

# Caribbean Today



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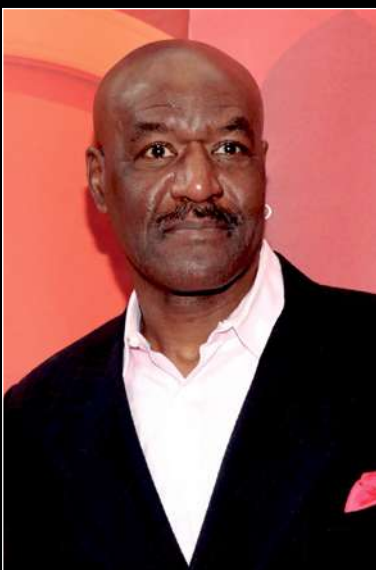
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# FROM UNDOCUMENTED TO MAGA

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Trinidadian rapper and singer-songwriter Nicki Minaj at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium in Washington, DC, on January 28, 2026. (Photo by Brendan SMIALOWSKI / AFP via Getty Images)

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## REGIONAL NEWS



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## Here Are Some Of The Top Headlines Making Caribbean News:

## REGIONAL

Independent Jamaican artist Keznamdi captured the 2026 Grammy Award for Best Reggae Album on Sunday night, Feb. 1st at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles, edging out genre heavyweights, including Vybz Kartel, in a victory that underscored both reggae's evolving sound and the growing influence of independent Caribbean artists on the global stage.

Keznamdi claimed the honor for BLXXD & FYAH, released independently in August 2025, marking his first Grammy win and his first nomination. The album triumphed over Kartel's Heart & Soul, Lila Iké's Treasure Self Love, Jesse Royal's No Place Like Home, and Mortimer's From Within.

"Reggae music has always been a music weh defend truths and rights, African liberation, and Black man redemption," Keznamdi said while accepting the award. "We represent Jamaican culture -dancehall and reggae."

**A Roots-Deep Reggae Journey**

Born into music, Keznamdi is the son of Errol and Kerida, lead vocalists of the international reggae band Chakula. He

grew up touring globally and recording in a home studio in the St. Andrew hills of Jamaica, where the band produced ten albums.

He recorded his first song at age five and began performing publicly during his mother's album release tours for her children's project Save the World, which became a viral hit in Jamaican primary schools. His musical development continued through studies at St. Mary's College in Northern California, followed by formative years living in Tanzania and completing high school in Ethiopia.

BLXXD & FYAH features collaborations with Kelissa, Mavado, and Masicka, blending roots consciousness with contemporary global production.

**BARBADOS**

Prime Minister Mia Mottley says she has invited election observers from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Commonwealth for Barbados' February 11th general election, as the opposition Democratic Labour Party, (DLP), renewed calls for a postponement.

Chief Electoral Officer Sherland Turton confirmed last week that candidate nominations



Jamaican musician Keznamdi accepts the Grammy for Best Reggae Album for "BLXXD & FYAH" on stage during the 68th Annual Grammy Awards Premiere Ceremony at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles on February 1, 2026. (Photo by VALERIE MACON / AFP via Getty Images)

proceeded smoothly. Mottley, who is seeking re-election in St Michael North East for the ruling Barbados Labour Party, said the invitation aims to protect the country's reputation and electoral integrity.

She said she has formally written to CARICOM Secretary General Carla Barnett and Commonwealth Secretary General Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, with copies sent to President Jeffrey Bostic, the Electoral and Boundaries Commission, and the opposition.

DLP leader Ralph Thorne alleged irregularities in the voters' list that could disenfranchise citizens, though he provided no evidence. He said voting is a constitutional right and warned that even a single disenfranchised voter undermines democracy.

**TRINIDAD & TOBAGO**

Government and opposition leaders in T&T have offered sharply different reactions after the Zones of Special Operations (ZOSO) Bill was defeated in the Senate on January 27th, just days before a state of emergency is due to expire.

The legislation, piloted by Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar, required support from at least four independent senators but failed after eight of the nine voted against it, with one abstaining. All six opposition People's National Movement senators also opposed the bill, while the government's 15 senators voted in favor.

Opposition Leader Penelope Beckles welcomed the outcome, describing the bill's collapse as proof that democracy remains strong in Trinidad and Tobago. Persad-Bissessar, however, said she was not surprised by the vote and accused independent senators of undermining public safety, arguing that the bill was necessary to preserve gains made under the state of emergency.

The ZOSO Bill, modeled on Jamaica's framework, would have granted expanded security powers in high-crime areas.

**GUYANA**

The Guyana government has outlined an expansive 2026 budget focused on accelerating economic transformation, boosting human capital, and improving social wellbeing.

Presenting the budget to Parliament, Finance Minister Ashni Singh said total central government expenditure is projected to rise 15.8 per cent to GY\$1.5 trillion, equivalent to approximately US\$6 billion. The Public Sector Investment

Program will expand to GY\$779.6 billion (about US\$3.1 billion), while non-interest current spending will reach GY\$705.1 billion (around US\$2.8 billion).

Singh said the budget, the largest in Guyana's history and financed without new taxes, is designed to deliver modern infrastructure, improved education and healthcare, affordable housing, and safer communities. He noted that the investment drive supports President Irfaan Ali's vision of a modern, inclusive economy, while tax relief measures and targeted incentives are expected to raise disposable incomes and stimulate private-sector growth.

**ANTIGUA & BARBUDA**

The family of Chinlee Robinson, a 23-year-old who died while in custody last year, has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the Antigua and Barbuda government, seeking general and punitive damages, legal costs, and interest.

Robinson was found dead on January 24, hours after being granted bail on a charge of stealing a mobile phone. At a recent coroner's inquest, evidence revealed conflicting accounts of his final hours, including testimony from a teenage inmate who reported limited overnight supervision. Medical findings showed Robinson died from oxygen deprivation, neck trauma, and heart failure.

His family alleges negligence by prison and police officials and has called for a homicide probe, a request police have rejected.

**JAMAICA**

Jamaica has used its presence at the International Tourism Trade Fair, (FITUR 2026), in Spain to signal that the country is not merely rebounding from Hurricane Melissa but rebuilding its tourism sector with long-term resilience in mind.

Director of Tourism Donovan White said recovery requires both restored inventory and faster-returning confidence, noting strengthened European airlift, digital marketing, and hotel partnerships. Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett said Jamaica is courting regional and private investment to accelerate resilient infrastructure.

The Ministry of Tourism reported measurable progress, including stronger reopening timelines and investor interest. FITUR also marked a major milestone, with UN Tourism naming Jamaica the world's tourism resilience hub.

- Rewritten from CMC & NewsAmericasnow.com



## Celebrating Black History Month



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# From Undocumented To MAGA Faithful Trinidad Born Rapper Nicki Minaj Declares She Is Donald Trump's "Number One Fan"

BY CARIBBEAN TODAY  
STAFF WRITER

Trinidad and Tobago-born rapper Nicki Minaj has been open about coming to the US as an undocumented five-year-old in the past. So, her sudden turn about regarding the Donald Trump administration in light of its volatile immigration crackdown has stunned many.

But despite the growing criticism and the loss of over 3 million followers, Minaj is leaning in. Last week, at a high-profile appearance at a U.S. Treasury Department-hosted summit in Washington, D.C., Minaj publicly aligned herself the US president's "No. 1 fan."

Addressing the audience ahead of Trump's remarks at the event, which launched "Trump Accounts," a new tax-advantaged savings initiative for children, Minaj said criticism of her support has only strengthened her resolve.

"I will say that I am probably the president's No. 1 fan," the grinning 43-year-old performer said. "And that's not going to change." She added that backlash and online criticism had motivated her to support Trump more forcefully, describing attacks against him as bullying

and smear campaigns.

Minaj also suggested divine protection over the former president, saying "God is protecting him," comments that drew immediate attention across social media and political circles.

The endorsement represents a notable reversal from Minaj's earlier public positions. During Trump's first term, she said she would not "jump on the Donald Trump bandwagon." In previous years, Minaj spoke openly about coming to the United States as an undocumented child and condemned the separation of migrant families at the U.S.-Mexico border.

In a widely circulated 2018 post, Minaj recalled entering the United States without legal status and criticized immigration policies that separated children from their parents, calling the practice "terrifying" and urging compassion.

Her recent appearance is part of a broader pattern of increasingly visible engagement with



Nicki Minaj (L) and U.S. President Donald Trump during the Treasury Department's Trump Accounts Summit at Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium on January 28, 2026, in Washington, DC. (Photo by Win McNamee/Getty Images)

conservative platforms. Minaj has attended events hosted by Turning Point USA and has spoken favorably of Trump in interviews and public remarks, drawing both praise from supporters and intense backlash from critics.

"I have the utmost respect and admiration for our president," Minaj said at the Turning Point event. "He's given so many people hope."

The rapper has also drawn attention for public feuds, including a recent clash with

former CNN host Don Lemon, whom she criticized on social media.

Online reactions have included calls for her deportation with a petition gaining over 100,000 signatures, despite her long-standing U.S. residency and citizenship status.

Some have suggested her embrace of the president is to help her brother and husband, who have faced legal challenges, obtain a pardon. Her husband, Kenneth Petty previously served four years in prison as a Level 2

sex offender after he was found guilty of raping a 16-year-old girl, whom he held at knifepoint, in 1994.

Her brother, Jelani Maraj, has also faced legal issues. In 2017, Maraj, then 38, was convicted of raping an 11-year-old girl at his Long Island residence. Maraj said the accusations were invented by the victim's mother to go after Minaj's family's fortune. He was sentenced to 25 years to life in 2020.

Minaj has, however, framed her support in terms of opportunity, resilience, and empowerment.

For many in the Caribbean and wider diaspora, Minaj's political turn has reignited debate about identity, power and political loyalty among immigrant communities in the United States.

Her embrace of the MAGA spotlight underscores how celebrity influence continues to intersect with politics - and how figures with Caribbean roots can shape, challenge, and complicate conversations on race, migration and political belonging in America.



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# Guyana Finally Has An Opposition Leader

After months of paralysis following the Nov. 2025 election, Guyana's parliamentary opposition has finally filled one of the most constitutionally important vacancies in the country's democracy.

On Jan. 26th, We Invest In Nationhood, WIN, leader Azruddin Intiaz Mohamed, was elected Leader of the Opposition by a unanimous 17-0 vote and used his first brief remarks to call for cooperation in Parliament.

On paper, the move ends a prolonged and uncomfortable limbo. In practice, it opens a far more complicated chapter. Mohamed's election closes a procedural gap in Guyana's 13th Parliament, which convened in November 2025 without an Opposition Leader - a situation that stalled key parliamentary functions, including consultations ahead of the national budget. With the opposition now formally constituted, Guyana's institutional

framework is technically complete.

But the manner in which it was completed raises deeper questions about credibility, governance, and the trade-offs political actors are now willing to make.

Mohamed enters the role not only as the leader of a newly formed political movement that surged unexpectedly at the polls, but also as a businessman under indictment in the United States



Guyana's new opposition leader We Invest In Nationhood, WIN, leader Azruddin Intiaz Mohamed, has been indicted by a grand jury in Florida.

on multiple charges including wire fraud, mail fraud, and money laundering linked to gold exports. He and his father, Nazar Mohamed, were indicted in 2023 by a grand jury in Florida - allegations they have publicly denied.

That legal reality loomed heavily over the January 26th vote.

House Speaker Manzoor Nadir openly warned opposition MPs against the moral and reputational implications of electing what he described as an "international fugitive" to one of the country's highest constitutional offices. Former parliamentarians, party officials, and even the Attorney General echoed similar concerns, arguing that the decision would weaken Guyana's standing at home and abroad.

Yet, when the moment came, the outcome revealed a political calculation that goes beyond Mohamed himself. With members of the A Partnership For National Unity, (APNU's) 12 MPs abstaining from the process and the smaller Forward Guyana Movement casting its lone vote with WIN in Mohamed's favor,

the election underscored the fragmented state of Guyana's opposition and the vacuum that the new party has rapidly filled.

For supporters, Mohamed's elevation is framed as democratic realism: voters delivered WIN 16 seats, and the party exercised its numerical right to lead the opposition. For critics, it signals something more troubling - a willingness to subordinate ethical concerns to expediency at a moment when Guyana's global profile has never been higher. That tension sits at the heart of this moment.

Guyana is no longer a peripheral state operating in obscurity. It is an oil producer under intense international scrutiny, navigating geopolitical pressures, investment flows, and institutional stress tests that accompany rapid wealth. In that context, the Opposition Leader is not merely a domestic actor; he is part of the country's external image.

Mohamed's call for cooperation may signal a desire to project stability. But cooperation, credibility, and accountability are not interchangeable concepts. Parliament may now be whole, but the questions surrounding its opposition leadership are far from settled.

What Guyana has resolved is a delay. What it has invited is a debate - about standards, signals, and the kind of political trade-offs a rapidly changing country is prepared to make.

In that sense, the election of an Opposition Leader does not close a chapter. It opens one - under a much brighter, and less forgiving, spotlight.

- NewsAmericasNow.com



## SSL Case Transferred To Supreme Court

The criminal cases against three former executives of the collapsed investment firm Stocks & Securities Limited, (SSL), have been transferred to the Supreme Court.

Cases involving SSL Growth Equity Limited and Delta Capital Partners Limited have also been moved.

The transfer was announced on January 26th, when the three former SSL executives appeared before the Kingston and St Andrew Parish Court. Prosecutors disclosed that Director of Public Prosecutions Claudette Thompson exercised her constitutional authority to discontinue the proceedings at the parish court level.

Instead, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions indicated that the matters would proceed to the Supreme Court by way of a voluntary bill of indictment.

Those charged are Hugh Croskery, founding director of SSL; his daughter, Sarah Meany; and former SSL chief executive

officer Zachary Harding. They face multiple charges, including fraudulently inducing persons to invest, failure to register a company carrying on business in Jamaica, operating a securities business without a dealer's license, breaches of the Banking Services Act, and failing to apply to the Financial Services Commission for registration of securities issued.

SSL collapsed in January 2023 amid allegations of \$4 billion fraud.

Law enforcement officials declined to say whether additional charges will be laid against the former executives or the companies involved. However, King's Counsel Jacqueline Samuels-Brown, attorney for Harding, told the court that prosecutors have indicated there are other aspects of the case still under review.

- Rewritten from the Jamaica Gleaner



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# Families Of Trinidadians Killed In U.S. Boat Strike Sue Washington For Wrongful Death

The families of two Trinidad and Tobago nationals killed during a U.S. military strike in Caribbean waters last year have filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the United States government, arguing that the killings were unlawful because no armed conflict existed at the time.

The lawsuit, filed on Jan. 27th in federal court in Massachusetts, was brought by the mother of Chad Joseph, 26, and the sister of Rishi Samaroo, 41. Both men were among six people killed on October 14, 2025, when a U.S. missile struck a boat Washington claimed was transporting narcotics.

The case is being pursued under the Death on the High Seas Act and the Alien Tort Statute, legal mechanisms that allow civil claims for deaths occurring in international waters and for alleged violations of international law. Human rights groups estimate that at least 125 people have been killed in similar U.S. strikes in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific since September 2025.

U.S. officials previously

described the operation as targeting “narcoterrorists” linked to drug trafficking networks operating between Venezuela and the United States. However, the lawsuit asserts that no evidence has been presented to show Joseph or Samaroo were affiliated with criminal or terrorist organizations.

Instead, the plaintiffs maintain that both men were civilians engaged in fishing and agricultural work in Venezuela and were traveling home to Trinidad when the strike occurred. “There was no armed conflict,” the lawsuit states, describing the deaths as extrajudicial killings carried out without legal justification.

The families are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), which say the case challenges the U.S. government’s claim that anti-narcotics operations constitute a



The dead are Chad Joseph, 26, and Rishi Samaroo, 41.

battlefield conflict.

Relatives of both men described them as hardworking fathers and sons attempting to rebuild their lives. Trinidad and Tobago’s government has previously said it has no information linking the victims to illegal activity.

The U.S. State Department and Pentagon have not yet commented on the lawsuit, which adds to growing international scrutiny of Washington’s expanded military operations in Caribbean waters.

- *Rewritten from NewsAmericasNow.com*



# Silencing The Past: Book Bans, Policy Rollbacks And The Fight For Black History

This Black History Month arrives under a growing shadow in the United States, as efforts to commemorate Black history collide with a widening federal campaign to restrict how that history is taught, displayed, and discussed.

Across the country, several federal agencies have paused or scaled back observances tied to Black History Month, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Juneteenth, citing compliance with executive orders aimed at curtailing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

In Department of Defense-run schools, Black History Month celebrations were cancelled altogether, with displays honoring figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, and Rosa Parks removed from school spaces.

For many Black Americans and members of the Caribbean diaspora, the moment feels painfully familiar. The suppression of Black history is not new. It has simply evolved.

**Book Bans As Modern Erasure**

Over the past several years, states and school districts have increasingly targeted books that examine race, racism, and Black achievement. According to PEN America, hundreds of titles have been banned or restricted, many of them foundational to understanding Black history and the African American experience.

Among the works most frequently challenged are:

- W.E.B. Du Bois’ *Black Reconstruction in America*, a landmark analysis of the post-Civil War era.
- *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi.
- *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*, a Newbery Award-winning novel that explores Black family life during the civil rights era.

Children’s biographies of Maya Angelou and Sojourner Truth have also been removed from classrooms in multiple districts.

Critics argue these bans do more than limit reading

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

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# Massive Caribbean American Farewell For Late Ambassador Curtis “Rustie” Ward

BY DERRICK A SCOTT

Hundreds of mourners defied sub-freezing temperatures, journeying from near and far to pack into Saint Andrew’s Apostolic Catholic Church in Silver Spring, Maryland on Saturday, Jan. 24th, to pay final tribute to former Jamaican Ambassador Curtis “Rustie” Ward, a distinguished attorney, diplomat, and tireless champion of the Caribbean Diaspora.

The gathering reflected the remarkable breadth of Ambassador Ward’s influence. Heading the list of mourners were Jamaica’s Ambassador to the United States, Anthony Anderson; Governor of Maryland Wes Moore; Members of the diplomatic corps as well as heads of many Diaspora organizations. It was a testament to a man whose impact transcended the formal boundaries of his diplomatic portfolio.

A Son Of St. Elizabeth Who Carried Jamaica To The World The tributes painted a portrait of a man whose journey from Treasure Beach to the world stage never diminished his connection to home. Former Prime Minister P.J. Patterson’s tribute, read at the service by Ms. Francine Chin, captured this duality with characteristic eloquence, describing Ward as “a son of Treasure Beach who carried the best of our nation to the world stage, and who never forgot where he came from or whom he served.”

Patterson recalled

appointing Ward as Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations with Special Responsibility for Security Council Affairs in 1999, noting that Jamaica had needed “someone of high intellect, unwavering principle and endowed with masterly command of international law.” Ward proved himself precisely that during Jamaica’s tenure on the Security Council from 2000 to 2001, helping navigate the global response to the September 11 attacks and drafting critical counter-terrorism resolutions.

“Jamaica has lost a noble Avatar,” Patterson declared. “Let us strive to honour his memory by perpetuating the exemplary standards of truth, courage, and service that Curtis Ward embodied throughout his remarkable life.”

Speaking Truth Without Fear Opposition Leader Mark Golding’s tribute illuminated the personal dimension of Ward’s influence. Golding revealed, in a messaged read publicly by Ibrahim “IB” Konteh, Vice President of the People’s National Party, (PNP), Patriots, that Ward had corresponded with



Governor of Maryland Wes Moore right escort Mrs. Sonia Ward widow of Ambassador Curtis Ward into the sanctuary of St Andrew Apostolic Catholic Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, prior to the commencement of the thanksgiving memorial mass service for the late Ambassador Ward. At left is mother of Governor Moore, Mrs. Joy Moore. (Photo Derrick A Scott)

him via WhatsApp on a daily basis since he, Golding, became PNP President in 2020, offering counsel that shaped the Opposition Leader’s thinking on critical issues.

“He understood power, but he was never impressed or overwhelmed by it,” Golding shared. “He understood influence and always used it responsibly.”

Golding noted that Ward’s commitment to uplifting public understanding continued until his final hours, describing him as “a trusted and powerful voice for reason, justice and proportionality in global affairs.” The Opposition Leader credited Ward with playing a major role in the success of the

PNP’s Diaspora Tour of the US Eastern Seaboard in 2022.

Jamaica’s Ambassador to the United States, Antony Anderson, conveyed condolences in a letter to the widow, Mrs. Sonia Ward. “The Caribbean, academic, and legal communities throughout the Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia area have indeed suffered a profound loss,” Ambassador Anderson wrote. “Ambassador Ward’s life was distinguished not only by devoted service to Jamaica, but also by his steadfast contributions to the Caribbean and the wider international community. A champion of diaspora engagement, he served with dedication on the Maryland Commission on Caribbean Affairs, where he advanced the social, cultural, and economic interests of Caribbean people in every role he represented Jamaica with distinction integrity and pride.”

## Family And Community Remember

The most poignant moments came from Ambassador Ward’s daughters, Myeasha and Tamara, Kareem who shared intimate reflections on a father whose public service never overshadowed his devotion to family. Their tributes reminded mourners that behind the lawyer, diplomat and analyst was a man who understood, as those close to him noted, that “the true measure of a life is not found solely in accomplishments or accolades, but in the values lived out daily, the love given freely, and the integrity maintained consistently.”

The Diaspora community Ward

championed so fiercely was well represented among those offering tributes. Rev. Larry Walker, Executive Director of the Governor’s Office of Community Initiative, spoke of Ward’s lasting impact. Irwine Clare, Sr., Co-founder and Managing Director of Caribbean Immigrants Services, captured what made Ward irreplaceable: “He was one of our top servants in the global space, a person who was in the right place at the right time, and who was prepared to speak frankly on many issues when many others were afraid to do so.”

Rick Nugent, President of the Jamaica Association of Maryland, joined Larry Sindass, Founder and President of Caribbean Nation Television; Chris Gardiner, Co-founder of the Caribbean American Organization; and Venice Mundle Harvey, former Co-Chair of the Caribbean American Advisory Group, in honouring a man who believed that Jamaica does not end at its shores.

## Honors For A Life Of Service

Maryland Governor Moore personally presented Mrs. Ward with a citation. She was also presented with other citations from US Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, the Mayor of Washington DC, Muriel Bowser and other dignitaries, formal recognition of a partnership that sustained Ambassador Ward through decades of service. Governor Moore’s citation, praised Ward for his leadership and integrity.



## Silencing The Past: Book Bans, Policy Rollbacks And The Fight For Black History

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5) choices - they narrow historical memory. By targeting books that address slavery, segregation, and systemic inequality, opponents say policymakers are reshaping history to avoid discomfort rather than confront reality.

### Policy Rollbacks In Florida

The fight over Black history has also moved beyond classrooms and libraries into the legal arena. In Florida, Attorney General James Uthmeier recently issued a sweeping opinion questioning the constitutionality of roughly 80 state laws and programs that support minority contracting, Black-owned businesses, and diversity in public appointments.

Uthmeier argued that such measures violate the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and announced he would no longer defend what he termed “race-based” provisions.

The response from Black lawmakers was swift. Members of the Florida Legislative Black Caucus condemned the opinion as a political maneuver that ignores Florida’s long history of racial discrimination, including decades of Jim Crow segregation.

“I wish he would listen when we explain the reality of our lives,” said state Rep. Fentrice

Driskell, the Democratic leader in the Florida House. “Civil rights laws are protections against discrimination, not preferences.”

State Sen. Mack Bernard warned that dismantling these policies threatens democratic principles, arguing that inclusion strengthens institutions rather than weakens them.

### Why This Matters To The Caribbean Diaspora

For Caribbean communities at home and abroad, these developments resonate deeply. Caribbean history itself has long been shaped by colonial erasure, selective storytelling, and struggles over whose narratives are deemed legitimate. The push to limit Black history in the United States reverberates across the diaspora, where shared legacies of enslavement, resistance, migration, and cultural survival remain central to identity.

Black History Month was created not as a celebration of comfort, but as an act of correction - a refusal to allow history to be told without Black voices at its center. Efforts to ban books, dismantle equity programs, or mute commemorations reflect an ongoing tension over power, memory, and truth.



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# Slew Of Events To Celebrate Black History Month Throughout The South Florida Area

BY DAVID L. SNELLING  
 Edited By Felicia J. Persaud

Despite a federal government push to largely erase Black History, local governments and non-profit organizations are planning on celebrating Black History Month, recognizing the achievements of African Americans/Caribbean Americans and their major contributions to this country.

A host of events are being planned across South Florida. These include the Miami-Dade County Black Affairs Advisory Board (BAAB), which is hosting its annual Black History Month kick-off celebration on Friday, February 6th, at 11:45 a.m., at the Stephen P. Clark Center, 111 N.W. 1st Street in Miami. This year's event theme is "A Century of Black History Commemorations," marking 100 years since the establishment of a dedicated period to recognize Black history.

In 1925, Dr. Carter G. Woodson initiated the first week-long event to honor the achievements and history of African Americans, which was later expanded into a month-long observance. The advisory board encourages the public to participate in events that highlight the contributions and stories of the African American community.

The Stephen P. Clark Center will serve as the main venue for

the commemorative kickoff. All meetings and events organized by the Black Affairs Advisory Board are open to the public, and residents are encouraged to learn more about the board's work.

Participation offers community members an opportunity to deepen their understanding and appreciation of Black history, not only during February but throughout the year.

For more information about Black History events or to request accommodations such as accessible materials, sign language interpreters, or CART services, contact BAAB Program Officer Retha Boone-Fye by email or at 305-375-4606.

## BROWARD

Broward County is also celebrating Black History Month with a variety of events and activities throughout February. The Broward County Library system will host a full schedule of events, including story times, lectures, film screenings and cultural arts performances. All are free and open to the public.

The library is also highlighting its online collections, including the Special Collections of Broward County's African American Research Library and Cultural Center, which contains



Dr. Carter G. Woodson initiated the first week-long Black history event to honor the achievements and history of African Americans. It was later expanded into a month-long observance.

over one million items.

For more details, you can visit the Broward County Library's event calendar at broward.org.

Meanwhile, the Urban League of Broward County and the City of Fort Lauderdale will host a Black History Cultural Festival on Saturday, February 7, 2026, at 10 a.m. at 560 Northwest 27th Avenue in Fort Lauderdale. The event includes a Sistrunk parade, live entertainment, food trucks and community resources.

To attend the event, participants must register at eventbrite.com/e/2026-urban-league-cultural-festival-tickets-

Participants can also visit the City of Fort Lauderdale exhibition titled "Roots of Resilience: The Journey of Black Broward at 231 S.W. 2nd Avenue. The exhibition, launched last year during Black History Month, showcases the contributions of the Black community in the city and in Broward County from 1793 to 2025.

It features a collection of artifacts, historic photographs, and oral histories from African American residents and ancestors, highlighting challenges, triumphs and heroes. The goal is to reflect on the profound impact of the diverse residents and amplify the voices and experiences that have shaped local history. According to Ft. Lauderdale city leaders, the exhibition is a significant event during Black History Month and is supported by various organizations and foundations.

## MIRAMAR

The City of Miramar, which constitutes a large Caribbean population, is hosting a variety of events during Black History Month, including cultural performances, educational workshops, and community discussions.

On February 6th, there will be a special screening of Spike Lee's "School Daze," at the Miramar Cultural Center, 2400 Civic Center Place, to honor the Hollywood filmmaker, director, writer and producer. Lee's movies focused on race, urban life and politics including Do the Right Thing and Malcom X starring Academy award winner Denzel Washington. For events schedules and times and venues, visit miramarfl.gov.

## PALM BEACH COUNTY

Palm Beach County is also celebrating Black History Month with a variety of events and activities. The community will host educational lectures, cultural festivals, art exhibitions, and live performances throughout February.

Notable events include the Palm Beach County Black Cultural Heritage Trail, which highlights historic sites and the contributions of African Americans.

For more information on the events and dates, visit thepalmbeches.com/blog/celebrate-black-history-palm-beaches.



## "Mama Millie" - One Of Key West's Oldest Residents Turns 100

Mildred Seales Tynes, affectionately known throughout her community as "Mama Millie," marked a remarkable milestone last month as she celebrated her 100th birthday, becoming one of the oldest living residents of Key West, Florida.

Born on January 12, 1926, in the Panama Canal Zone, Seales Tynes was honored with a series of celebrations that brought together family members traveling from Panama and across the United States. The centennial festivities were held in Miami-Dade County and Key West, where local officials presented proclamations recognizing her life of service, resilience, and community leadership.

A lifelong servant of her community, Mama Millie, was deeply rooted in Saint Peter's Episcopal Church in Key West. There, she served on the Vestry, was a member of the Daughters of the King, and led as President of the Episcopal Church Women, leaving a lasting spiritual and organizational legacy.

Beyond the church, she is known for her social engagement and leadership. She served as President of the Silverette Club, was an active member of the Eastern Star and the American Legion Auxiliary and later led the Business and Professional Women's Club in Key West.



Family and friends gathered on January 10th at the Miriam Dean Pratt Community Center at 11201 SW 160th Street in Richmond Heights, Florida to honor "Mama Millie." (Contributed image)

Professionally, Seales Tynes worked for 30 years as a seamstress at the Navy Exchange, while also serving as a caregiver, hostess, and devoted mother who raised three children.

The celebrations included a formal ceremony on January 10 at the Miriam Dean Pratt Community Center in Richmond Heights, featuring musical tributes from family and friends, followed by a more intimate gathering at her home on January 12.

At 100, Mama Millie's life stands as a powerful testament to service, faith, and Caribbean Diaspora resilience.



# Spring Health



The April issue of Caribbean Today will feature a comprehensive examination of how the healthcare industry serves the Caribbean community.

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## Creating A Legacy In Steelpan Arts

BY DAWN A. DAVIS

Imagine the sweet sound of 200 steelpanns playing your favorite classical piece. Your whole being is immersed in an unforgettable, mesmerizing experience! That was my reaction to the first pan yard I walked into at a Trinidad carnival.

Invented in Trinidad and Tobago in the 1900s, the steelpan is recognized as the only new acoustic instrument to be invented in the 20th century. Its roots run deep, drawing on West African cultural practices such as drumming ('talking drums'), dancing, religious customs and other ancient traditions. Indeed, the transatlantic slave trade brought enslaved Africans to the Caribbean, who brought their traditions with them.

The steelpan might be associated with carnival, but today it has surpassed its humble beginnings. It is now heard in concert halls as an orchestral instrument, on international stages, and taught in educational institutions across the world by renowned pannists.

### Steelpan Arts

One such leader in steelpan arts is composer, arranger and musician, Dr Dawn K. Batson, a prominent figure in the steelpan world. A Trinidad and Tobago native, Dr Batson has elevated steelpan as a respected discipline through her university steelband programs and

mentorship. Little did she know that her first memory of Carnival, listening to the Desperados Steel Orchestra at the age of four, would lead her to championing similar orchestras herself.

In fact, in 2000, as Director of the Steelband Program at Florida Memorial University, she led the university's ensemble to a first-place win at the World Steelband Festival with her original composition, 'Black Holes Do Exist,' a first for a steelband outside of Trinidad and Tobago. She also started a steelband program at the University of Miami. The renowned pannist was later appointed Board Chair of the Trinidad and Tobago National Steel Orchestra by the President of the twin-island republic.

"I feel great pride when I see the continued evolution of the steelpan across the globe," said a passionate Dr Batson in conversation with Caribbean Today. "Of course, there is still a great deal to be done - good work leads to more work! Universities in Trinidad and Tobago, the US and the UK and steelbands across the world have been producing not only performers and composers but visionaries who not content with the status quo, are pushing the boundaries."

Although the Florida university steelband programs are inactive now, graduates have gone on to establish and teach at programs across the globe, such as at Princeton



Dr. Dawn K. Batson - a prominent figure in the steelpan world. (Contributed image)

University and in schools across New York City, throughout the Caribbean, and in London Dr Batson confirmed.

The music educator and mentor told Caribbean Today that, at this stage of her life, while promoting education and expressing her creativity still play major roles, her main focus is advancing the power and scope of the culture of the Caribbean Diaspora through the setting of culturally specific educational standards.

"The music learned, often by rote, in traditional steelbands is just as important as the scored music of many classrooms," she explained. "I feel strongly that all practitioners

of arts that have evolved from the oral tradition - jazz, gospel, calypso, and many others - must have the opportunity to stand side by side with classically trained practitioners. This opens the door to a variety of opportunities that might otherwise be closed. The exchange goes both ways."

### Keep Your Joy

Her music and mentorship take many forms. Continuing her work and building a legacy, Dr Batson founded 'Keep Your Joy and Rise,' a uniquely creative organization that "works with educators and artists of all genres to identify, celebrate, and expand the scope and unique possibilities of their singular skills." Combining music, business competency, interpersonal skills, workshops, and networking, her programs nurture mentees' natural abilities, helping them to propel to success.

"What I found over the years, and especially after COVID, a lot of our young people and artists, people of all ages, were frustrated, and they started to lose that joy of self," Dr. Batson said. "So, I thought it was important to tell the stories, to begin to see how people have found their joy in different ways and possibilities. And then speaking to them about how they could use their arts, their creativity, to make something new."

"You help to plant some seeds;

you don't know what's going to grow. And I'm so proud of what they are doing and what they will do when I'm long gone," she added.

It is because of this passion, her unique musical educational programs, and her mentorship that Dr. Batson is being honored at the Melton Mustafa Jazz Festival this month. The festival, founded by jazz great Melton Mustafa, now deceased, recognizes key figures in music who have helped propel the musical arts through their unending work.

Its mission has always been to provide young people with exposure and opportunities to learn and participate in jazz workshops and communities to sustain this musical form. The honor is conferred on individuals who have had a profound impact on music education and appreciation.

Asked about how the Festival's values align with her philosophy, Dr Batson noted: "Melton Mustafa and I were friends, perhaps because our philosophies aligned and because of our mutual respect for our musical ancestors and our pride and belief in our students - the future. Community is strength. It is the foundation that allows us to soar. That foundation was built by those who gave life and limb to ensure that the foundation was solid. We must honor and continue their legacy."



## New Beacon Books Shines A Light On British Black History

BY DAWN A. DAVIS

Tucked away at 76 Stroud Green Road in Finsbury Park, a community in North London, New Beacon Books has made an indelible mark on this increasingly gentrifying neighborhood, once a majority-immigrant, black working-class enclave.

While still maintaining elements of its diverse cultural beginnings, the demographic shifts mean the area is becoming unaffordable for some of its original inhabitants. But New Beacon Books, at this prime location since 1966, is helping keep alive the voices and aspirations of its multicultural roots and educating its newer residents.

Founded by Trinbagonian John La Rose and his partner Sarah White 60 years ago, New Beacon Books was the first Black and Caribbean-owned publishing house, bookshop, and international book distributor in Britain with a focus on African, Caribbean, Asian, and South American history, literature, and culture. After the elder La Rose's death in 2006, his son, Michael, carries on his father's legacy.

I caught up with Michael La Rose at the bookshop during a January 2026 book launch for Jamaican-American author Sharon Gordon's first book *Sheribaby*.

More Than A Bookshop "New Beacon Books is more than a bookshop; we are activists in business," La Rose told Caribbean Today. "It was an idea from the Caribbean brought here because my father and mother were activists back home. So, when they came here, one of the things they wanted to do in terms of holistic culture, was to have a bookshop. There was a real need here, especially



Michael La Rose, owner of the UK-based New Beacon Books. (Photo by Dawn A. Davis)

black children's education which was very, very poor at that time. So, part of the bookshop idea was about bringing books by black writers, black literature, but also books for children."

He added that the bookshop was part of a movement in Britain to educate and highlight black History, as a response to the pervasive racism that defined society at the time. Working with similar entities to their specialist publishing house, New Beacon Books helped Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications get established and formed the Walter Rodney Bookshop, as well as independent publishers, Allison and Busby, who published a series of anthologies by Pan-Africanist C.L.R. James.

Indeed, without the elder La Rose's struggle for justice, New Beacon Books would not exist. His history of activism is well known and has inspired new generations. In the 1940s, in Trinidad, John La Rose helped found the Workers Freedom Movement. He later became General Secretary of the West Indian Independence Party. His upbringing in a colonial society

made him uniquely aware that the powers that be kept control by withholding information from the populace. So, his only course of action was to educate. Hence, the birth of the bookshop.

The elder La Rose's activism continued in Britain through his involvement in the Black Education Movement in the 1960s, the Black Parents Movement, the Black Youth Movement and other cultural and political groups. He founded the George Padmore Supplementary School for West Indian children in 1969 to help equalize the playing field. Reaching further afield, the 1980s saw the birth of a radical book fair - International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books, which drew independent publishers from across the UK and around the world, creating a lasting network.

### Holding Strong

In 1991, John La Rose created the George Padmore Institute, an archive focusing on the history of the black struggle in Britain, of people of African, Asian and Caribbean descent. It still exists today. And although it's a battle, the bookshop is holding strong.

In fact, they published two books by Professor August 'Gus' Jones' in 2024, Michael confirmed - *Blazing Trails*, on those who have passed and have contributed strongly to Britain, and *Don't Salvage the Empire Windrush*. But he acknowledged that it is difficult to run a bookshop. There is no profit in books, he said.

"We were involved with most of the political movements in Britain, so that helped in terms of selling books," La Rose explained. "But as I said, there's not much money in it, and if you

work here, you've got to commit yourself. We've used volunteers mostly. They work hard to keep the bookshop going."

But another crisis was on the way.

"The real crisis came in the 90s - with Amazon, the Internet and Kindle. So, a lot of bookshops in the black bookshop movement did not survive, as did many independent radical bookshops," La Rose lamented.

In addition, La Rose explained, it's impossible to compete with mega bookshops like Waterstones, with branches to spread the risk. So, as the Caribbean saying goes: "We haven't put our hats where our hands can't reach," he remarked.

One of the factors that helped New Beacon Books survive is its growth strategy. La Rose explained: "We built very, very slowly. In 1966, we published books; we didn't have a physical bookshop. We had a box that we could take to meetings. Then later on, we had a front room in a house which became a bookshop. Then three houses along, the rooms got bigger, and eventually we came to a bookshop front, a proper place like this, in 1975."

### So, what's the future for New Beacon Books?

"The future has always been grim. But it's always been that we'll hold on, we'll survive and provide a service to people, both intellectually and materially with books and ideas," said La Rose. "We support the Black community, and also we want to influence the wider community so that they have the whole picture, especially around history."



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## Is ICE Becoming America's Tonton Macoutes?

In 1959, Haitian dictator François "Papa Doc" Duvalier created a paramilitary force that answered only to him. Empowered to use unrestrained violence, it existed to terrorize, silence and eliminate perceived enemies.

This force - the Tonton Macoutes - was born not from law, but from paranoia:

Duvalier replaced institutional accountability with personal loyalty enforced through brutality. Critics now argue that similar dynamics are emerging within ICE under the current administration, where political loyalty increasingly appears to eclipse institutional accountability.

Named after a Creole myth of an "uncle" who kidnaps disobedient children in a gunnysack, the Tonton Macoutes became a national nightmare.

Armed with machetes and guns, wearing straw hats and dark glasses, they extorted businesses, kidnapped dissidents and murdered civilians with impunity. They were not accountable to courts, legislatures, or law - only to Duvalier himself. Civil rights did not apply.

That history matters now in these United States.

On January 24, 2026, another taxpayer-funded US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent shot and killed an innocent American. He was gunned down in a cold, snowy street - a moment so jarring that critics say it reflects the same moral coarsening publicly embraced by political leaders, including Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, who wrote in her own memoir about shooting a puppy and a goat. The killing of Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old nurse, has shocked the nation to its core. Dozens of



FELICIA J. PERSAUD

CEOs have issued statements, as have Presidents Obama and Clinton. It comes less than three weeks after the killing of another 37-year-old by ICE, Renee Good, and the killing of Keith Porter, 43.

"According to publicly reported data and investigative reporting, at least 27 ICE-related shootings occurred, leading to 8 deaths. At least 19 incidents of agents opening fire and 36 incidents where agents held bystanders or protesters at gunpoint were reported as of late 2025. At least six people have died in ICE detention centers since the start of 2026, following at least 30 deaths in ICE custody last year, a two-decade high.

Civil-rights advocates, legal scholars and even cultural figures are stunned. Singer Bruce Springsteen used his recent concert to denounce the Trump administration's use of ICE.

"We are living through incredibly critical times," Springsteen told the audience. "The ideals and values this country has stood for are being tested as never before." He condemned what he described as heavily armed federal agents using Gestapo-like tactics against American citizens exercising their right to protest.

Legal thinkers have echoed that concern. New York Times op ed writer David French has warned that the United States is drifting toward what Nazi-era legal scholar Ernst Fraenkel called a "dual state" - one system governed by law, another by unchecked power. Journalist M. Gessen, also in the Times op ed section, noted that in Europe, observers increasingly describe America as building detention camps that resemble historical authoritarian regimes.

The constitutional principles at stake are the same.

No one is arguing that immigration law should not be enforced. The question is how it is enforced - and whether any agency should operate with expanding powers, military

equipment, and minimal accountability, while attacking civilians exercising their right to free speech, and arresting Native Americans and preschoolers.

History teaches us that when armed forces answer more to political authority than to law, abuse follows. Haitians know this lesson intimately. The Tonton Macoutes did not spring up overnight. They emerged gradually, justified by

fear, normalized by silence, and enabled by impunity.

Americans should take heed. History rarely announces itself with sirens. It advances through normalization - through the quiet acceptance of practices once considered unthinkable. When armed agents answer more to political power than to law, when deaths are dismissed as procedure, and when fear becomes policy, the comparisons we resist today

become the realities we inherit tomorrow.

*Felicia J. Persaud is the founder and publisher of NewsAmericasNow.com, the only daily syndicated newswire and digital platform dedicated exclusively to Caribbean Diaspora and Black immigrant news across the Americas.*



## Intangible Divorce

Relationships are like the four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. Men are April when they woo, courting, for they are fresh, with a spring in their step, full of lyrics, life, and lies.

But they're like December when they wed, with no sunshine and warm breeze, but cold, dour, dank and dismal. Maids are like May when they are maids, young, sprightly, fresh and full of flavor and laughter. But the sky changes when they become wives. It gets dark.

That's The Winter of Discontent that many couples experience when the relationship runs its course and changes from spring through summer, autumn and eventually the arctic blast of winter.

At that time, many couples

may decide not to ride out the winter together, call it quits, and get a divorce. I explored why women divorce a few months ago. But there's divorce, and there's divorce.

There are legal fees, dividing up of the assets, finding somewhere else to live, and a general dislocation of everyday life. It doesn't have to be like that. There is a new approach to separation that is utterly hassle-free, inexpensive and emotionally painless. It's called the intangible divorce,

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)



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## As Migration Closes, CARICOM Must Build Jobs At Home

BY SIR RON SANDERS

On January 14, 2026, the U.S. Department of State announced that, effective January 21st, it would pause the issuance of all immigrant visas for nationals of 75 countries, including eleven in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), deemed to be at "high risk of public benefits usage."

Applications may still be submitted, but no immigrant visas will be issued during the pause. The notice sets out the policy logic plainly. President Donald Trump has directed that immigrants must be financially self-sufficient and must not become a "public charge."

Visas are described as a privilege, not a right, and admissions as national-security decisions. Implemented by a Department led by Secretary Marco Rubio, the language is deliberate and categorical. It signals a shift in doctrine, not a temporary pause awaiting reversal.

For the Caribbean, this matters because for decades, outward migration absorbed part of the region's internal economic pressure - unemployment, low wages, limited domestic markets, and frustrated professionals. That outlet has now narrowed. The pressure, therefore, will intensify at home.

The composition of the 75-country list reveals the underlying logic.

The countries are drawn overwhelmingly from the Global South - Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and parts of Central and Eastern Europe and Asia. What links them is not politics or proximity, but economic structure: high youth populations, weak labor absorption, persistent underemployment, and long reliance on outward migration to relieve domestic pressure. The pause thus functions as a broad structural screen, signaling that the United States will no longer accept migrants it does not actively seek.

It is now incumbent on the eleven CARICOM states to build conditions that attract investment, expand enterprise, and generate employment. The alternative is clear and costly: higher unemployment, deepening poverty, rising crime, social instability and declining economic prospects.

This warning is not speculative. Research by the International Monetary Fund,

the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank shows a consistent pattern across Latin America and the Caribbean: persistent unemployment - especially among youth - drives poverty, fuels crime, weakens social cohesion, and deters investment. Stronger labor markets and rising real earnings, by contrast, are among the most reliable drivers of poverty reduction and stability.

Addressing these challenges, however, is not the responsibility of governments alone. It requires a collective national effort.

Governments must create conditions for growth - but they do not create jobs on their own. The private sector must invest, expand, innovate, and take calculated risks at home, not merely extract rents or wait for incentives. Trade unions must defend workers while engaging seriously with productivity, skills upgrading, and enterprise sustainability. Political parties - especially those that aspire to govern - must treat economic reform as a national obligation, not a partisan weapon.

If this collective effort fails - if no national plan is jointly devised, implemented, and monitored - Caribbean economies will fracture under the weight of unemployment, accompanied by familiar cycles of bickering and finger-pointing among actors unwilling to place national interest above sectional advantage.

The region's difficulties are compounded by a self-inflicted handicap. World Bank and IDB assessments show that many Caribbean economies operate with high costs of doing business - slow approvals, overlapping regulations, expensive logistics, and especially high energy prices. Electricity costs in some states are two to three times higher than in North America. Regulation is often cumbersome, mired in red tape and institutional inertia, and, in some cases, distorted by practices that extract private gain in exchange for favorable treatment.

Too often, reform is postponed because it is inconvenient. Governments fear backlash. Businesses resist competition. Unions resist change. Oppositions calculate advantage. The political cost of reform is exaggerated; the economic cost of delay is discounted.

That miscalculation is no longer theoretical. It is urgent. If unemployment remains high while migration outlets

narrow, the result will not be patience. It will be rising poverty, higher crime, social strain, and a deteriorating investment climate. Investors will withdraw. Insurance costs will rise. Bank deposits will shrink, and interest rates increase. Tourism will falter. Public finances will weaken. Social cohesion will fray.

This is why responsibility must now be shared - and openly acknowledged as such. CARICOM must also take its own commitments seriously.

The Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas envisaged a regional industrial policy under the CSME. Heads of Government are expected to consider a CARICOM Industrial Policy Framework at their Fiftieth Meeting in St. Kitts and Nevis this month - more than three decades after the Treaty was signed.

Similarly, the Caribbean Skills Certificate and regional labor mobility were intended to create a genuine internal skills

market. They have yet to deliver at scale. Initiatives to deepen capital and financial-market integration - such as the long-promised regional stock exchange championed by the CARICOM Private Sector Organization - remain worthy causes deserving urgent support.

If external doors are narrowing, the region must make its internal space work - or accept the cost of fragmentation. What is required now is a new compact. Governments must decisively lower the cost of doing business. The private sector must commit capital and creativity to domestic production. Trade unions must champion skills, productivity, and fair wages together. Political parties must accept that economic reform is not optional, and that sabotaging it for short-term gain undermines everyone's future. The State Department's notice does not single out the Caribbean, but its consequences should rivet regional attention. It removes the long-standing illusion that

migration will always be available as a safety valve. That era is all but over. The door to migration to the United States is no longer ajar; it has been closed elsewhere for years.

Either Caribbean societies - governments, businesses, unions, and political movements alike - accept shared responsibility for building opportunity at home, or they continue to defer and allow unemployment, crime, and instability to exact a far higher price.

As migration closes, there is only one viable response: build opportunities for investment and jobs at home - together.

*The author is the Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the United States and the OAS, and Dean of the OAS Ambassadors accredited to the OAS.*

- Reprinted From CMC News



## Intangible Divorce

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

where couples actually divorce without going through the legal, financial, and other upheavals of a traditional divorce.

It's called the intangible, silent, or hushed divorce, and while the concept may not be brand new, they have now given it a name. It seems to be a less painful and viable alternative, where couples can actually eat their cake and have it too.

The Intangible divorce is a term for a marriage where the partners are emotionally disconnected and live separate lives, though they remain legally married and still live together. It's not a legal process, but an emotional one, where a couple coexists like roommates, devoid of intimacy, shared experiences, or meaningful conversation. "Well, we both live in the same house, but that's about it, nothing else."

There's emotional disconnection, with the most defining feature being a lack of emotional intimacy and communication. The two people live under the same roof but share nothing together, no exchange of thoughts, no suggestions, no questions asked. They both leave for work in the morning and return in the evening with no words spoken between them. Old-time people used to call it malice, but in the intangible divorce, there is no malice, no bad feeling, no anger, just a cool indifference and aloofness as they pass each other like two ships in the night.

There is no fighting, no quarrelling, no fussing or bickering, no conflict, for both parties have agreed to the terms and conditions of the intangible divorce, so there is no need for actual war. But like the Cold War of many years ago, just an



invisible conflict that had no tangible casualties.

One casualty is intimacy, though, for in the intangible divorce, there is no romance. How could there be, for romance is supposed to be the binding force that draws couples together. So, if romance enters the picture, then the intangible divorce would be in jeopardy. It's certainly not like friends with benefits, for they aren't friends and there are no benefits.

But the intangible divorce does not happen overnight. It is described as a "Slow Fade." People may simply lose interest in each other, stop caring about each other, experience a growing apathy and simply withdraw into their own lives.

It may occur naturally over a period of time without them even realizing that they're caught up, not in a legal divorce with the attendant legal ramifications

and financial fiasco, but the silent type, just like a submarine that slips beneath the waves silently.

For some couples, it begins when the romance stops. When the romance goes, that's usually when the intangible divorce begins. And even though the term is new and all sorts of fancy phrases are used to define and explain it, the intangible divorce has been around for a very long time.

Just like hypertension and diabetes, many people are walking around in an intangible divorce with no symptoms.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Tony Robinson is an independent contributor to Caribbean Today and the views expressed here are his own. He can be reached at [seido1yard@gmail.com](mailto:seido1yard@gmail.com) for feedback.



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## Third World Guitar Legend Stephen “Cat” Coore Remembered After Death

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL

In October 2023, Rolling Stone Magazine named three Jamaicans in its ‘250 Greatest Guitarists of All Time.’ Jamaican Stephen “Cat” Coore of Third World placed highest at number 91.

Coore, who co-founded the Grammy-nominated band in 1973, died in Kingston on January 18th. He was 69 years old.

That brought to seven the number of Third World members who have died. They include co-founder and keyboardist Ibo Cooper, who passed away in 2023, and original lead singer Prilly Hamilton, who died in 2025.

According to Rolling Stone, Coore “practically redefined the heights that reggae guitar could soar to.” The publication noted that his riffs were comparable to the legendary Carlos Santana, one of Coore’s biggest



**FLASHBACK:** A young Stephen “Cat” Coore (left) with Third World in 1982. (Third World promotional image/1982)

influences.

“But Coore’s appreciation of the importance of rhythm is essential to his style, and his pick accompaniments often help drive the engine of Third World’s best,” read the Rolling Stone assessment. “He’s also a

master on the acoustic guitar, not always associated with Jamaican music - his fretwork on 1865 (96 Degrees in The Shade) helped open the minds of Jamaican listeners and other Jamaican guitarists as to the possibilities of the acoustic in reggae.”

For those who followed his career with Third World, the Rolling Stone recognition was not surprising. Coore was the band’s mainstay, even after the departures of Cooper and drummer, Willie Stewart in 1997.

Stewart was among those saluting Coore, whom he had known for 60 years.

“From a very young age, Cat and I were bound by music, a bond forged through timeless songs, shared stages, and a sound that will live on forever,” said Stewart. “The hits we created together, the melodies we carried across the world, and the spirit we poured into our music will always be part of my memory.”

Coore was the youngest of three sons born to David Coore, a lawyer who served as Jamaica’s deputy prime minister and finance minister during the 1970s, and Trinidadian Rita Coore, a respected music teacher.

After playing for five years with Inner Circle, he and Cooper

formed Third World in 1973. The band’s self-titled debut album was released three years later by Island Records, the company that charted Bob Marley’s international rise.

Third World had a hit song, “Now That We Found Love,” in 1979. They collaborated with Stevie Wonder on ‘Try Jah Love,’ a 1982 single that was another strong seller.

Coore underwent esophageal surgery in 2022 but led celebrations for Third World’s 50th anniversary celebrations the following year. His resilience was admired by Stewart, whose annual Rhythms Of Africa show honored him in April 2023.

“His work will never die,” said Stewart. “His impact can never be overshadowed. He lives on his music, through his children, and is forever set in the culture of Jamaica as a Reggae Ambassador for life.”



## History Maker - Jamaican Roots Shine As Delroy Lindo Earns First Oscar Nomination For Sinners

After decades of commanding performances that have shaped modern Black cinema, Jamaican-roots, British-born actor Delroy Lindo has finally crossed a milestone many believe was long overdue: his first Academy Award nomination.

The London-born actor, 73, earned a Best Supporting Actor nomination at the 98th Academy Awards for his role as Delta Slim in Sinners, the genre-blending vampire thriller directed by Ryan Coogler. The nod marks a long-awaited recognition for an artist whose career has been consistently lauded by critics yet repeatedly overlooked by awards bodies.

For Caribbean audiences and the global diaspora, Lindo’s nomination resonates far beyond Hollywood. Born in Lewisham, London, to Jamaican parents who were part of the Windrush generation, Lindo’s life mirrors a transatlantic Caribbean journey – moving from the UK to Canada as a teenager, then to the United States, where he trained at the American Conservatory Theater and forged a career that would span stage, film, and television.

### LINDO’S HUMBLE BACKGROUND

His mother was a nurse who struggled as an outsider in England but instilled a strong sense of heritage in her son, while his father held various jobs, contributing to the family’s cultural background. Lindo has said in the past that he felt like an outsider as the only Black child in his school, but was inspired to act after a school play. He deeply connects with his Jamaican roots, viewing his parents’ emphasis on presentation as a key part of his heritage, a theme echoed in his work.

Lindo has previously found himself in awards-season conversations for iconic roles,

including West Indian Archie in Spike Lee’s Malcolm X and his searing performance in Da 5 Bloods. But when nominations failed to materialize, he deliberately resisted expectation. “I try not to buy into that,” he told Entertainment Weekly last year, reflecting on past snubs. Still, he admitted that the absence of recognition was painful. “I was profoundly disappointed, frankly.”

That disappointment did not derail him. Instead, Lindo kept working – on his own terms.

In Sinners, he delivers a performance critics describe as hypnotic. Playing Delta Slim, a Mississippi bluesman whose music anchors a juke joint that becomes the target of supernatural forces, Lindo brings gravitas, restraint, and lived-in wisdom to the screen. Coogler has praised the performance as “incredible,” noting what Lindo brought to the role every single day on set.

Audiences agreed. Sinners boasts a 97% critical rating and 96% audience score on Rotten Tomatoes, and its global box office haul of approximately \$368 million made it one of the year’s most successful original films. The movie shattered awards records with 16 Oscar nominations, becoming the most-nominated film in Academy history.

For Lindo, the recognition arrives not as validation, but as affirmation. “To have been working as an actor for the length of time that I have... the fact that audiences still apparently find what I’m doing interesting – that’s not a given,” he said. “I don’t take any of it for granted.”

### DIRECTING

His Caribbean roots continue to inform his creative direction.



**Jamaican roots Delroy Lindo as Delta Slim in Sinners.** (Warner Bros. image)

Lindo has long spoken about the influence of his Jamaican heritage and the Windrush experience, which he is now exploring in a forthcoming memoir scheduled for release in 2027. He is also developing and directing a feature film set in Jamaica’s Blue Mountains, centred on spirituality, healing, and the power of community - themes deeply rooted in Caribbean culture.

Lindo exclusively told E! News that his son Damiri was the one to tell him he received his first-ever Oscar nomination for the 2026 ceremony. “I was in bed,” he recalled to E!. “My phone rang. It was my son. I picked it up and said, ‘Hey man,’ and he said, ‘Dad, dad, you got it. You got that s-t.’”

“It means the world because he’s seen it all,” Lindo was quoted as saying. “He’s seen it away from the red carpet. He’s seen both sides of it. So, along with my wife, they have the internal and the external perspective on this journey. It felt completely right on to receive this news from my son.”

Lindo faces off against Jacob Elordi (Frankenstein), Stellan Skarsgård (Sentimental Value), Benicio Del Toro (One Battle After Another) and Sean Penn (One Battle After Another) in his

category.

But, however, it turns out, Lindo told E!: “It’s just incredibly joyful and affirming. Affirming that audiences inside and outside of the industry have responded to this work so fully, and the fact that the work has touched people, I believe, in the depth of their humanity. I don’t have the words to explain how gratifying and affirming that feels. It’s extraordinary.”

For many in the Caribbean

diaspora, the moment already carries meaning: a son of Jamaican immigrants, whose artistry endured decades of industry-blindness, finally standing where history says he always belonged.

The Academy Awards, hosted by Conan O’Brien, air Sunday, March 15, 2026, on ABC.

- NewsAmericasNow.com



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT NEWS



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# Lifetime Achievement Honors For Mr. Vegas, Leroy Sibbles And The Late Sly Dunbar At Reggae Genealogy



Island SPACE Caribbean Museum celebrates reggae legends - Mr. Vegas, Leroy Sibbles and the late Sly Dunbar - with Lifetime Achievement Awards during its high impact, multimedia kickoff to Reggae Month on February 7th.

Three pillars of Jamaican music - Mr. Vegas, Leroy Sibbles and the late Sly Dunbar - will receive Lifetime Achievement Awards at Reggae Genealogy® 2026, presented by Island SPACE Caribbean Museum on Saturday, February 7th, in Plantation, Florida.

The annual event, which officially kicks off Reggae Month in South Florida, returns with its most ambitious production to date under the theme “Lights. Camera. Reggae.” Organizers expect more than 3,000 attendees for the large-scale outdoor showcase at Volunteer Park, celebrating reggae’s enduring influence across music, film, television and global pop culture.

The 2026 edition blends live performance, visual storytelling and cultural dialogue, spotlighting reggae’s evolution from Jamaica to the world. The festival is supported by the City of Plantation, Broward County Cultural Division, Florida Power & Light, Grace Foods, and Inner Circle/Bigg Zound.

### Three Icons, One Legacy Moment

Mr. Vegas, one of dancehall’s most globally recognized voices, broke through internationally in the late 1990s with hits including “Heads High” and “Nike Air.” Known for his high-energy performances and genre-blending catalog, the MOBO Award winner has maintained chart presence and worldwide touring appeal for nearly three decades.

Leroy Sibbles, lead singer and bassist of The Heptones, was instrumental in shaping the sound of Studio One during reggae’s formative years. In addition to voicing classics like “Book of Rules” and “Party Time,” Sibbles created foundational basslines that became enduring riddims, influencing generations of artists and producers.

The late Sly Dunbar, the legendary drummer and producer behind Sly & Robbie, is among the most influential figures in reggae history. With credits spanning Bob

Marley, Junior Murvin, Grace Jones and beyond, Dunbar’s innovations helped define reggae, rocksteady and dancehall rhythms. He was a two-time Grammy Award winner and one of the most recorded drummers in the genre and passed away on Jan. 26th.

### Performance-Driven Celebration

The event opens with a tribute to reggae and film icon Jimmy Cliff, followed by performances

from Tifa, Phil Watkis, Roy G and Bobby Rose, backed by Code Red Band. Jamaican actress Audrey Reid, (Dancehall Queen), will host the main stage, with music by Bigg G and DJ King Mega and pre-show hosting by Frank!e Red.

Additional programming includes a tribute to the late Jimmy Cliff, a fireside chat with Leroy Sibbles, Caribbean food vendors, artisan marketplaces, a children’s

activity zone and a corporate networking circle.

Gates open at 4 p.m., with the main program beginning at 6 p.m. Tickets are on sale at reggaegenealogy.org/tickets, priced at \$30 for general admission, \$80 for VIP, and \$10 for children.

- NewsAmericasnow.com



# Ayesha Curry Among UWI Toronto 2026 Honourees

The University of the West Indies (UWI) Toronto Benefit Awards has announced renowned Canadian-born, Jamaican roots, entrepreneur and philanthropist, Ayesha Curry, as one of its 2026 honorees, recognizing her with a Luminary Award for her leadership in community upliftment, wellness advocacy, and purpose-driven entrepreneurship.

Curry, the wife of basketball star, Stephen Curry, is among a distinguished slate of honorees for the 17th annual awards, which will be held on Saturday, April 25, 2026, at The Ritz-Carlton in Toronto under the theme “Unlocking Brilliance.” The annual gala supports scholarships for students across the Caribbean and has become a signature philanthropic event on Toronto’s social calendar.

Organizers cited Curry’s commitment to cultural empowerment, family wellness, and philanthropy as central to her



L to R, the 2026 UWI Toronto honorees: Ayesha Curry, Tonya Williams, Marci Len, Justice McLeod and Sam Ibrahim. (Contributed image)

selection, noting her influence as a global business leader who consistently centers community impact in her work.

The other honorees this year Sam Ibrahim, an esteemed business leader and philanthropist recognized for his dedication to community advancement and social impact initiatives who will receive the G. Raymond Chang Award; Marci Len, a former Canadian Member of Parliament and award-winning broadcaster, recognized for her advocacy, public service, and community leadership, who will receive the Chancellor’s Award and Justice Donald F. McLeod, a distinguished jurist recognized for decades of service to justice, equity, and civic

leadership, who will receive the Vice-Chancellor’s Award.

“This is a powerful night of purpose and pride,” said Dr. Donette Chin-Loy Chang, Patron of the UWI Toronto Benefit Awards, emphasizing the role education plays in transforming lives and communities.

In addition to funding scholarships, a portion of proceeds from the 2026 event will support Hurricane Melissa relief efforts in Jamaica. To date, the UWI Toronto Benefit Awards has awarded more than 1,000 scholarships, reinforcing UWI’s long-standing mission to expand access to higher education throughout the region.



# CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN MIAMI

Take time this month to honor the heritage and experience the culture. With a variety of historic Black neighborhoods encompassing music, food, art, memories and more, Greater Miami and Miami Beach has endless ways to commemorate the impact the Black community has had both past and present in Miami. Find ways to celebrate this month and all year round at [www.MulticulturalMiami.com](http://www.MulticulturalMiami.com).



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# Afro-Caribbean Cuisine Steps Into The Spotlight At South Beach Wine & Food Festival

Afro-Caribbean cuisine is stepping into the global spotlight, and Miami will be center stage on Friday, Feb. 20th as the South Beach Wine & Food Festival, (SOBEWFF®), hosts ‘Las’ Lap Link Up: A Celebration of Afro-Caribbean Cuisine,’ a late-night cultural showcase spotlighting one of the most influential food movements shaping today’s culinary landscape.

The event, hosted by acclaimed chefs Kwame Onwuachi and Nina Compton, will take place from 10:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. at the Kimpton Surfcomber Hotel in Miami Beach as part of SOBEWFF®’s 25th anniversary celebrations.

Once viewed largely through the lens of community cookouts and regional traditions, Afro-Caribbean food has increasingly moved into mainstream culinary spaces – redefining menus,

inspiring global chefs, and fueling new food economies. Its rise reflects a broader cultural shift, where Caribbean flavors are no longer treated as “ethnic” or “exotic,” but as essential to the future of food.

“One of the things that makes SOBEWFF® special is our ability to celebrate culture through food,” said festival founder and director Lee Schragar. “Afro-Caribbean cuisine is bold, joyful, and deeply rooted in history – and this event captures that energy in a way only Miami can.”

At the heart of the celebration is chef Kwame Onwuachi, whose culinary vision has helped propel Afro-Caribbean flavors into the highest ranks of global dining. His Miami Beach restaurant Las’ Lap recently opened to widespread acclaim, bringing island-inspired

cuisine, inventive cocktails, and cultural storytelling to South Beach. His New York City restaurant Tatiana has earned top honors, including recognition as North America’s Best New Restaurant and consistent praise as one of the city’s premier dining destinations.

Co-host Nina Compton, a James Beard Award-winning chef and the force behind Compère Lapin in New Orleans, brings her own deeply personal interpretation of Caribbean cuisine. Raised in Saint Lucia, Compton is celebrated for blending island flavors with refined technique and narrative-driven cooking that reflects migration, memory, and identity.

Together, the two chefs represent a new generation of Afro-Caribbean culinary leaders



Caribbean-born chef, Nina Compton, will co-host Las’ Lap Link Up: A Celebration of Afro-Caribbean Cuisine’ at the South Beach Wine & Food Festival.

reclaiming narrative power—elevating traditional dishes without stripping them of their cultural soul.

The evening will also feature music by DJ GQ, whose reggae

and dancehall sets will provide a soundtrack rooted in Caribbean rhythm and diaspora culture, reinforcing the event’s immersive atmosphere.

At Las’ Lap Link Up, food becomes more than sustenance – it becomes storytelling. Guests will experience how Afro-Caribbean cuisine continues to shape global tastes while honoring the histories and communities that gave rise to it.

As Afro-Caribbean food continues its ascent from the margins to the mainstream, events like this signal not just a culinary trend, but a cultural reckoning – one where flavor, identity, and heritage take their rightful place at the center of the global table.

- NewsAmericasnow.com

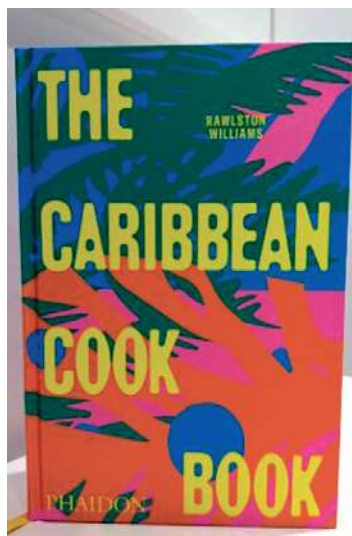


# Chef Rawlston Williams Brings Caribbean Culinary History To The Global Table

The Caribbean Cookbook, a major new work by Caribbean chef, Rawlston Williams, has been released, offering one of the most comprehensive explorations of Caribbean cuisine published to date.

Spanning 432 pages, the book challenges the narrow global perception of Caribbean food, which is often reduced to a small set of familiar dishes. Drawing on decades of lived experience and extensive research across the region, Williams presents Caribbean cooking as a rich, diverse culinary tradition shaped by history, migration, and local ingenuity.

Born and raised in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Williams grew up in a vegetarian household where culinary knowledge was passed down through instinct and observation. Those foundations inform the book’s approach, encouraging



Caribbean Chef Rawlston Williams has released ‘The Caribbean Cookbook.’



readers to understand food through texture, aroma, and ingredient integrity. In researching the book, Williams travelled widely across the Caribbean, engaging with home cooks and professional chefs to capture regional authenticity. The recipes range from Dominica’s callaloo soup and Puerto Rico’s mofongo to Saint Lucia’s green fig salad, Haiti’s seafood creole, and Aruba’s cashew cake. Historical context is central, including dishes such as Haiti’s Soup Joumou, a powerful symbol of

independence. Organized by ingredients and technique, the book moves through marinades, soups, grains, vegetables, seafood, meats, baking, desserts, and drinks, with spices, citrus, coconut, rum, and tamarind anchoring the cuisine. Photographed by award-winning photographer Nico Schinco, the cookbook stands as both a cultural document and a celebration of Caribbean creativity and resilience.



# Barbados-Born Chef Leads This New Upscale Caribbean Inspired Restaurant

Momofuku is returning to its New York restaurant roots with its first new city opening in years, placing Caribbean cuisine and one of its most acclaimed chefs at the center of the revival.

Reservations are now open for Bar Kabawa, a casual Caribbean-inspired restaurant set to open in the East Village, inside the former Momofuku Ko space. The opening marks Momofuku’s first new New York restaurant since 2019, following the closure of the two-Michelin-starred Ko in 2023. A prix-fixe dining room version of Kabawa is expected to follow later.

The restaurant is led by Barbados-born Paul Carmichael, Momofuku’s head chef, whose work has been instrumental in elevating Caribbean cuisine on the global stage. Carmichael, who previously guided Momofuku Seiobo in Sydney to international acclaim, brings a menu that blends Caribbean traditions with refined technique.

Bar Kabawa’s offerings include raw bar selections, Caribbean patties, and rum-forward cocktails. Patties draw inspiration from both Haitian and Jamaican styles, featuring fillings such as Creole chicken, curried crab, conch with bone marrow, and lobster with red herring. The raw bar extends beyond oysters to dishes like octopus pikliz, salt cod



Barbados-born, chef, Paul Carmichael, is steering options that include raw bar picks, Caribbean patties, and drinks accented by rums, with daiquiris in the limelight. (MSN.com image)

with pickled okra, and sardines with avocado hot sauce. Dessert centers on caramelized ducana paired with nutmeg ice cream. Behind the bar, cocktails spotlight Caribbean spirits, including several daiquiri variations infused with bay leaf, jerk spices, and habanero. Wines are sourced from island regions worldwide.

Designed by Joseph Alayón Ormaza, the space reflects a tropical aesthetic, reinforcing Momofuku’s renewed commitment to restaurants - and to Caribbean cuisine as one of New York’s most dynamic culinary movements.

- Rewritten from MSN.com



Most of us try to attract other people by the friends we keep and the way we carry ourselves.  
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Peter A. Webley  
Publisher



## How To Live To Be 100 Years Old

Living to 100 may sound extraordinary, but research suggests it's more achievable - and enjoyable - than many people think. Studies show the majority of centenarians rate their health as good, and large numbers of people in this age group are mobile, active and optimistic.

According to the American Medical Association, adopting these seven habits can improve longevity and quality of life:

### 1. Eat Healthy.

Think of food as medicine. Choose nutritious, whole foods. Eat more fruits that are dark in color - blue, purple and red - to get the most nutrients, as well as fiber-rich vegetables, especially non-starchy vegetables such as broccoli, carrots and leafy greens. Incorporate whole grains, nuts, seeds, lean meats and fish. Drink more water, or as an alternative, flavored or sparkling water with no added sugar.

Reduce your intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and unhealthy ultra-processed foods, especially those with added sodium and sugar. Drinking sugary beverages, even 100% fruit juices, is associated with a higher mortality risk, according to a study published in JAMA Network Open. Eat fewer processed meats, which tend to be high in fat and heavy on added salt and preservatives. Limit your intake of refined grains, such as bread, crackers, baked goods and white rice. Drink less alcohol.

### 2. Exercise

Adults should aim for at least



150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity weekly. A recent study published in JAMA found that putting down the television remote and walking can improve healthy aging - highlighting the importance of small everyday habits.

### 3. Get Enough Sleep

Adequate sleep improves memory, reduces stress, improves mood, and primes the body's natural defenses against disease. But sleep quality decreases with age. Improve your sleep quality by setting a regular bedtime and wake-up time, insulating your bedroom against noise, avoiding exercise within an hour of bedtime, maintaining a cool and dark bedroom, and limiting fluids within two hours of bedtime. Also avoid alcohol before bedtime and make your bedroom a tech-free zone as screen-time can impact your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep.

### 4. Live With Purpose

A sense of purpose can lead to

increased energy, motivation, emotional stability and resilience. Take time for self-reflection and try meditation or yoga. Prioritize your values and beliefs and put them into action toward a goal that's meaningful to you and benefits others.

### 5. Stay Positive

To bust stress, take a break from decisions, connect with others, pet your dog or cat, write a to-do

list (stick to three items), take time to recharge, laugh, sing, curb clutter, set boundaries, perform mindfulness exercises, practice gratitude, and seek help from a professional when stress becomes overwhelming.

### 6. Stay Connected

Research shows that having social connections is a significant predictor of longevity and better physical, cognitive and mental health, while social isolation and loneliness are significant predictors of premature death and poor health. Unfortunately, there is a nationwide loneliness epidemic that medical experts consider a major public health concern. Combat loneliness with social clubs and community groups, or by taking up a hobby, learning something new or volunteering. If you're struggling with loneliness, reach out to a professional, your doctor, family member or friend. You can also call the 988-crisis helpline for

support

### 7. Get Screened

Schedule preventive care, tests and health screenings to help your doctor spot certain conditions before they become more serious. Your doctor can recommend needed tests based on your age, gender and health conditions - including colonoscopies, mammograms, gynecological and prostate exams, and vision screenings.

Today, there are many at-home screening options available. Some are more effective than others, and all work best - and minimize stress around results - when taken in consultation with a doctor.

For more resources on staying healthy, visit ama-assn.org.

- StatePoint



## Florida Lawmakers Weigh Shift Toward State-Run Obamacare Exchange

Florida lawmakers are considering legislation that would significantly alter the state's long-standing opposition to the Affordable Care Act, (ACA), also known as Obamacare.

Bills HB 1531 and HB 1533 would move Florida toward building and operating a state-run health insurance exchange, while HB 141 proposes a similar government marketplace for employers.

Critics argue the measures represent a major expansion of government, forcing more than four million Floridians who rely on ACA coverage to navigate a new state-run system, bureaucracy, and funding structure. Once established, a state exchange would require permanent financing and administrative oversight, shifting

responsibility from the federal government to Tallahassee.

Florida previously rejected this model, opting instead to use HealthCare.gov while relying heavily on private insurance agents and brokers for consumer support.

Opponents warn that creating a state exchange would weaken that system, introduce recurring costs, and lock the state into long-term vendor contracts that are difficult and costly to unwind.

Florida saw about 261,000 fewer people enrolled in the marketplace this year, according to new data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. "There are still tax credits



available in the marketplace, but it's [now] really limited to those people earning between 100 and 400% of the poverty level," said Scott Darius of Florida Voices for Health. The US President has ruled out reviving the subsidies and, for now, the chances of restoring them appear bleak.

- Rewritten from FloridaPolitics.com



## Judge Fast-Tracks Legal Challenge To Florida HIV Drug Program Cuts

A Florida administrative judge has agreed to fast-track a legal challenge to a new policy under the Ron DeSantis administration that advocates warn could strip as many as 16,000 people living with HIV and AIDS of access to lifesaving medications and insurance assistance.

Administrative Law Judge W. David Watkins set an expedited hearing for February 18 to consider a complaint filed by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF). The foundation is seeking a ruling before March 1, when changes to Florida's AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) are scheduled to take effect.

Since 2007, ADAP has covered Florida residents earning up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level. Under the new policy, eligibility would drop sharply to 130 percent, potentially excluding thousands

who rely on the program for HIV medications and health insurance discounts. The Florida Department of Health has also announced it will stop covering Biktarvy, a commonly prescribed daily HIV treatment.

The department, which administers the federally funded Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, says the changes are needed to address rising insurance costs and avoid a projected \$120 million funding shortfall.

AHF argues the state violated the law by implementing the changes without proper rulemaking. The issue has sparked protests and legislative testimony as Florida lawmakers convene, intensifying scrutiny of the administration's HIV/AIDS policy shift.

- Rewritten from FloridaPhoenix.com



## Suriname Probes Death Potentially Linked To Chikungunya Outbreak

Suriname's Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labour says it is investigating the circumstances surrounding a death reportedly linked to the chikungunya virus, days after the country confirmed an outbreak.

In a statement, the ministry said the Bureau of Public Health, (BOG), has launched a case investigation but provided no details about the victim. The death follows confirmation last week of eight locally transmitted



chikungunya cases, with laboratory testing conducted by the Central Laboratory of the BOG and the Academic Hospital Paramaribo. Health officials said none of the confirmed cases involved recent overseas travel.

The BOG continues contact

tracing, additional testing, and heightened surveillance to limit further spread. Chikungunya is a mosquito-borne viral illness transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes, which also spread dengue and Zika. Symptoms include sudden fever, severe joint pain and swelling, fatigue, headache, and sometimes rash.

The ministry is advising people with symptoms to use paracetamol rather than aspirin or ibuprofen, stay hydrated, rest, and seek medical care if conditions worsen.

- Rewritten from CMC





## Luxury Housing Development Rises In Jamaica's Historic Tower Isle

BY HOWARD CAMPBELL

Located on the border of Ocho Rios, Tower Isle in St. Mary parish, eastern Jamaica is considered a cradle of the country's tourism industry. It leads to Oracabessa, a seaside town where Ian Fleming wrote the famous James Bond novels.

Tower Isle is also the site of The Gates of Ocean Ridge, a high-end housing development scheduled for completion in 2026. It comprises 114 units - 54 one bedroom, 42 two bedrooms and 18 three bedrooms - that has drawn interest from buyers in Jamaica and its Diaspora.

Arnold Nugent is managing director of Renovare Development Company Ltd., which oversees construction of the project. He told Caribbean Today that work on the scheme

started in 2021 with a budget of \$32 million.

Like similar developments in the parishes of St. Ann and St. James, prospective owners have familiar backgrounds.

"The interest has been great from both the Diaspora, foreign Investors and Jamaicans at home," said Nugent. "We are offering pre-construction prices at the moment and are actively marketing the development."

Having worked in tourism for over 30 years, he is aware that location is critical to attracting buyers.

"Jamaica is strategically positioned to attract investors and in particular, the North Coast with a very high market share based on its offerings and geographic location," Nugent noted. "Also, the development is advantageously positioned,

approximately 10 minutes from Ocho Rios and five minutes from the Ian Fleming International Airport at Boscobel, St. Mary."

Several elite developments dot the scenic coastline of St. Ann, for which Ocho Rios is the chief town. These include Richmond, Sol Harbour, The Gates of Edgehill and Camelot Village that include apartments and townhouses.

Tourist-friendly towns such as Priory and Chukka Cove host events such as the annual Rebel Salute reggae concert. They are also home to reggae stars including Beres Hammond and Buju Banton.

The Gates Of Ocean Ridge is being built in coordination with Mosaic Architects, a Kingston-based company. It is in the heart of Tower Isle, where the groundbreaking hotel of the



The Gates Located on the border of Ocho Rios, Tower Isle in St. Mary parish, eastern Jamaica. (Contributed image)

same name was built by the Issa family in 1949.

That resort hosted numerous celebrities including movie stars Errol Flynn and Debbie Reynolds, heavyweight boxing

champion Joe Louis and playwright Noel Coward. The latter was a regular at Goldeneye, Fleming's Oracabessa haunt.



## Royal Caribbean Cancels Stops To This Caribbean Port

BY DAVID L. SNELLING  
Edited By Felicia J. Persaud

Royal Caribbean has announced cancellation stops to Haiti's Labadee port through the end of 2026.

The cruise line initially scrapped visits through April 2026 but extended it until the end of this year due to safety concerns in Haiti as gang violence spiral out of control. It comes as gangs shot at a Brazilian airline on Jan. 25th.

However, the cancellation could impact the job market in the Caribbean island as hundreds might be jobless in Labadee, according to economic experts. The Board of Directors of Communal Section, (CASEC) said an estimated 1,000 Labadie residents have already cut off from cruise-related jobs since the shutdown began in 2025. This latest suspension to the resort island has a deeper financial effect since cruise tourism is the mainstay of the economy.

Over 800 residents in Labadee were employed by the cruise industry for over 10 years and hundreds of vendors earned income by selling crafts, food and artwork to visitors. Others worked as security guards and support staff.

In previous announcements when Labadee was skipped for months, the cruise line explained the decision was made to ensure the wellbeing of guests and crew. Royal Caribbean said it has been monitoring the state of Port-au-

Prince, which has been seized by gangs and turmoil among leaders struggling to tackle the crisis. Visitors have been warned not to travel to Haiti, as the U.S. State Department lists the embattled Caribbean nation at its highest warning level possible, Level 4, with the warning "Do not travel." The Department says Haiti is gripped by murder, kidnappings for ransom, robberies, carjackings and brutal assaults.

In addition, the U.S. Coast Guard has concerns about security in the ports of Haiti and has advised mariners and passengers to travel though the ports of Haiti with caution.

"We have been monitoring the evolving situation in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and out of an abundance of caution, we're cancelling our visit to Labadee," Royal Caribbean said.

On May 23rd and June 20th, instead of visiting Labadee, visitors will enjoy a stop at Nassau, Bahamas. On July

18th, passengers will stop at Grand Turk, Turks & Caicos. In addition, before the first Sea Day, passengers will visit Nassau, Bahamas in place of Falmouth, Jamaica, arriving in Nassau.

On August 15th, instead of visiting Labadee, visitors will stop at Nassau, Bahamas and on September 12th and October 10th, Royal Caribbean will make another stop at Grand Turk, Turks & Caicos. The ship will also visit Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic in place of Falmouth, Jamaica.

On October 30th, instead of visiting Labadee, the ship will stop at Cozumel, Mexico and on November 7th, the ship will make a third trip at Grand Turk, Turks & Caicos. On December 5th, visitors will enjoy a stop at Nassau, Bahamas.

For more scheduling dates, visit [RoyalCaribbean.com](http://RoyalCaribbean.com)



## Caribbean Airlines Welcomes Arriving Passengers With Carnival-Themed Celebration At Piarco

Caribbean Airlines brought the energy and color of Carnival to its Duty-Free Store at Piarco International Airport, hosting its Annual Carnival Passenger Welcome for arriving customers.

Passengers arriving from Guyana, St. Maarten, St. Lucia and New York were greeted with a festive reception featuring live entertainment and interactive brand experiences. Chutney and soca artistes K.I. and Swappi delivered high-energy performances, supported by a DJ and master of ceremonies who kept the atmosphere lively.

The celebration included special duty-free promotions, exclusive offers on Caribbean Iere Mix, and prize giveaways from brand partners Angostura, Massy, AMCO, Vintage Imports and Brydens. The Duty-Free Store was transformed with Carnival décor provided by Samaroo's Limited and designer costumes from Carnival Catwalk.

Caribbean Airlines said the annual welcome underscores its commitment to celebrating Caribbean culture while creating memorable, customer-focused travel experiences. Carnival-



Arriving passengers were treated to a festive welcome at the Caribbean Airlines Duty Free Store at Piarco International Airport, to kick off the airline's TT carnival celebrations. (CAL image)

themed promotions at the Duty-Free Store continue, with shoppers benefiting from special giveaways and bonus mileage rewards on qualifying purchases.

The T&T government has declared the official start of Carnival 2026 and published regulations covering behavior, bands, orchestras and vehicles during the season.

Carnival has been declared a special event from Sunday

February 1 to midnight on Tuesday February 17, 2026, under the Liquor Licences Act.

A separate order under the Public Holidays and Festivals Act declares that Carnival 2026 will officially begin at 4a.m. on February, 16th and end at midnight on Tuesday, February, 17th.



## Sandals Saint Vincent Announces New Rondoal Villas Expansion

Sandals Saint Vincent has unveiled plans for a major accommodation expansion with the introduction of 20 Rondoal Butler Villas with Private Pools, set to debut in November 2026.

The new villas bring Sandals' signature round-shaped Rondoal design to its newest Eastern Caribbean resort, offering enhanced privacy, private plunge pools, and rooftop terraces. Nestled along the Buccament Bay valley and surrounded by tropical gardens, the villas range from approximately 1,000 to more than 2,000 square feet and feature king-size bedrooms, spa-style bathrooms with soaking

tubs, fully stocked in-room bars, and 24-hour dining with personalized butler service.

Select villas will include rooftop access designed for stargazing and private relaxation under St. Vincent's night skies. The expansion builds on recent upgrades at the resort, including Butler Villa Suites with plunge pools and select media-room layouts.

Sandals Saint Vincent, part of Sandals Resorts, offers an adults-only experience focused on contemporary design, immersive dining, and curated land and water activities in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.





# IMMIGRATION NEWS



## These Are The Caribbean Nations Hit by New U.S. Immigrant Visa Suspension

The United States has suspended the issuance of certain permanent immigrant visas to nationals of several Caribbean countries, as part of a broader policy move targeting what Washington describes as “high-risk” nations whose migrants are deemed likely to rely on U.S. public assistance.

The U.S. Department of State said the suspension applies to immigrant visa processing for permanent residency for selected countries and took effect on January 21st. The policy does not affect tourist or short-term visitor visas, which remain available in some cases.

Caribbean countries impacted by the suspension include:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- The Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Dominica
- Grenada
- Haiti
- Jamaica
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia, and
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.



According to the State Department, the measure is intended to ensure that new immigrants are financially self-sufficient and do not become a “public charge.” U.S. officials said the suspension will remain in place until additional safeguards are implemented.

Dual nationals applying with a valid passport from a non-listed country are exempt from the restrictions.

The announcement comes amid a wider review of U.S. immigration policies under the Trump administration, which has already revoked tens of thousands of visas this month. Caribbean advocacy groups have raised concerns about the potential impact on family reunification, migration pathways, and long-standing diaspora ties between the region and the United States.



## US Revokes Visas Of Two Members Of Haiti’s Presidential Council

The U.S. Department of State has imposed visa restrictions and revocations on two members of Haiti’s Transitional Presidential Council, (TPC), and their immediate family members, citing alleged involvement in the operations of gangs and other criminal organizations. The move underscores a blunt message: political authority entangled with gang power will no longer be tolerated.

“These actions are being taken due to the TPC members’ involvement in the operation of gangs and other criminal organizations in Haiti,” said State Department spokesman Thomas Pigott, pointing specifically to interference with Haiti’s efforts to combat gangs designated by the U.S. as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, (FTOs).

No names were officially released. No evidence was detailed. But the timing - and the context - spoke loudly.

### Power, Pressure, And A Fracturing Council

Over the past 24 hours, some council members have reportedly attempted to use their votes as leverage against Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé, while a well-known gang figure posted a TikTok video voicing support for the council. The overlap between political manoeuvring and gang signalling has become harder to dismiss.

The security situation on the ground continues to deteriorate. Armed gangs, already control large swaths of the capital, are expanding

their reach.

The visa action brings the number of TPC figures who have lost U.S. visas or green cards in the past two months to at least three. Previously, the State Department revoked the visa of former central bank governor and council member Fritz Alphonse Jean, who confirmed he was barred from entering the United States after an alleged attempt in November to remove Prime Minister Fils-Aimé. Jean has denied accusations of gang ties.

### Washington Signals The End Of Patience

The legal authority for the move - INA 212(a)(3)(C) - allows the U.S. to bar entry to individuals whose presence could have “potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences.” In practical terms, it is a diplomatic red card.

Tensions within Haiti’s transitional leadership have been escalating since November. With the council’s mandate set to expire on Feb. 7, and no elected president in place, five of the council’s seven voting members recently voted to remove Fils-Aimé and install a new government. The Trump administration has described that move as illegal and warned of consequences.

### A Country Running Out Of Time

Haiti’s crisis extends far beyond political infighting. Armed gangs now dominate much of the country, hollowing out the state’s ability to govern and deliver basic services. Presidential elections have not been held in nearly a decade. Humanitarian needs have reached

unprecedented levels, with millions struggling to meet daily necessities.

“Violence has intensified and expanded geographically, exacerbating food insecurity and instability, as transitional governance arrangements near expiry and overdue elections remain urgent,” said UN Secretary-General António Guterres in his latest report on the UN’s political mission, BINUH.

More than one in ten Haitians have been displaced by violence. Migration pressures are rising. Regional stability is increasingly at risk.

The U.S. move reframes Haiti’s crisis in stark terms: the problem is no longer only gangs versus the state – it is the blurring of lines between the two. By targeting senior political figures, Washington is signalling that stability cannot be built on compromised authority.

“The Haitian people have had enough with gang violence, destruction, and political infighting,” the State Department said, adding that the Trump administration “will pursue accountability for those who continue to destabilize Haiti and the region.”

Elections are tentatively projected for early 2027. Whether Haiti reaches that moment with functioning institutions - or slides deeper into fragmentation - may depend on whether this line drawn by Washington holds.

- NewsAmericasNow



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## Calls Grow For FIFA World Cup Boycott

Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter has voiced support for a proposed fan boycott of World Cup matches in the United States, citing concerns over the conduct of President Donald Trump and his administration's domestic and foreign policies.

In a post on X, Blatter backed comments made by Swiss anti-corruption expert Mark Pieth, who recently questioned the suitability of the United States as a World Cup host. Pieth, a former chair of FIFA's Independent Governance Committee, told the Swiss newspaper Der Bund that fans should consider staying away, warning that visitors could face harsh treatment from U.S. authorities. Blatter quoted Pieth's remarks and added that he agreed it was appropriate to question the tournament being staged in the United States.

The criticism comes as the United States prepares to co-host the World Cup with Canada and Mexico from June 11th to July 19th. Concerns raised by international football figures focus on expanded U.S. travel bans, aggressive immigration enforcement, and broader political tensions.



German Football Association vice president Oke Göttlich has also said a boycott should be seriously considered. Fan travel has already been complicated by U.S. entry restrictions affecting countries such as Senegal, Ivory Coast, Iran, and Haiti - nations whose teams have qualified for the tournament - raising questions about access, fairness, and the spirit of global sport.

### World Cup Groups Confirmed

- Group A: Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, Winner of UEFA Play-Off D (Denmark, Czech Republic, Republic of Ireland or North Macedonia)
- Group B: Canada, Winner of UEFA Play-Off A (Italy, Wales, Bosnia-Herzegovina or Northern Ireland), Qatar, Switzerland
- Group C: Brazil, Morocco, Haiti, Scotland
- Group D: USA, Paraguay,

Australia, Winner of UEFA Play-Off C (Turkey, Slovakia, Kosovo or Romania)

- Group E: Germany, Curacao, Ivory Coast, Ecuador
- Group F: Netherlands, Japan, Winner of UEFA Play-Off B (Ukraine, Poland, Albania or Sweden), Tunisia
- Group G: Belgium, Egypt, Iran, New Zealand
- Group H: Spain, Cape Verde, Saudi Arabia, Uruguay
- Group I: France, Senegal, Winner of FIFA Play-Off 2 (Iraq, Bolivia or Suriname), Norway
- Group J: Argentina, Algeria, Austria, Jordan
- Group K: Portugal, Winner of FIFA Play-Off 1 (DR Congo, Jamaica or New Caledonia), Uzbekistan, Colombia
- Group L: England, Croatia, Ghana, Panama

On June 11, the 2026 FIFA World Cup will begin with Mexico v South Africa in Mexico City, a repeat of the opening match in the 2010 FIFA World Cup that was hosted in South Africa.

The tournament will conclude with the final on July 19 in New York New Jersey.

- *Rewritten from the AP*



## West Indies Name T20 World Cup Squad

The West Indies have named their 15-man squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, handing a surprise call-up to uncapped Guyanese batter Quentin Sampson while fast bowler Alzarri Joseph misses out through injury.

The tournament will be played across India and Sri Lanka next month, and the squad will get an immediate test in a three-match T20 International series against South Africa.

Coach Daren Sammy and the selection panel have opted for a blend of experience and emerging talent, largely sticking with the core that featured at the 2024 edition. However, the retirements of Nicholas Pooran and Andre Russell have reshaped the middle order, forcing a shift in balance and finishing options.

Veterans Jason Holder and Johnson Charles are expected to shoulder that responsibility. Charles, a member of the title-winning 2016 side, will appear in his fifth T20 World Cup.

The headline inclusion is Sampson, who impressed during the 2025 Caribbean Premier League with the Guyana Amazon Warriors, scoring 241 runs at a strike rate above 150. Despite modest returns in a recent series



The West Indies will play the T20 in India and Sri Lanka.

against Afghanistan, selectors backed his power and composure.

Joseph's absence due to a hamstring strain weakens the pace attack, leaving Shamar Joseph, Jayden Seales, and Romario Shepherd to lead the fast-bowling unit.

After the South Africa series, the West Indies open their World Cup campaign on February 8 in Kolkata against Scotland, followed by group matches against England, Nepal, and Italy.

### West Indies Squad:

Shai Hope (capt), Johnson Charles, Roston Chase, Matthew Forde, Shimron Hetmyer, Jason Holder, Akeal Hosein, Shamar Joseph, Brandon King, Gudakesh Motie, Rovman Powell, Sherfane Rutherford, Quentin Sampson, Jayden Seales, Romario Shepherd.

- *Rewritten from CMC*



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# SPORTS NEWS



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## Miami Match Leads Ticket Demand For FIFA World Cup 2026

Miami will host the most sought-after match of the FIFA World Cup 2026, after FIFA confirmed

that Colombia versus Portugal in Miami received more ticket applications than any other

game during the recent Random Selection Draw phase.

FIFA said the draw generated more than half a billion ticket requests worldwide, highlighting unprecedented global demand for the expanded tournament. The Colombia-Portugal clash will take place in Miami Gardens on June 27th, drawing fans from across the Americas, Europe, and beyond.

Rodney Barreto, co-chair of the FIFA World Cup 2026 Miami Host Committee, said the response reflects Miami's status as a global city with deep multicultural roots and a strong football culture.

Miami is one of 16 host cities across the United States, Canada, and Mexico and is expected to play a central role in delivering the largest FIFA World Cup in history, reinforcing its reputation as an international hub for major sporting and cultural events.



**FIFA WORLD CUP**  
UNITED STATES - CANADA - MEXICO

This comes as thousands of fans are expressing concern about the tournament's security, outrage over the armed attack in Venezuela, and the controversial human rights and immigration policies of the Donald Trump administration. According to European media, messages promoting ticket cancellations on resale forums, travel agencies, and hotel booking sites have not only prompted extraordinary meetings between officials

and representatives of member associations but have also generated discussions about potential strategies to address the shifting perceptions surrounding the tournament.

FIFA has denied reports that fans are cancelling tickets for the US-hosted World Cup. FIFA's customer support website clarifies that ticket sales are final and cannot be cancelled once "payment for the ticket has been successfully processed." The organization reiterates that tickets should only be purchased through its official platform, which includes a dedicated resale and exchange marketplace.

More than a million World Cup tickets have already been sold during the Visa presale phase, while FIFA has received more than 500 million ticket applications during the latest random selection draw.



## Julien Alfred, Marvric Pamphile Named Saint Lucia Athletes Of The Year

Julien Alfred continues to set the standard for Saint Lucian athletics.

The Olympic 100-metre champion was named Female Athlete of the Year for 2025 by the Saint Lucia Athletics Association, (SLAA), at its annual awards gala on January 24 at the Daren Sammy Cricket Ground. Quarter-miler Marvric Pamphile claimed Male Athlete of the Year after a dominant season in the 400 meters.

Alfred's latest honor comes on the heels of a remarkable year that included Olympic gold and a World Championship bronze medal, cementing her status as one of the Caribbean's premier sprinters.

Pamphile's consistency on the track earned equal recognition, highlighting a strong year for Saint Lucia's senior athletes.

Rising stars also took center stage. Jady Emmanuel, a double CARIFTA sprint champion, was named Female Junior Athlete of the Year, while record-breaking



Julien Alfred is again Saint Lucia's female Athlete of the Year.

thrower Denzel Phillips secured the male junior award. Juvenile athletes Avery Maryat and Hadassah Jules were also honored for standout performances.

Off the track, Denise Herman of Choiseul Athletics was named Coach of the Year, while longtime Abilene Wildcats coach Finley Louis received a special dedication award for 20 years of service. Former national standout Makeba Alcide earned Administrator of the Year.

- Rewritten from CMC



## Jamaica Wins 2026 Cricket West Indies Women's Super50 Cup

Jamaica was crowned champions of the 2026 Cricket West Indies Women's Super50 Cup following Saturday's final round of matches.

The Jamaican women produced a remarkable final-round turnaround to capture the CG United Women's Super50 Cup, leaping from fifth position to clinch the title by a single point in one of the most tightly contested finishes in recent tournament history.

Entering the decisive round well off the pace, the Shane Brooks-coached side capitalized on a crucial slip by early leaders Windward Islands Women, who suffered defeat against Guyana Women. That result opened the door for Jamaica, who seized the moment with an emphatic eight-wicket victory over the winless Leeward Islands Women.

The dominant performance earned Jamaica valuable bonus

points, propelling them to 21 points overall and narrowly ahead of Windward Islands and Guyana, who both finished on 20 points. The margin underlined just how competitive the three-round tournament proved to be.

Barbados, who began the final round in second place, endured a disappointing close, sliding to fifth after their defeat and ending on 13 points. The Leeward Islands finished at the bottom of the standings on seven points, having lost all three matches.

Jamaica's late surge highlighted their resilience and



The Jamaican women's team produced a remarkable final-round turnaround to capture the CG United Women's Super50 Cup. (Instagram image)

consistency under pressure, turning a seemingly unlikely title push into a memorable championship triumph.

- Rewritten from Jamaica Observer





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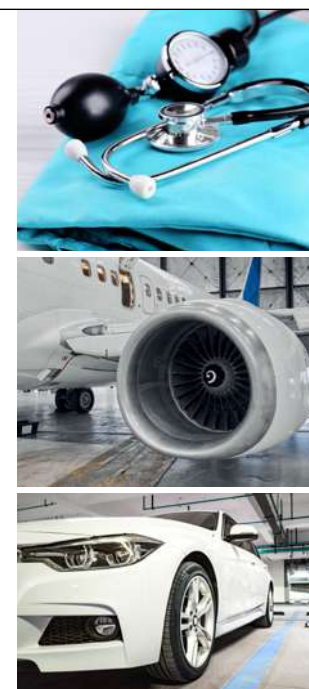
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SPORTS NEWS

# Jamaican Reggae Girlz Solai Washington Signed By Orlando Pride



Reggae Girlz Solai Washington is now an "Orlando Pride." (Orlando Pride image)

The Orlando Pride have announced the signing of Jamaican international forward, Solai Washington, securing the former Florida State Seminole through the 2027 season with a mutual option for 2028.

"Solai is a player we've been tracking closely during her two years in college," Pride head coach Seb Hines said in a club release. "Her composure on the ball, ability to break lines, and the maturity she showed at Florida State make her an excellent fit for what we're building. She brings energy, versatility, and a strong competitive edge. We're excited to welcome her to Orlando and see the impact she can make both on and off the field."

The 20-year-old, 5'6" attacker, originally from Atlanta, made 35 appearances for Florida State over two seasons, scoring 8 goals and recording 4 assists. She played a key role in the Seminoles' 2025 NCAA national championship run and their 2024 ACC tournament title. Washington's collegiate accolades include selection to the 2024 ACC All-Freshmen Team, the 2024 All-ACC Academic Team, and TopDrawerSoccer's Top 100 Freshmen list, where she ranked No. 42.

On the international stage, Washington has already gained

experience at the highest level. She earned three senior caps with Jamaica's Reggae Girlz at the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, making her debut in a scoreless draw against France - an impressive milestone achieved while still a teenager.

### What It Means for Orlando

Orlando's need for added depth in attacking positions has been well documented, and Washington represents a high-upside addition in an area of need. While the Pride could still benefit from proven NWSL scorers to support established stars like Barbra Banda, Marta, and Jacquie Ovalle, investing in young talent remains a key part of long-term roster building - especially in the post-draft era of the NWSL.

Washington was not the most prolific scorer at Florida State, but her early exposure to World Cup football at just 17 speaks volumes about her potential. With experienced teammates and a strong development environment under Hines and his staff, the Pride will look to help Washington take the next step in her professional and international career.

- NewsAmericasnow.com



# Your Shot At Cricket Glory: Here's How You Could Play Against Chris Gayle And Other Greats

If you're a cricket fan who has dreamt of stepping out onto a professional cricket pitch alongside legends of the game - including Universe Boss, West Indian star player, Chris Gayle, 2026 might be your year.

The Battle of Bats Cricket Challenge, a global cricket competition designed to bring everyday players into the spotlight, is giving amateurs the chance to compete for a spot on the same field as some of the sport's most iconic stars.

### A Global Challenge With Big Stakes

Battle of Bats is not your typical fan experience. This is a multi-phase competition that starts online and culminates in a live on-field showdown at the Grand Prairie Cricket Stadium in Dallas, Texas - one of the premier cricket venues in the United States on March 7th. Participants begin by registering for free and earning points in the early phase through a mix of online challenges, quizzes, and creative content submissions. As they progress, competitors move through subsequent rounds, with only 50 semi-finalists advancing, followed by 20 finalists selected to prove themselves in person.

In the final phase, the top performers will take to the pitch alongside professional players - including big names such as Gayle, along with other legends from India, the West Indies and around the world.

### Earn Your Place On The Pitch

The journey starts with digital engagement: answer cricket-related questions, complete creative challenges, post collaborative Instagram content using official hashtags, and rack up points to climb the leaderboard.

As competitors advance, the stakes rise. Online interviews and skill assessments with Cricket Technical Committee (CTC) representatives determine who advances to the live field trials. From there, the best performers earn the ultimate reward: a spot in the Battle of Bats Match on March 7, 2026, where 14 winners will share the pitch with pro cricketers from around the world.

### Play With Legends

The event's roster of cricket stars spans multiple countries, giving amateur players an unmatched opportunity to rub shoulders - and bat - with some of the best the sport has to offer. Team The World, the Battle of Bats squad that will face off against the finalists, features giants of the game, including Gayle, known for his explosive batting and record-breaking performances in Twenty20 cricket.

For players who have grown up idolizing these figures, this isn't just a chance to watch from the stands - it's a chance to test their skills in the same stadium and under the same conditions as their heroes.

### More Than Just Cricket

Beyond the on-field competition, Battle of Bats encourages community engagement and creativity. Social media challenges let participants showcase their passion, and earning points through popular platforms like Instagram and TikTok adds a social dimension to the pursuit of cricket glory.

The event also highlights cricket's growing footprint in the United States and around the world. Hosting the final in Dallas - a city with a rapidly expanding cricket fan base - underscores how the sport is evolving and creating new opportunities for players and fans alike.

### Your Chance To Step Up

With registration open and challenges underway, aspiring cricketers from across the globe have a real shot at being more than spectators. Whether you're a weekend club player, a seasoned amateur, or simply a cricket enthusiast with dreams of the big stage, Battle of Bats offers a concrete path to go from fan to competitor. For details on how to sign up and join the Battle of Bats Cricket Challenge, visit battleofbats.com.

- NewsAmericasnow.com



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