill). For a long time preschools were ignored but this is not the case now. There are now regulations regarding their operation and when these are flaunted, operators run the risk of having their centres closed by the entity that supervises this area.

Cognisant that all good teachers do not necessarily wish to become school administrators, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration of the Antigua

and Barbuda of Teachers trained teachers to become Master or Senior Teachers and Heads of Department so that there is upward mobility in the system, not trending only to the principalship.

Finally, teachers were reclassified in 2014. According to the prepared document, teachers can determine their salaries based on their qualifications. The document specifies the qualification needed in each category. An individual coming into the system can now map out where he or she would like to be in the next ten or twenty years.

We have come a long way since Independence but there is much more to be done. We are grateful for what we have accomplished thus far and look to the future with much anticipation.

***Happy Independence
Antigua and Barbuda!***

Game Time!

40 Years of Parliament

Antigua & Barbuda

Parliament, through 40 years

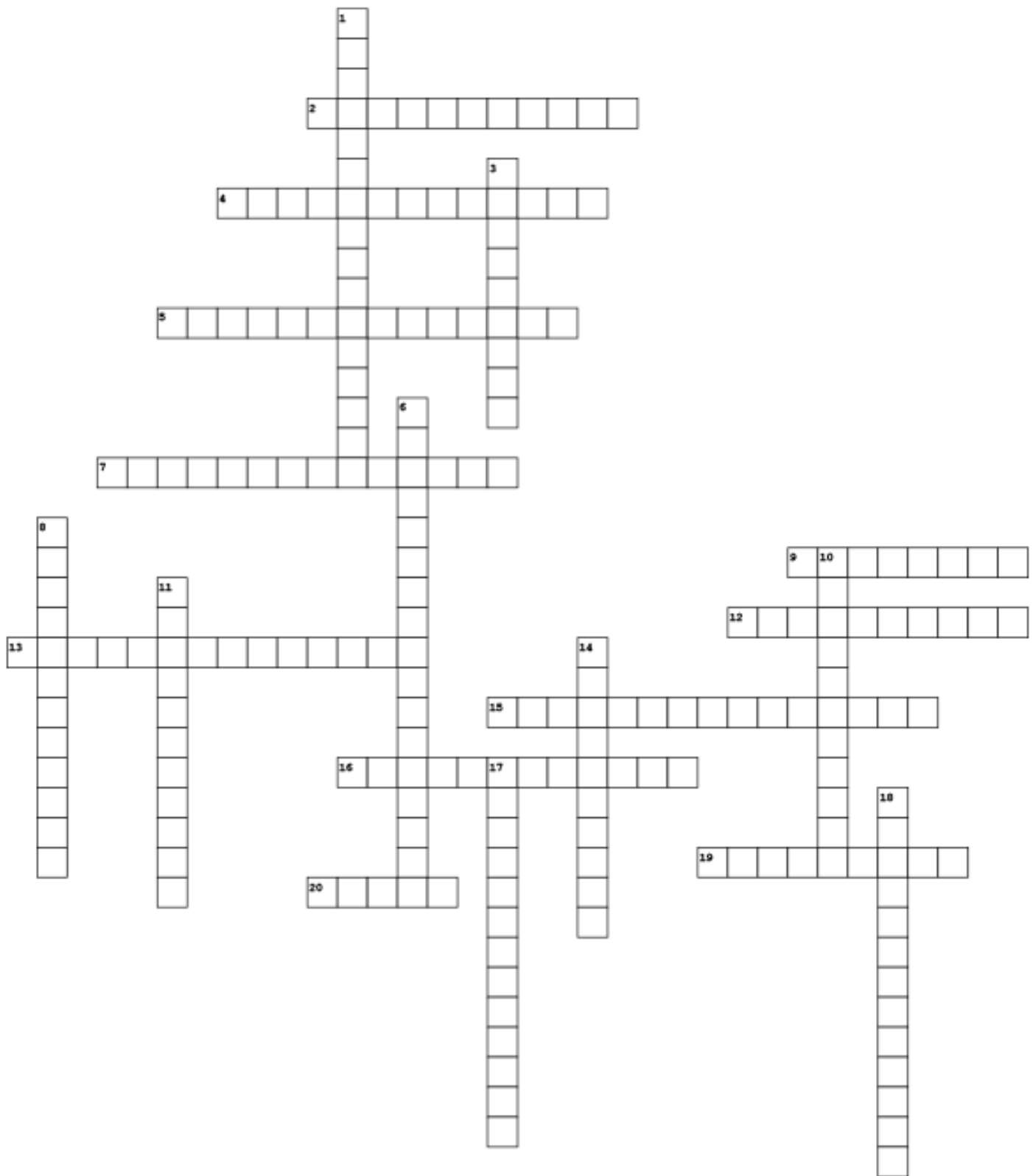
Across

2. 1st female MP in the Lower House of Parliament
4. Speaker of the House in 1981
5. From member of political committee of foundation party, to leader of the party that unseated the root
7. Parliamentary Secretary of Women's Affairs, leading Caribbean Home Economist
9. Cabinet connection - Daddy then, daughter now
12. Rural East Cabinet members , I am the foundation
13. Minister of Tourism then, Queen's Representative today
15. Economic Development then, bottling our basic need today
16. Barbudan MP from Barbudan party, once in Cabinet, still in Parliament
19. Our surname could also be tied to the 'faith', from Education to Upper House, still legislators
20. Father, Sons, Granddaughter

Down

1. Sweetest talker ever
3. One side law advisor, next side lead law scribe
6. Longest serving Minister of Labour
8. Leading from the West, outside the box thinker yet feisty
10. Barbudan who decided it was safer with labour until fall by one vote
11. Leading cricket coach, calypso writer, MP for St. George to Cabinet
14. From Cabinet to Speaker of the House
17. Way beyond 9 lives to world record status
18. 1st female Speaker of the house

40 years of Parliament





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40 Years a Theatre Baby

When interviewed by CXC CSEC students for their Research SBA (school-based assessment), this is my preface to my life in theatre. For my “statement of interest” on my master’s application, I opened with great sentiment explaining that “theatre was like that lover you grow apart from, but return to once you realise this is your soulmate.” Sappy, ‘ent it? I live a pretty sappy life and I’m totally okay with that.

In my own little world, it is so cool to say that my parents met through theatre. In fact, I often jokingly credit Dorbene O’Marde (affectionately called Uncle Fats) as the genesis of my existence. I was fortunate to have been raised in a house of not only thespians, but literature educators (my maternal grandparents), so the appreciation for the arts was inherent, even though I was encouraged to pursue anything that my heart desired. But it was the enrollment in various drama and performing arts workshops, and the exposure to troupes, whether visiting or while off island, that would have solidified my fate in theatre. I daresay, being raised with grandparents and an uncle who were teachers (my mother chose the mundane road of accountancy) would see me as a Theatre Educator no less.

My earliest memory of theatre is of me as a toddler climbing up on stage at the UWI Open Campus, where my parents were either performing, or premiering their first film *Man That I Am*. The Harambee Open Air Theatre would be my introduction to theatre, my first realisation of what a family outside of blood relations could feel like. It was from the family of Harambee Open Air Theatre and Roots Krokus that our parents would create the “Children’s Education Workshop”, which would imprint our lives forever. For many Saturdays we’d gather at the old Catholic Annex on Church Street, or in the lot of Carnival Gardens, and different parents would host storytelling, dance, drama, and other cultural workshops. Attendance was not optional. I can still hear the faint voices singing “the coolie man house on fyah, the coolie man

“I was born into theatre!”

- Zahra J Aivall





Members of Harambee Open Air Theatre. Top Row: “Tony” and Gene Nanton
 Middle Row: Dorbrene O’Marde, Buntin Airall, Adosha Francis, Justine Airall, Terry “IT” Padget, Ozzie Reviere.
 Bottom row: Arlene Kitson, Beverley Airall nee Skerritt, Heather Edwards.
 (Photo courtesy Beverley Airall)

run away”, and Zucan Bandele leading us in folklore as our hips moved downwards and upwards and we sang, “cruddydown a lady, cruddy down a lady”.

My next defining moment would be a visit to New York to see my father. He would take me to Broadway on this trip to see the musical *Cats*. I may have been about eight at the time, but I remember distinctly not only the characterisation of the cast, but the transformation of the house (area where the audience sits). The balcony and a few of the front rows had been transformed into the fantastical world of the garbage dump, and yes, I was in awe. Even more so as the Cat leader sat frozen on stage throughout the entire intermission. No, I did not take a bathroom break as I wanted to see if he’d twitch and break character. And even at that young age, I knew I wanted to be

a part of something like that; I wanted to create that feeling for audiences; I wanted to do things like that in “little Antigua and Barbuda”.

But it would be my tenure with Dr. Amina Blackwood Meeks that would give me that sound grounding. As a member of her children’s group “Child’s Play”, we would have been through the ringer as young thespians learning techniques, terms, and the painful yet beautiful process of rehearsal. It was Amina who would show me that performing outside of Antigua and Barbuda was possible. At the time, it did not seem a big deal, but reflecting... wow! Can you imagine being ten years old and the only group to represent Antigua and Barbuda at the CARIFESTA event in Trinidad? I can still recall the pride of our little group of young people walking that huge stadium with our flag

flying high, printed on our shirts. It was epic, being surrounded by so many colours and sounds of the various islands. From steel pan to stilt walkers, we were immersed in this fusion of culture and talent, and it was intoxicating. We’d eventually go on to travel to Miami to perform, and even Belize for an exchange with another youth drama group. I knew I’d one day want to create similar opportunities for young people.

But alas, life happens, and my ambitions jetted in another direction. After completing the Antigua State College and teaching for a year at the Villa Primary School, senior level with some students who were older than me, I realised I wanted to pursue counselling. I wanted to be a psychologist and offer help. Unfortunately, the university I attended, Saint Mary’s in Nova Scotia, did not have a large theatre culture.

My best friend and roommate would remind me, however, that I still found the theatre, dragging her or any willing friend to anything from a Martin Luther King Jr. production to the ballet!

Fast forward to my return to Antigua, and my alma mata – the Antigua Girls’ High School – and this is where I realized that I did not have to wait until I was in my 40s and upwards to start my own youth group. Now, I must share that around 2004 I heard that CXC had introduced a new syllabus – Theatre Arts. I

more than a light dance (we had a ballerina on pointe that year); and the travellers danced up the aisle, abandoning their solemn walk. And while some Old Girls may have scoffed at some of our productions over the years, until the pandemic, it garnered renewed attendance from both the participating students (Antigua Grammar School included) and the public. Over the years we’ve had Josephs who could sing and dance, a drummer girl who electrifies the audience with her violin, ballet dancers, and shepherds

Culture Khan Cordice and members of their group “Just Six”. Zee’s Youth Theatre would have seen some now prominent professionals on my stage: persons like Abi and Danielle McCoy, Arita Phillip, Regis Burton, Peter Abraham, Alyssa and Ariel Derrick, Daniel Placide nee Thomas, and several others who are all contributing to our society in different spheres.

These amazing young people would even assist with backstage and front of house management during the acclaimed productions of Eve Ensler’s The



Theatre teachers from across the island working with West End start Savannah Stevenson (top right). Featured here are Zahra Airall, Centillia Browne, Abi McCoy and choir director Vinema Jarvis.

was excited and journeyed up the hill to find out more, but was told they would not be introducing it as no one was interested. I mean... hellllloooo I am here, I am interested, and obviously I have students who are interested! My energies were concentrated elsewhere, and in 2004 I gave the annual AGHS Carol Service it’s dramatic facelift, with Mary being a talent audition for a singer and/or dancer (no longer the merit of a lighter complexion); stars doing

forming pyramids and other acrobatics. But I digress.

After being turned down, and then having a baby, and continuing the drama in my literature classes and through the Carol Services, I finally decided that I was going to form a youth theatre group. This is where Zee’s Youth Theatre was formed, with our Christmas premiere – You Need to be Told – A Nativity Story. I would have begged the musical assistance of our current Director of

Vagina Monologues and When A Woman Moans, which were produced by Women of Antigua. If you go back to 2007 with me, you’ll recall that our country, arguably, experienced its first serial rapist. It would be at a literary festival in November 2007 that I would reconnect with childhood friend and birth twin, Linisa George, and we’d discuss Eve Ensler’s The Vagina Monologues. Linisa had seen a production in Toronto, and I’d read the book.

We had the idea to join forces with Greschen Edwards Merchant and Thomasine Greenaway Whyte to create Women of Antigua, and we'd use The Vagina Monologues as an advocacy tool. Over the next two years, we'd be so overwhelmed with women sharing our stories, it came to me to suggest that we create our own and call it When A Woman Moans. The collaboration was amazing, as we had writers from around Antigua contributing to the script – Dotise Isaac, Joanne Hillhouse, Marcella Andre, Floree White nee Williams, Fayola Jardine, Brenda Lee Browne, to name a few. And best believe, save for Dotise, we got all these women, along with anyone who would volunteer – Sen. Aziza Lake and Malaka Parker, for example – on stage to perform some of the pieces.

The conversations that followed were amazing, and lives began to change and more women realized that they were not alone

in their trauma; they realised that there were other women who enjoyed freedom in their sexuality, irrespective of age (you needed to have seen Heather Doram perform “Over the Hill”), and most importantly, more men also began to see themselves as valuable partners and advocates in the fight to eradicate gender-based violence. I credit the stories of Harmabee and the writing of Dorbrene O'marde, as the subconscious seed that led me to use theatre as an advocacy tool. I began to realise how powerful the stage could be to effect change – from civil rights matters to social ills. And even more than that, it became a tool of healing, for not only me and the cast members, but the audience as well. Almost overnight, and without any intention, I began to be known as this “women’s rights activist” and a “feminist”. Truth be told, the media began tagging me as this, and I honestly can't recall the moment I accepted such; I just knew

that I wanted to help people, and theatre was proving a most valuable arsenal in this fight.

Now I should mention that by this time, I was convinced by my then principal, the late Yvette Samuel, and then deputy, Marlene Fearon, to begin teaching the theatre arts syllabus at AGHS. With assistance from Owen Jackson, I finally gave in and decided to give it a go. It would be two years later in 2014 that he'd also birth his baby – the Antigua and Barbuda National Secondary Schools' Drama Festival. By this time, Zee's Youth Theatre had taken a hiatus, and Women of Antigua as well. The festival, a dream of Jackson for years, was a reminder to me that I could never really let theatre do more than temporarily fade into the background. Flexing my muscles once again, I'd find a renewed passion for writing and directing, which would see me lead my girls and AGHS to the inaugural win



Members of Honey Bee Theatre just before their performance at the 2019 Caribbean Meeting of Ministers of Education



Members of Sugar Apple Theatre Ensemble during their 2019 performance of the Vagina Monologues. (Photo courtesy SATE)

that year, and then three more times until the pandemic.

It was the drama festival that led to Caribbean networking with some of the best theatre practitioners and educators I've met – Dr. Yvonne Weekes, Anderson Labarie, Michelle Hinkson Cox, Kentillia St. Louis, Marvin George, Jeanelle Archer-Chang, and the late great Aston Cooke. It was also the genesis of the AGHS Bee Hive, an all-female ensemble who would go on to represent Antigua and Barbuda at the 2015 and 2019 Caribbean Secondary Schools' Drama Festival, cupping the title and other awards in 2019. It was the mission to subtly create peer advocates and powerful, aware young women. This desire would see us partnering with the Directorate of Gender Affairs on many occasions, one such that would lead to us being commissioned by UN Women in 2018. This commission not only asked

for a n o r i g - i n a l piece, but led us to travel to Turks and Caicos, twice! Before I realised it, I had set out to do what I wanted when I was a child – I'd created my own youth theatre groups, and opportunities for travel presented themselves. The pandemic threw a wrench in our plans for summer 2020 when we'd planned to travel to New York for a Broadway workshop, which of course would have included seeing a few shows. I was looking forward to seeing on their faces that feeling I had when I first saw *Cats*. I am still hopeful that we can make that a reality soon.

In 2016, following two consecutive wins at the local drama festival, the acting bug began to bite, and once again, I'd be pushed to make another dream a reality. Trying my best to "sweet talk" him, I'd invite "Uncle Fats" (Dorbrene) to direct a new group – Sugar Apple Theatre. To sweeten the talk, not only would I invite him back to the home of Harambee (UWI Open Campus), but beg the honour to produce one of his plays – *Tangled Web*. This fulfilled three items on my

bucket list: producing a Dorbrene O'marde play; acting on the same stage as my parents; playing the same role my mother played in the 70s! Leave it to my mother, she invited every person who ever played that role to see the show.

Once again, life would get in the way, and although *Tangled Web* was a success, we'd take a hiatus. I'd later realise this was for good reason. Two of my past students would have returned to Antigua in the following years and it dawned on me that I could never take on "life" and run Honey Bee Theatre and manage an adult company on my own. I'd invite Abi McCoy, with her fine arts degree in musical theatre, and Nadia Brown, valedictorian of her class with a bachelor's in theatre education, to join me as principals of Sugar Apple Theatre Ensemble. While both women would have been my literature students from AGHS, Abi would have taken the stage in Zee's Youth Theatre, and Nadia would have delivered an unforgettable performance on stage for the premiere of *When A Woman Moans*. In 2018 we had the conversation, and invited persons who would have been committed, to a one-year workshop to build skills, and a new family. December 2019 would have seen the ensemble's debut with Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*; and although it would have been produced previously, this was a new group of actors under a director who was able to flex her wings as she saw fit.

So what's next? Hopefully an even deeper investment in, and respect of, the performing arts. This would look like a state-of-the-art theatre house with consul-

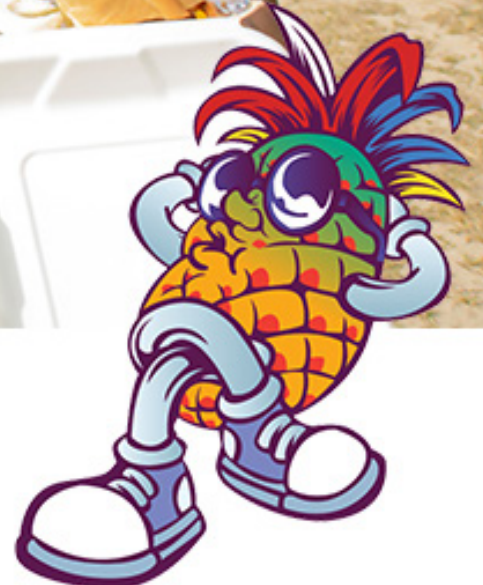


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'TIGUAN TEEZ
@tigan_teez





First youth Theatre group, Zee's Youth Theatre in 2007.

tation from theatre practitioners. Further training of persons in the arts – whether performers, technical or production crew. This would look like a break of this culture of requesting acts without remuneration or sufficient time to rehearse. It would also mean placing persons for their experience and qualifications and retiring the “friend and company”

rhetoric. Ideally, it would look like a return to the stage, with all safety protocols, and a thriving theatre culture that would deem this country as a small Broadway in the West Indies – we certainly have the talent for it.

The theatre movement within the last 20 years has allowed the public, especially young people, to appreciate varying

genres of theatre, moving away from the bawdy farces and “red panty theatre” that had dominated the previous years. Not to say we still don't get those productions on stage, but there is a new appreciation for higher comedy, drama and tragedy that would stimulate the intellectual aspect of the entertainment. Just like steelpan, the combination of the CXC CSEC Theatre syllabus in schools, the introduction of the local drama festival, and the often unnoticed and enthusiastic commitment of theatre teachers around the island, the passion and appreciation for theatre was reignited, especially in young people.

For the young people I have had the pleasure of directing over the years, theatre became a catharsis for them, offering a safe space to explore their emotions and frustrations, a safe environment to heal and nurture talent, and most importantly, an academy of empathy that has allowed them to become peer advocates and contributing members of society. These amazing young people would not only learn about social ills and develop skills that were interdisciplinary, but some



Members of Honey Bee Theatre and other schools returning triumphant from the 2019 Caribbean Secondary Schools' Drama Festival in St. Lucia.

would realise that they could have careers in theatre as well. At the moment I have four past students who are currently in universities in the Caribbean and New York pursuing degrees in theatre.

I must pause here to mention one of these students and the healing power of theatre. Shaveesa Gasper, the 2015 Carnival teen pageant winner, and the 2015 local drama festival “Best Actress” and first recipient of the scholarship that accompanied the title, would have begun her new year with a near fatal tragedy. Scarred on sixty percent of her body, I can still hear her painful cries and screams when she returned to Antigua and tried to resume her life. I can remember her crying to me saying, “No one will ever want to see me on stage again!” I promised her that was not true, and that she’d always have a place on my stage. I commend the then members of Honey Bee Theatre as Shaveesa returned to regular club practices and eventually rehearsals for the 2017 festival. Why do I commend them? Not once did they single her out, drawing attention to her scars. And during rehearsals, as she drew painful references to her character and her own fresh trauma, we’d pause, allow her to vent, scream, cry – whatever she needed – and then resume. The patience, empathy and healing love that was emitted from these young people was inspiring.

Even though we did not win the title that year, Shaveesa won the Best Actress for a second time. She’d also travel with us to Turks & Caicos in 2018 playing a role in *Light in the Dark* (our UN Commissioned piece), and play Mother in my 2019 production of Derek Walcott’s *Ti-Jean and His Brothers*. In 2020 she was my CAPE Drama student at the Antigua State College, and placed second in the Caribbean for the exam. Today she is a second-year scholar at the Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts.

When I think of how powerful theatre can be to the human soul, I think of Shaveesa, other young people who were saved through theatre – from watching the play, from their teachers who fought to save them, or even their young thespian peers. I think of the number of women around Antigua and Barbuda who found the strength to leave abusive situations, and the number of men who have admitted their own contribution to the toxicity and shifted their awareness. I think of the young people and adults who feel safe, irrespective of creed, sexuality or race, and find a home on the stage. Having witnessed and been a part of theatre during the 40 years of our nation’s independence, I see theatre as the living soul that connects and reminds us to live the best version of ourselves, not just for us, but each other.



Artiste Heather Doram performing “Over the Hill” in the 2010 “When A Woman Moans” production.



LEGENDARY LEGACY

by Petra Williams

Hurst First



“But separate a man from his car – that’s inhuman!”
– Tim Allen

Our 40 year old Antigua Barbuda story includes some most unusual yet amazing threads. Any given day, amidst the fleet of motor vehicles that caters to the staff who serve at the Prime Minister’s Office is a history maker.

Max’s Jetta, which is fondly referred to as *HURST FIRST* was launched one year before our twin island nation won its independence.

Volkswagen launched the Jetta, which was introduced for the 1980 model year in the U.S. and it became known as a “Rabbit with a trunk.” The Jetta became the best-selling German model on the continent, racking up more than 3.2 million sales over forty years. (<https://drivemag.com/news/>)

At the time of purchase in 1980, Ambassador Hurst was a student in the USA, New York to be precise. In 1985, having completed his Bachelor’s Degree, his Master of Business Administration Degree, and his Juris Doctor Degree from the New York Law School, and having taken the New York and the New Jersey Bar exams, he returned to Antigua and appeared before the Honourable Lester Bird as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Honourable Hugh Marshall as Minister of Trade, and Sir Eric Challenger, Permanent Secretary. Without a car in Antigua, he spent six months preparing for his first assignment abroad. He was posted at the Embassy of Antigua and



in Washington, D.C. He served as First Secretary. He continued his diplomatic career in the US moving into various positions including Head of the Miami Consulate in 1986, the Head of Mission to the United Nations in 1988, and Head of the Embassy and Permanent Mission to the OAS in 1995. In 2003, he resigned his diplomatic post to become a candidate in the March 2004 general elections. He lost.

Hurst was attracted to the brand and gasoline consumption pattern. A new Jetta also sold for US\$5,000.00 in 1980. The price of the Jetta has climbed as new features were added.

Max's car served him well. It was his sole personal means of transportation through his US tour of duty; the government did purchase far more elegant models that fit the image of an Ambassador's vehicle. In 1996, shortly after his assignment in Washington, he was assigned a single parking space. He shipped his Jetta to Antigua so that he would not have to depend on the supply of a car whenever he returned home meant the introduction of his Jetta to our local environment. At home, under more challenging roads, the vehicle continued to safely transport Max facilitating his regular requirements: to work, recreation and love.

That the car continues on the road is a testimony to the prowess of the technical team and Max's tenacity. According to him it's quite straight forward and uncomplicated, 'the welder, the mechanic and an impromptu body-repairman keep her going despite the quality of the roads. She delivers and I drive.'

Max shared his perspec-

tive on cars while introspecting on his now legendary mode of transportation. *“Cars are deployed as status symbols. The more expensive the model, the higher the income and the social status of the owner. Conversely, the lower the value of the car, the lower the status of its owner. Those who manufacture and sell cars have reinforced this time-tested rule for 200 years.*

I am the Chief of Staff in the Prime Minister’s government and can afford a car of higher value, I am told by many others. Derision and disappointment in my choice of a car cause many to be flummoxed. Complete strangers, at every turn, tell me about having a “better” car. They pray for its end, and they gladly hurry it to the junkyard. Yet, it won’t die. All 1980 Volkswagens are now in junk status, unless they are rotting in a front yard or a back yard. Mine drives every day.”

In 2009, Max overhauled the vehicle’s exterior investing EC\$8,000.00. In retrospect, he feels that it was not the best use of the funds. *“I could still have my car working and also have my \$8,000 + Interest of 5% annually= (12 yrs X 5%=\$4,800) \$12,800. That is the opportunity cost since 2009. A choice I made to cause my car to look good. Ha!”*

Reviewing Max’s financial analysis, the opportunity cost of the interest versus the legendary legacy of the car to our collective history. Sustaining five percent (5%) on the amount in his savings for the past 12 years though not impossible is highly unlikely. The enjoyment and delight given to so many as we speculate on the many adventures of Max’s car, priceless



and

incomparable.

How much longer does Ambassador Hurst intend to keep his 1980 Jetta on the road? In his own words: “A few are fascinated and think of its owner as eccentric. We are free to own and to drive the car we wish, and I choose my 1980 VW Jetta 1.6 Litre 4 cylinder engine with 294,500 miles on the odometer with original engine and transmission under the bonnet. I will die before she does and Adrian Hurst, my first-born son, will decide its fate. Amen!”

The love between a man and his car can only be understood by those who have felt it. (anon)







PLEDGE TO BE A GOOD GOOD GO ANTIGUA AND BARBU

by Ralph G. A. Bowen, Esq.



GOOD CITIZEN OF BARBUDA

Our Pledge is one of the most patriotic songs ever written for Antigua and Barbuda. In beautiful Kaiso music married to the irrepressible voice of one of the giants of the art form, it brings together the history of our journey that demands a pledge of patriotism molded on the backs of our ancestors and necessary to bequeath a brighter future for the generations to come. It begs for unity of all citizens in this common goal. It begs us not to allow for our exploitation either by the foreign or local man. The lyrics reach deep down into your soul and forces you to face the stark reality of what it is to be without this level of patriotism.

But have we listened? Have we paid attention to Kaiso's pleading? 40 years later have we learn? Do we understand?

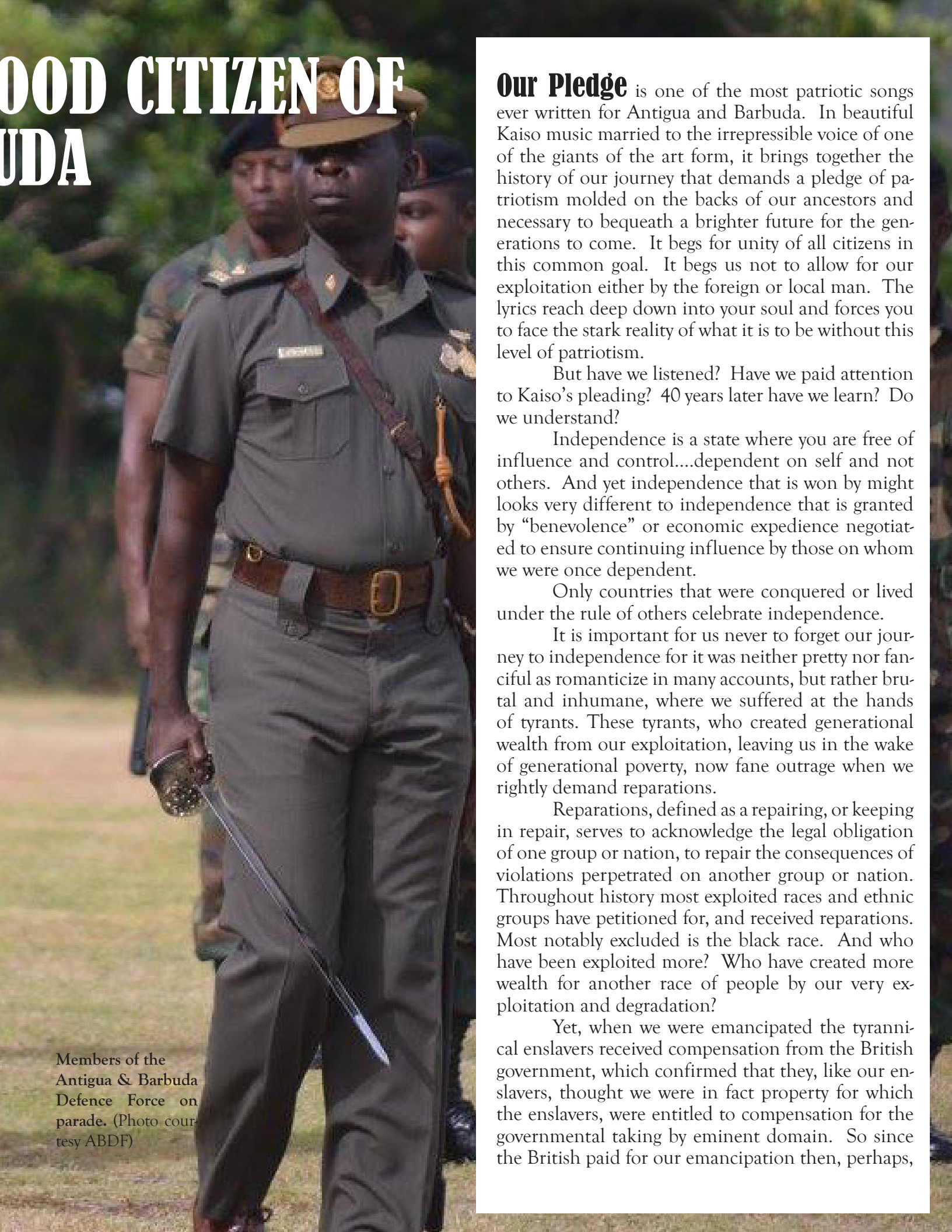
Independence is a state where you are free of influence and control....dependent on self and not others. And yet independence that is won by might looks very different to independence that is granted by "benevolence" or economic expedience negotiated to ensure continuing influence by those on whom we were once dependent.

Only countries that were conquered or lived under the rule of others celebrate independence.

It is important for us never to forget our journey to independence for it was neither pretty nor fanciful as romanticize in many accounts, but rather brutal and inhumane, where we suffered at the hands of tyrants. These tyrants, who created generational wealth from our exploitation, leaving us in the wake of generational poverty, now fane outrage when we rightly demand reparations.

Reparations, defined as a repairing, or keeping in repair, serves to acknowledge the legal obligation of one group or nation, to repair the consequences of violations perpetrated on another group or nation. Throughout history most exploited races and ethnic groups have petitioned for, and received reparations. Most notably excluded is the black race. And who have been exploited more? Who have created more wealth for another race of people by our very exploitation and degradation?

Yet, when we were emancipated the tyrannical enslavers received compensation from the British government, which confirmed that they, like our enslavers, thought we were in fact property for which the enslavers, were entitled to compensation for the governmental taking by eminent domain. So since the British paid for our emancipation then, perhaps,

A photograph of several members of the Antigua & Barbuda Defence Force in their olive green uniforms, marching in a parade. The central figure is a man in a full uniform, including a peaked cap and a sash, holding a sword. Other soldiers are visible behind him, also in uniform. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery.

Members of the Antigua & Barbuda Defence Force on parade. (Photo courtesy ABDF)



they owned us until independence. When we became a financial burden to the British government, we were “granted” independence. But independence on their terms and with the caveat that their sovereign remains our sovereign to whom we owe an allegiance, and similarly remain the head of all institutions of power and of the overall state.

Woven into the fabric of our constitution are voluminous evidence of this fact:
We are allowed to elect our representatives but they swear and owe their allegiance to the queen.
The queen is our head of State.
The queen is our head of parliament.
The queen is the head of our courts.
The queen appoints the law lords of our apex court who determines final justice in our lands.
No bill becomes law unless signed off by the queen.
The people who have the right to register and vote in our country are any citizen of any country that owes an allegiance to the queen, who resides in Antigua and Barbuda.
The queen appoints our prime minister and approves the members of his or her cabinet.
The queen approves our senators.
The queen declares and cancels states of emergency.
When the queen is at war we are at war.
The queen remains the central figure on our currency.

The queen, however, has no obligations to provide us with aid. The queen has no obligations to ensure our financial and economic security and survivalafter all we are an independent country 40 years old.....thrust into independence without reparatory justice.

We continue to celebrate the vestiges of our enslaved past in the names of our most celebrated sites of interest. We allow the queen, her citizens and protectants, and others of their ilk who have created generational wealth on the backs of our ancestors to continue to exploit us ...now by invitation by those who we elect to swear their allegiance to the monarchy. And yet we are unable to get a scintilla of reparations for our people...the exploited.

We have found our independent self so dependent on the queen that we must of necessity ask

“how independent is this independence.” 40 years later we have found it impossible to divorce ourselves from this position. We seem incapable to comprehend that we are good enough....that we are worthy and entitled to be free, truly emancipated in body, mind, soul and our finances.

We, 40 years later, continue to export our wealth by failing to incentivize domestic investment at the same levels as those who come from abroad. There is no public police or national political effort to protect our valuable assets, our lands, ensuring that ownership remains locked for our future generations. Giving our legacy the opportunity to leverage and maximize the profitability of these

lands based on the highest demand for their use in the future.

We invite colonialism and, by extension, our economic enslavement, with the policies we adopt for political expediency and short term election cycle mileage. We do not plan

nor implement strategically but get excited when others point at things we once owned but now owned by others who have marked them up to prices that we can never afford to repurchase even if offered, or afford to retake in the future even if for public

“We are allowed to elect our representatives but they swear and owe their allegiance to the queen. The queen is our head of State. The queen is our head of parliament. No bill becomes law unless signed off by the queen.”



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purpose, because we simply cannot afford the appraised value.

We operate in a global geopolitical and economic space but have failed to plan or think strategically to protect our vulnerable small open economy. We prostitute our environment to enrich others with no regard to our unique vulnerabilities to climate change and our susceptibility to its destructive effects. This while we continue to pay lip service to environmental talking points and pass toothless protective legislation in our attempts to attract environmental grant monies, only to subsequently pass laws pimping our environment to the Johns who come with smiling faces and tossing dollar bills at our feet.

Our pledge to be good good citizens mandates that WE the people rescue ourselves from this time warp as those who have sworn their allegiances to the queen seem unwilling or incapable to protect us.

In 40 years of “independence”, though within their power, our elected representative have not seen it necessary to wean themselves from the bosom of the queen, the sovereign of their former enslavers, and chart a new course for us the descendants of the enslaved. A course that maximize our human and physical capital for the benefit of this and all our future generations. Curiously they have chosen a different part...utilizing the age old conqueror’s manual of dividing and conquering. Yes...yet again, US.

We have found it necessary to always have an enemy, an opposing force to fight. During slavery it was the enslavers; during colonialism it was the colonizers; now as an independent nation it is each other. Driven by those who have the most to gain from this division, we separate ourselves based on artificial constructs of created political parties with identifiable colors....and then We fight each other in the name of our colors. Does this sound familiar? Gangs around the world have followed this same construct in the waging of their own wars. After 40 years of independence is that who we are?

Consider a nation of citizens who respect each other’s right to exercise our constitutional right to choose which candidate or party to support:

- That we strongly debate the issues affecting our nation during election campaigns, but after a fair election and the majority have spoken, we critically and objectively evaluate the policies of the government that was elected to govern us all.
- That we call right “right” and wrong “wrong” regardless of who the actors are and the colors they wear.
- That we place the emphasis on and evaluate the message rather than the messenger.
- That we always put country over political party.
- That we always put Patriotism over party patronage.

- That we evaluate the effects of governmental acts, policies and practices not just on their short term implications but on their generational effects.
- That we trust, empower and promote each other as our brother and sister citizens of our beloved nation.
- That we celebrate each other's successes particularly when this redounds to the benefit of our nation.
- That we insist on being seen and heard in our jurisdictional space, elevating our domestic goals and desires over that which outsiders may seek to impose on us.
- That we develop a National short, medium and long term plan, each building on the other and that those in government at any time are REQUIRED to implement.
- That we tap into the resources of Antiguan and Barbudans at home and abroad to help develop and implement this strategic plan.
- That we heal the long lingering artificial unproductive divide between those who live on the island of Barbuda and those who live on the island of Antigua, recognizing that we are stronger together than apart.
- That those foreigners who would seek to invest in our independent nation must come with projects that fit into and further OUR strategic plan rather than we adapting to their vision of our Antigua and Barbuda.

Forty years, no longer a child. With the technological tools and access to information that is at our fingertips we would have to work really hard to be ignorant in today's world. But if we knowingly or unknowingly chose ignorance over knowledge, then our independence will never be realized and the dependency of our legacy is assured.

This is a job for good good good citizens. On the 40th anniversary of our journey to independence let's pick up the pace by Pledging to be good good citizens ensuring that:

*Corruption must cease, nepotism decrease
throughout our whole nation
Our country then will be
Not just a society
But a JUST society
Let this be our Pledge*



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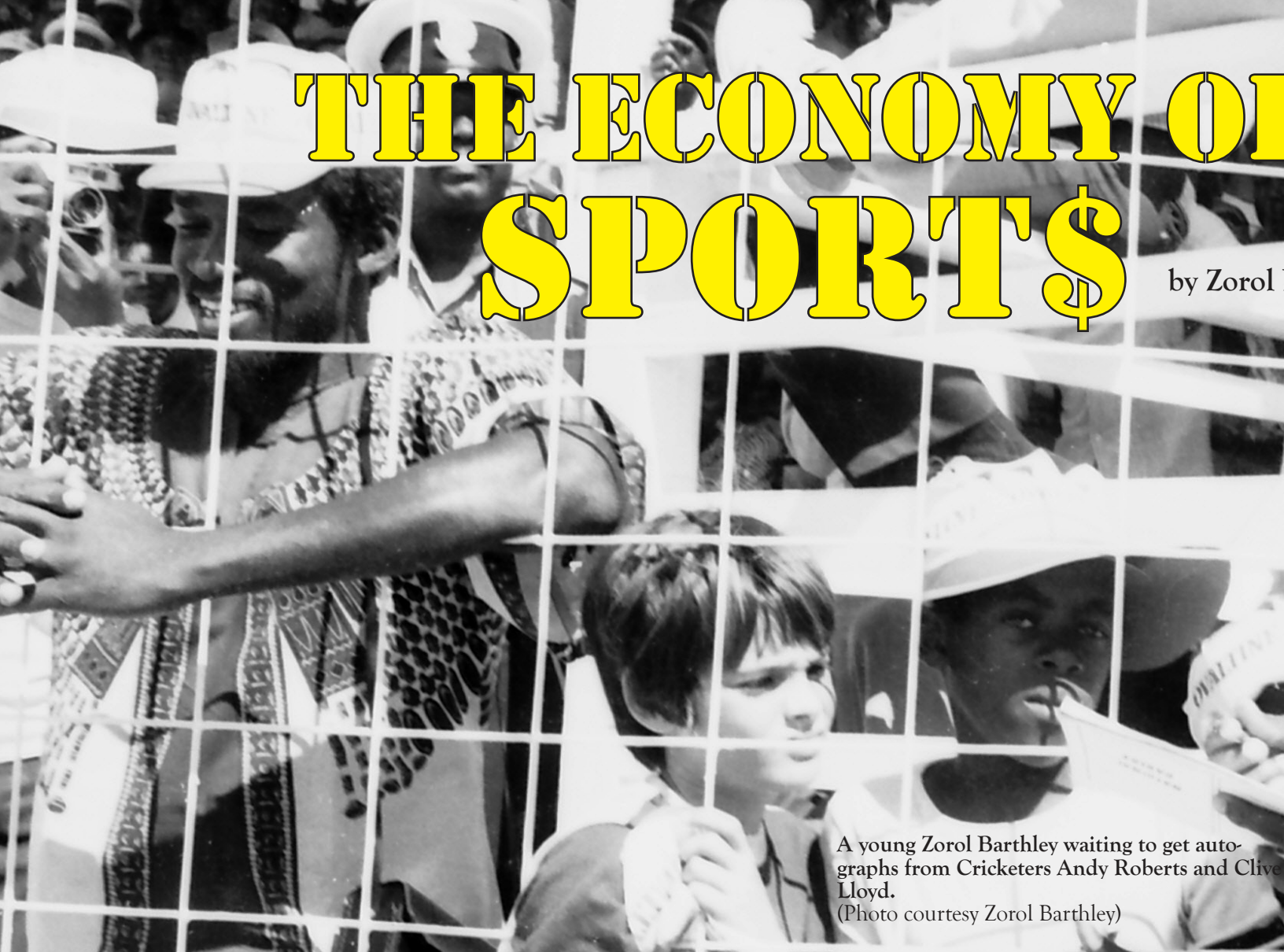


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THE ECONOMY OF SPORTS\$

by Zorol



A young Zorol Barthley waiting to get autographs from Cricketers Andy Roberts and Clive Lloyd.

(Photo courtesy Zorol Barthley)

Whenever any new government announces its ministerial appointments, I often get excited thinking that one day, some prime minister is going to follow through on a deep conviction I have always had and establish a Sports Department within the Ministry of Tourism.

Why, do you ask? Why not, I'd argue!!

Too often we hear the term 'Sports Tourism' bandied about and we may on occasion learn that the Ministries of Sports and Tourism have come together for a particular event. After the event's conclusion however, things return to business as usual with no continued synergy between the

two. Hence, the benefits accrued during the collaboration is usually lost, the best practices designed and utilised are soon forgotten and the legacy benefits come to nought. The reports, if there are any, are shelved to gather dust.

One of the major challenges faced in such disjointed planning concerns the allocation of resources and determining which ministry's budget picks up the tab.

The economy of sports is a quintessential component of any country's economy. Think back to the halcyon days of the OECS Sports Desk between 1984 and 1996 and the impact of our inter-regional sportsmen moving

through the islands season in, season out.

The Sports Desk was headed by regional cricket commentator, Reds Periera. Contrary to popular belief, the Sports Desk was not funded directly by regional governments whose initial contribution toward the establishment of the organisation was \$5,000. Obviously, governments contributed by ensuring that resources were made available on the ground when needed, however its activities were funded primarily through private sector sponsorship.

The impact was felt throughout the islands in many ways. For example, I first heard of



the company Huggins in Grenada because they sponsored a local champion team in that country which had advanced to an OECS tournament. As a result Huggins was mentioned regularly in the media and became a regionally known brand. In hindsight, I am almost certain that when Huggins decided to sponsor a local team from their country the regional impact and benefits of that decision was not envisaged.

The OECS Championships were the annual showcase for sportsmen and women across a host of disciplines. Performances improved, club structures were enhanced and our athletes secured university opportunities

to enhance their sport, their education and by extension their after-sport marketability.

On the local scene, the growth of Antigua and Barbuda as a Sports Tourism destination almost coincided with the country gaining political independence and becoming test cricket's 52nd venue, both in 1981.

The quality representation given by our first two international cricketers, Sir Andy Roberts and Sir Vivian Richards, presented the natural step that the country be offered hosting rights. Antigua and Barbuda transformed the longest form of the game, test cricket, into a five day party spectacle - something

never before witnessed in the world of cricket. Careful analysis of the evolution of the sport will also reveal that Sir Viv Richards was the father of the T20 batting style, now so very popular, long ago in his test cricket glory days, long before the birth of T20 cricket.

An Antigua test match became a must-visit for scores of fans around the Caribbean and for traveling fans of the international teams. The growth of the accompanying cricket soca hits, became an annual treat and almost signaled the early launch of Antigua's Carnival. As if by design, some test matches coincided with the popular Antigua

Sailing Week - yes, another international sporting event - and the natural crossover of interests and events meant that Lay Day became Cricket Day for many sailors, if they were able to manage the “inflow”.

The spin offs must not be lost on us, as in addition to the heightened business generated by the hotels, restaurants and taxi drivers, sports clubs also “backed in their truck”. The Liberta Sports Club utilised its members to clean the stands after every day’s play, a service usually outsourced by the Cricket Association. Who can forget the Bassa Sports Club’s steamed fish and “Aunt Tess”’s fred dumplings or the traveling Jamaica Posse ordering their two dozen dumplings on the last day of the game to take home? Bassa certainly made good money which they were able to pump back into the development of their club.

Antigua and the Antigua Recreation Ground created the template for the party atmosphere of cricket that was soon modeled with the introduction of the The Mound Stand in Jamaica and the Trini Posse at the Queen’s Park Oval. In addition to this however, music and entertainment began to find its way into cricket venues around the world, with a tag that read, “Made in Antigua”.

The Stanford T20 introduced a level of glitz and marketing never before witnessed in any sport in Antigua and Barbuda, and by extension the Caribbean. The fact that resources were getting to the lower rung of Caribbean cricket and nations across the region were represented by their own teams completely captured the imagination of the Caribbean.

Games were broadcast



nightly, crowds packed into the well maintained Stanford Cricket Ground and objectives were being met: Antigua & Barbuda was successfully showcased as the place to be, Caribbean Star the airline to fly and R. Allen Stanford and his group the investment vehicle of choice.

The Stanford juggernaut on Caribbean cricket, with a subtle attempt to extend that influence to the world game, made a short stop at the home of cricket, Lords. Landing in a branded helicopter and unveiling a “vault” of US dollars, it was announced that Antigua and Barbuda would host the richest cricket game ever - US\$20 million!

That game made a team of “Stanford All Stars” - the cream

of Caribbean cricketers - instant “Made in Antigua” millionaires before the eyes of the world.

Our tour operators and Ministry of Tourism have been regular hosts of school teams visiting from the United Kingdom and they have served as excellent competition for our local sportsmen and women.

While the groups have enjoyed their visits, like scores of other visitors who visit our shores via cruise ship or by air they have joined the unenviable and large body of individuals who are shocked and utterly embarrassed at the despicable state of the Antigua Recreation Grounds.

Among young cricketers, the disappointment lies in being unable to play a game or par-



ticipate in a practice session at a cricket venue as iconic as the ARG. For the nostalgic visitor, it's not being able to relive the former glory or purchase a memento of many of the world's most memorable cricket moments at a cricket museum which could be established at the stadium. Absolutely nothing exists as this historic location which reminds one of the glorious memories of years gone by..

Our past players and their deeds are worthy of being chronicled by those of us who have lived to witness their accomplishments in order to ensure that future generations have an accurate picture of our history. If not, a day will come when someone with no authentic claim to our story will tell

the version of our story as they choose to, as Stanford almost did.

The records and feats created at the ARG, along with the personalities who created them, are a fundamental part of our story. The sheer number of world records recorded at the venue is phenomenal. Modern cricket legend, Brian Lara's legacy would not exist without Antigua and Barbuda and the ARG. For some reason however, our country has not embraced Brian Lara as we should have for establishing not one, but two world records here. Could a Brian Lara "Road to the Records" documentary produced by the Antigua and Barbuda Sports Tourism Department be a good story? There are other ways and means by which this natural

synergy could be beneficial, however, I have encountered a high level of myopic thinking whenever this subject is raised.

In an interview he gave shortly before his passing, former Vice President of the West Indies Cricket Board (now Cricket West Indies), Clarvis Joseph, detailed the process by which the regional body's headquarters was relocated to Antigua in 1998. The subsequent spin off has been significant as noted by the preparation camps, tournaments, meetings and various other activities that are hosted in Antigua and Barbuda.. The recent partnership between the government and Cricket West Indies to acquire the Coolidge Cricket Ground as the Headquarters of West Indies cricket is a huge show of commitment.

Built for the 2007 ICC Cricket World Cup, the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Stadium, with its enhanced facilities, along with the Coolidge Cricket Ground, now allows Antigua and Barbuda to boast two international venues. They certainly placed the country at the head of the queue when Cricket West Indies made plans for its post-covid roll out of international and regional cricket. The economic boost has been welcomed, however, facilities for other sports are in need of upgrades..

On November 24, 2018, Antigua and Barbuda became the smallest country, by population, to host the finals of any international sporting World Cup, when we hosted the ICC Women's World Twenty20 Final. That was certainly a major accolade, however, a sport loving visitor to our islands would have no way of knowing this remarkable detail as



Above: Launch of "Bassa Water", the official water of Bassa Sports Club, five-time ABFA Football Division Champions. Featured are Bassa Sports Club President Lyndon "Danny" Smith, and Premier Beverages Marketing Rep Calbert Francis Jr.

Below: CPL 2014 - Antigua Hawksbills vs Guyana Jaguars, SVRCG.





(l-r) Bassa's Captain Ashton Cyrillen, Bassa



we gloss over it as though it was a mundane achievement.

On January 28, 2019, Team Antigua Island Girls rowed into Nelson's Dockyard and filled our chests with pride having completed the gruelling Atlantic crossing by choice, bearing in mind the conditions under which our forefathers had done so. Where, though, is the shrine to commemorate that worthy achievement that would serve as a symbol of the dedication, commitment and strength that we possess as a people when we come together to join forces for the common good.

Visitors to our islands, and locals alike, need to know the story of Sir Hugh Bailey and his exploits at sea as he proudly flew the most beautiful flag in the world. Sir Hugh started sailing as a 15-year-old deckhand on the schooner, *Freelance*. He eventually bought it at the age of 32 in 1975 having captained other vessels in the interim. He subsequently dedicated his time to teaching sailing alongside his other commercial exploits.

In 1976, *Freelance* sailed in OpSail 76, the bicentennial Tall Ships gathering in Manhattan, New York. His crew included 14 Antiguan cadets he personally trained. On the outward voyage, a broken shaft nearly sank *Freelance* near Bermuda where repairs were done after being towed into harbour. Can you imagine the pride that Sir Hugh felt when the *Freelance* led the Tall Ship parade down New York Harbor? I can tell of the pride I felt as a 10 year old Cub Scout as we lined Nelson's Dockyard along with thousands of citizens to welcome back the *Freelance*, Sir Hugh and his Cadets. We saluted them with pride.

As a sidebar, the *Freelance*

almost didn't leave New York as the towing company had the ship impounded for unpaid fees and filed a writ to have the ship auctioned. Fortunately, it was all settled.

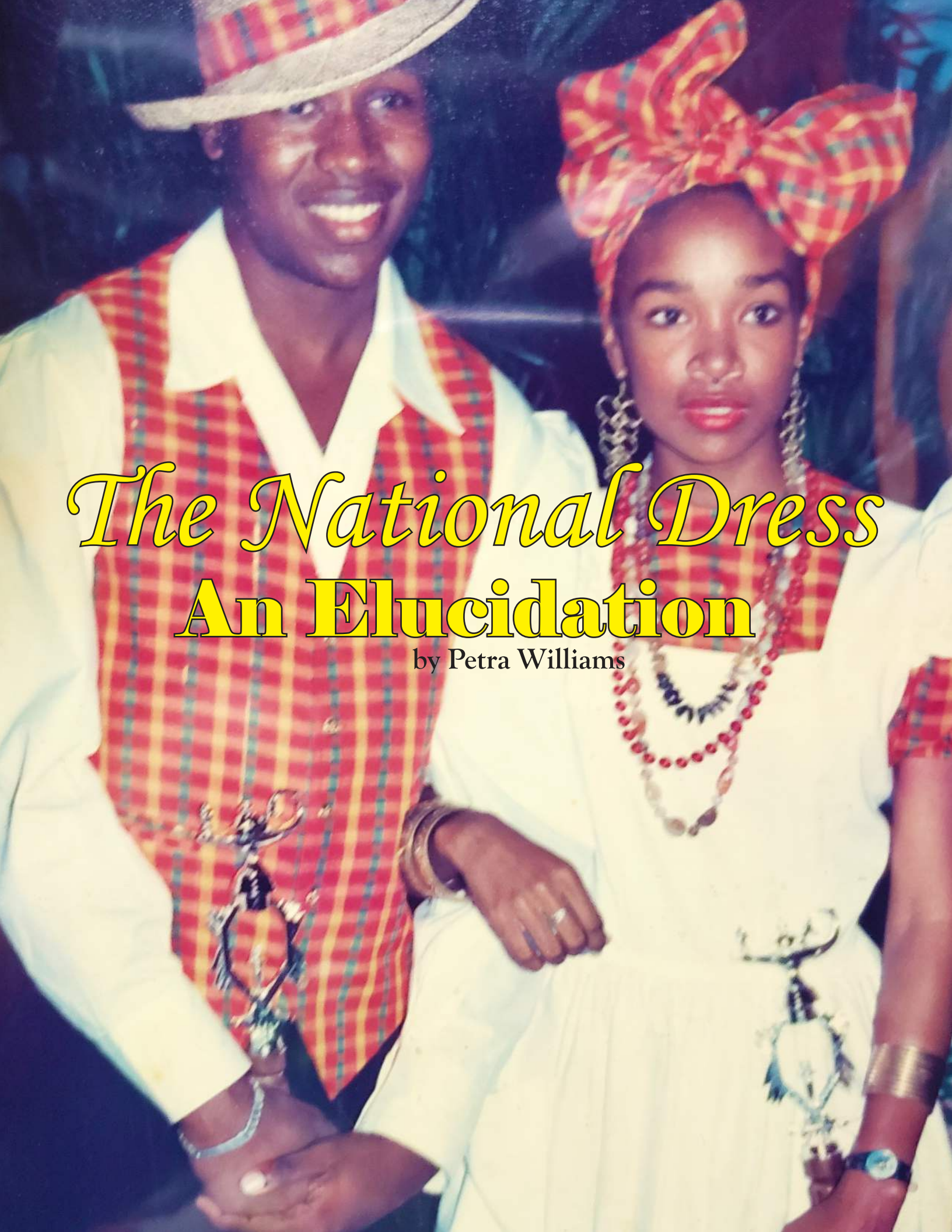
Where is the monument to celebrate the point at which Sir Hugh stepped back on to Antiguan soil? That spot where visitors could take that "must have" photo, in similar fashion to those commemorating their visit at the foot of Sir Viv's statue located at the stadium that bears his name. Is our message to this and future generations that Sir Hugh was merely a man who did some sailing and that Horatio Nelson contributed more to Antigua and Barbuda's sailing culture than he did?

Antigua and Barbuda has often punched above our weight; a feat also undertaken by national boxing treasure, Maurice Hope. We have undertaken other successful endeavours and made a positive impact on the sector. We played against and hosted the USA in the FIFA World Cup qualifiers and our athletes across a host of other disciplines have performed outstandingly at the highest levels.

We still have time to make amends for our shortcomings and the 40th anniversary of Independence certainly provides the opportunity for reflection and planning the future of our sports tourism offering.

Let us be resolute in our commitment to document more, to enhance our facilities, to be more open minded and to listen - even when the idea is not our own. Above all, let us ensure that we do not become a byline in the story.

Let it be our story!



The National Dress
An Elucidation

by Petra Williams

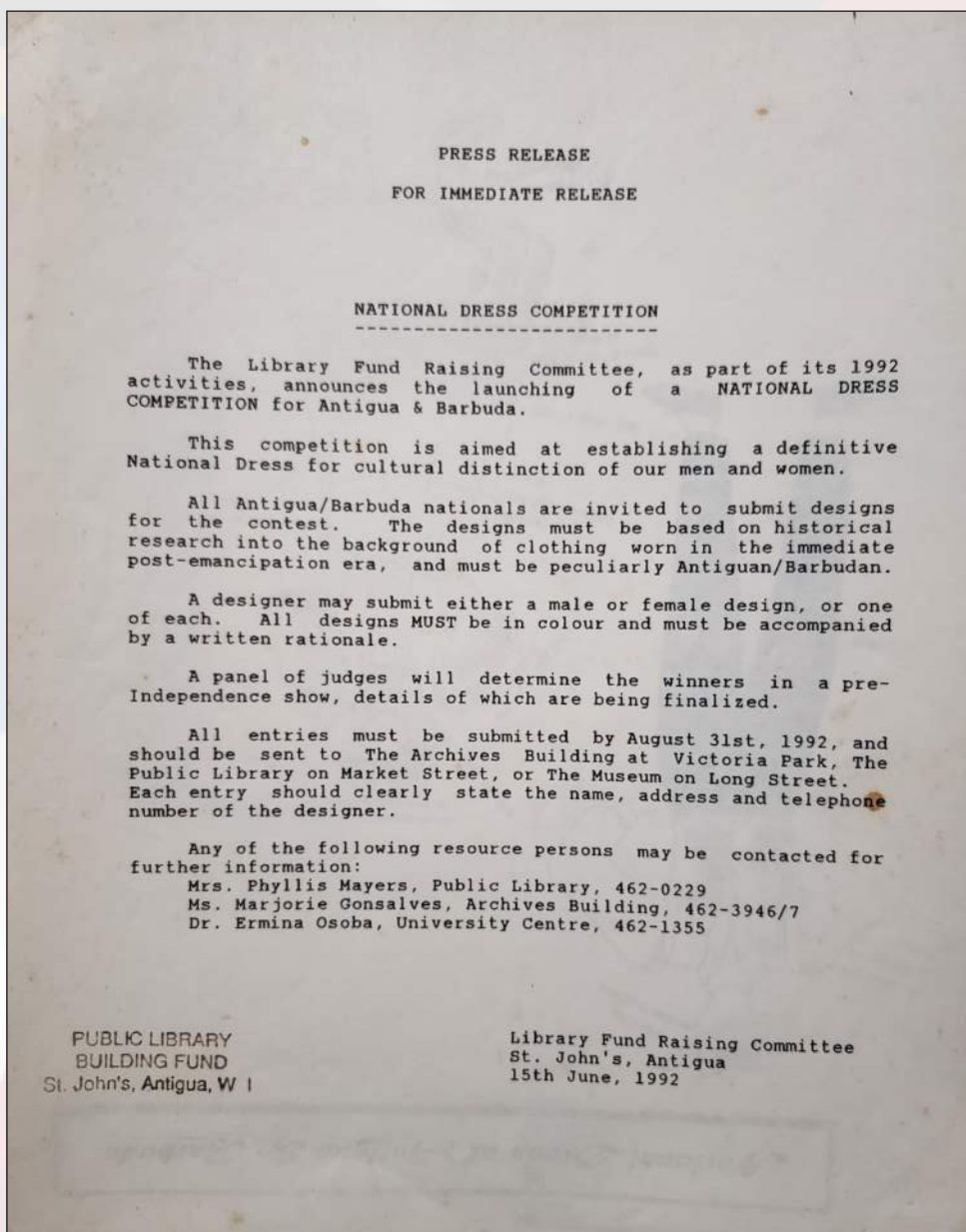
Each season of independence celebrations and sometimes in between the seasons, there is much discussion over the relevance of the National Dress. At the core of the conversations is a call to awaken the consciousness and return to the style and traditions of the African forefathers, the dominant ethnic ancestry. In this context it is useful and timely to reflect on the origin of our National Dress.

The National Dress was birthed 11 years after Antigua and Barbuda was granted political independence. The Library Fundraising Committee included a National Dress Competition in its series of fundraisers to build a new national public library. The directives provided stated “The designs must be based on historical research into the background of clothing worn in the **immediate post emancipation era, and must be peculiarly Antiguan/Barbudan** All designs must be accompanied by a written rationale.”

For those who are students of history, some tidbits to assist in building a frame for the fashion sense in the immediate post emancipation era. The Transatlantic slave trade was a significant element in European economic activity for well over one hundred and fifty years until 1807 when Great Britain led in the abolishing of the Slave Trade. Slavery was abolished in 1834.

During the protracted period of enslavement there was little opportunity to propagate the norms and values from the ancestral home. Families were ripped apart during the capture phase on the African mainland, and there are records of deliberate efforts to break the spirit of the people almost immediately from captivity begun into infinity. In the isles the enslaved people were without their customary resources and thus ‘made do’ with what was available.

The post emancipation era of our ancestors would by default then, be a mix of the various elements that influenced their life. The connection with remnants of African ancestral memory given no physical evidence or structure to execute was tenuous at best. Our religious outlook offers some insight into how the European influences continued permeated post emancipation society up to present times. A quick comparison of religious outlook and practices between Caribbean countries yield a most interesting perspective. Haiti, where African successfully overthrew their enslavers in the late 1700s, has religious practices similar to their African ancestors. This holds true for enclaves in other territories with rebellious bands that fought valiantly to protect their freedom. For the rest our religious values and practices in the post emancipation era largely mirrored and was dependent on our European colonisers belief systems.





In 1992 Heather Doram entered two designs into the National Dress competition and placed first and second.

Featured along the sides are entries from other participants in that competition.

(Photos courtesy Heather Doram)

Our customs and values from then to now mirror less those of the ancestral home of the majority of the citizens and residents of our twin island and more those of our former masters, blended with the customs of the many ethnic groups who migrated to the islands and eventually became a part of the fabric of the society.

It is with this frame that the practical considerations governing the design and construction of a national dress would be undertaken. What would our ancestors have had access to in the development of their sense of fashion. Who would they take the lead from?

Heather Doram the designer of the National Dress outlines the research process she underwent as part of her design process for two submissions. She shared the following

"I approached my research in two ways: I spoke to several elderly persons in the community, who would have had memories of the clothing worn by their parents and grandparents and any memories they may have had. I also spent many days at the museum doing research and looking at the clothing worn by black persons in the immediate post emancipation period. The images and the documentation I found in my research somewhat overlapped with the memories of clothing being worn as shared by the elders."

An independent exploration almost thirty years later finds similar context. There was no connection to the Motherland in the post emancipation period. Styles were practical, designed within the context of affordability; garment construction was multi-functional and durable. The rational outlined was not restricted to the

official national dress as we know it today. From among more than 60 entries from 23 local designers, the seven finalist designs had several common themes. They were cotton based, colourful and designed to be multifunctional. The fabric palette from regions with whom the Caribbean had frequent and continuous interaction.

Lest we think that the dress patterns were unique, reflect on our cultural dances and language which are also heavily influenced by others who have long engaged with us in the region. The same is true of our Christmas customs, our inflection in our language. Our dialect is a hodgepodge of remembered African phrases heavily laced with Irish, English and Portuguese phrases.

Thus we come to the breakout of the National Dress as conceptualized by Designer Heather Doram. *“Cotton dress with puff sleeves was a staple and because an individual could not afford to have many such dresses they sought to protect the one they had by wearing a pinafore over it. So the pinafore would be donned to go to the market and spruced up to be worn to church or even a wedding. The women were very creative and industrious and would demonstrate their skills by stitching several tucks in the skirts of the garment. The bags in which flour and other goods were shipped were much sought after and the designs printed on them would be bleached out in the sun. The madras was available and it was inexpensive. Clothing and head ties were made from it.”* In essence the dress in local lingo was a cut and contrive edition, built to last while standing out.

Why the madras? The designer, recognizing that there was no dominant African style in the design simple because it was not a part of the post emancipation cultural ethos, opted to infuse the bold African colours of bold, red and green via the already, very affordable and popular madras print which was already a long time fashion staple. The Afro-Caribbean heritage was secured. Tiny ribbons in the same colours was added to the pinafore in addition to rows of lace.

Heather reflects *“I was cognizant of the fact*

that a National Dress was a dress which was going to have to stand the test of time and be worn at official functions, balls, banquets etc”

In keeping with the terms and conditions of the competition the sleeves on the winning design was adjusted to be longer and fuller. The madras adjusted to cotton from the synthetic original. The dress, both male and female, were approved by Cabinet in 1994 as the official National Dress.

As we continue our quest for our place, the best Antiguan and Barbudan we are to be, it is our duty to build on the legacy of our ancestors. We are unique people forged from a mixed bag of circumstances that combines for our unique characteristics. Our walk, our talk, our sense of style and culture draw from all the influences alongside our genetic makeup. We are the sum of everything. As we go forward let us continue to fuel our nation building genes.

Changes to the future, if any, must be within the context and understanding of our past!



Designer of the National Dress of Antigua and Barbuda Heather Doram.





Editor Eboni Brandon is a veteran journalist who now lives abroad and provides Editorial and Public Relations consulting services. She is also a restaurateur and the proud mother of an 18 year old son, Skye.



Ato J. Lewis is an environment and sustainable development professional with over 20 years of experience. A proud Antiguan who completed his first degree in Geography in 2000 at the UWI Mona Campus and in 2005 achieved a Masters in Sustainable International Development at Brandeis University through an OAS LASPAU scholarship. Ato works at the Dept. of Environment where he heads the unit that oversees government regulation of the EIA process. Additionally,

he support the implementation of a number of the environmental treaties to which Antigua and Barbuda is party. Ato has also provided technical support on a variety of environmental project and participated in various regional and international negotiations. As a sustainable development practitioner, Ato believes wholeheartedly that any development that does not respect or seek a harmonious existence with the environment is not only courting failure but likely to impose significant hardships on future generations. He hopes for a prosperous Antigua and Barbuda



Carlon Knight is a graduate of the University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus, where he received a B.Sc. in Political Science and Economics. He enjoys research in areas of Governance, Public Policy and International Relations with a focus on Diplomacy, Regional Integration, Trade and Economic Development. Outside of research Carlon enjoys writing and was a former columnist for the Caribbean Times newspaper as well other regional publications. He has also been a frequent commentator on discussion programmes such as the Big Issues and Observer AM.

Meet the Writers



Zahra I Airall, playwright, director, spoken word artiste, actress, educator. She is stationed at the Antigua Girls' High School, her alma mata, where she founded the Honey Bee Theatre, the inaugural and current winners of the National Secondary Schools' Drama Festival. She has travelled and performed in various islands, and even headlined in St. Kitts as a spoken word artiste. Zahra holds a Bachelor of Arts in English and Psychology from Saint Mary's University, a post-Graduate diploma in Education from the University of the West Indies, and a Masters in Theatre Education from the University of Houston. When she is not working as a teacher, dramatist, photographer or free-lance journalist, she can be found having a glass of wine with friends or hanging out with her daughter.



Zorol Barthley is a former Antigua cricketer and administrator, having served as a West Indies Under 19 captain and Chief Cricket Operations Officer at the West Indies Cricket Board, now Cricket West Indies. A certified Commercial Pilot, and General Insurance Practitioner, Barthley currently manages his own business, DizzyB Enterprises Ltd, providing services in Real Estate Sales & Development, International Logistical Management & Facilitation, and Sports Tourism Tours & Consultancy.



Ralph Bowen Esq is a practicing lawyer in the jurisdictions of the States of Connecticut (1998), New York (1999) and Antigua and Barbuda (2003). His commitment to the development of Antigua and Barbuda encom-

passes a range of initiatives to include a founding member and current President of Antiguans & Barbudans for Constitutional Reform & Education (ABCRE). Mr. Bowen also formed and serves as president for the Antigua and Barbuda Heritage Foundation, Inc., a New York based Not-For-Profit Corporation organized for the development and expansion of education and health care services in Antigua and Barbuda and the wider Caribbean.

Ralph is married to Dr. Suzette Sadio-Bowen and they have a son Brandon Bowen.



Jacintha Pringle

After having spent more than three decades in the classroom as a secondary school teacher Mrs Jacintha Pringle was promoted to Education Officer with responsibility for Secondary Schools (2002), then to Chief Education Officer (2005).

Post her retirement from the Public Service in 2015, she served as Principal of the Sunnyside Tutorial School for a brief period. Presently, Mrs. Pringle works as an English A and English B Teacher at the St. Joseph's Academy School.

She is the mother of four adult children.



Barbara A. Arrindell was born in the house that occupied the land where she now lives. She attended the TOR Memorial, Christ The King High School & The University of the West Indies. She says that when she grows up she wants to be a writer. Until then she involves herself in activities that benefit youth and community development.



Petra Williams is a patriot who is committed to observing and encapsulating the life, history and passions of Antigua and Barbuda. She is an economist, and a social, political and sport commentator. She is a sports enthusiast who enjoys working with young people. Petra looks forward to a more structured progressive Antigua and Barbuda!



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