



CHARLES TOWN
MAROON COUNCIL

**7th ANNUAL
INTERNATIONAL
MAROON
CONFERENCE**

*"Maroons, Indigenous People
and Indigeneity Part 2"*



AFRICAN CARIBBEAN INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA/ JAMAICA MEMORY BANK

A DIVISION OF THE INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA



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Welcome...

If the modern world lets the indigenous cultures fade, then they will spend a long hard journey into the future in search of values of the past.

Obala! To all who have a care for the continued condition of planet earth and its deterioration. The Maroons because of their continuing warfare, 85 years of armed conflict they left no edifices as did the colonial powers, what they left is as valuable. They left trails along which if you walk you can hear the ancestors whispering. They left us a culture with values to live by. One such value is to make decisions mindful of the next generation and absence of community where the members are committed to each other in the pursuit of development strategies.

“The law of the jungle” is the abiding mantra. The Law of the jungle is as old as the sky and as true as the wind. And as the vine encircles the tree trunk, so the law runs backwards and forward. The strength of the wolf is the pack and the strength of the pack is the wolf. The wolf that lives by this law prosper, the wolf that does not perishes.

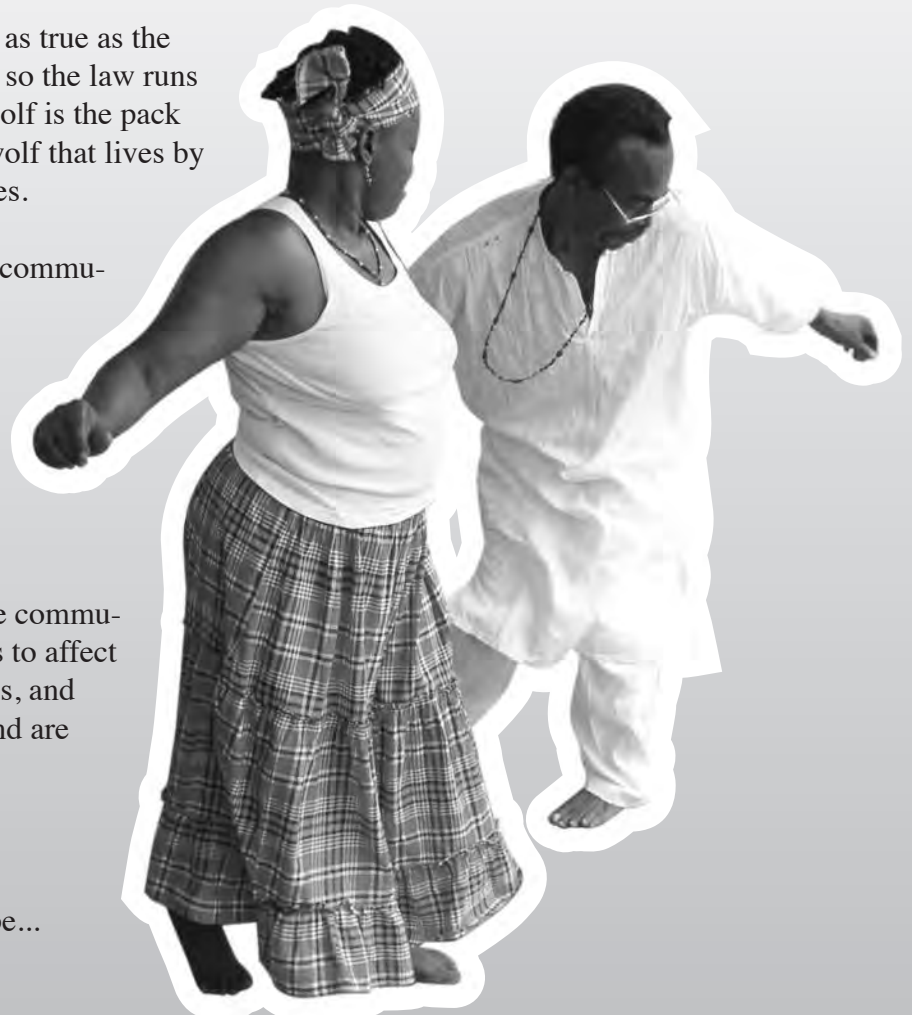
The purpose of the conference is a borderless community of indigenous people where it transcends Geographical Boundaries... And, as the Maroons did, having one goal, that of freedom, so the interest of an indigenous community without borders is about protecting the rights of indigenous communities worldwide.

To be able to shine the collective light of these communities, on the plight of individual communities to affect change. These interests have spanned centuries, and are as old as the sky and as true as the wind and are now to be realized.

More in the magazine.

“Jan Jan catu” what will be... will be... will be...

Col. Frank Lumsden



Meet the Organising Committee...

Colonel Frank Lumsden

Leader of the Charles Town maroons and chief organizer of the conference. Colonel Lumsden is a fine artist and holds a BSc. Management from Southern Illinois University.

Dr. Frances Botkin

Dr. Frances R. Botkin, Professor of English, teaches British Romanticism, Caribbean Literature, and Gender Studies at Towson University in Baltimore. With Dr. Paul Youngquist, she is co-editing a collection of essays on Maroon studies, *The Abeng and the Book*. She has been a conference organiser since 2009.

Dr. Paul Youngquist

Paul Youngquist is a Professor of English at the University of Colorado, Boulder. His areas of specialization include British Romanticism, Atlantic Studies, Science Fiction, Literary and Cultural Theory.

Marcus Goffe

Marcus Goffe is a Jamaican Attorney-at-Law. Mr. Goffe is in the final year of his PhD research at Queen Mary. His research focuses on the protection of indigenous rights, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions in the Caribbean.

Evan Williams

Principal Architect/ Designer/Planner. Jamaican born, British educated and American trained, Dr. Williams has established an international network of professional and personal relationships not only in the field of architecture, art and design, but also in entertainment and Tourism.

Dianne McIntosh

Dianne McIntosh is a Special Educator, sociologist, Community Development Expert and practitioner. She has served in the United Nations and the Government of Jamaica specializing in the area of public finance management reforms and marginalized and vulnerable populations. Her focus is on economic empowerment, particularly of women and children in the development of their local economy and community.

Flavius Laidley

Flavius Laidley is the webmaster for the Conference sit. He is a trained and practising Systems Analyst. Flavius has been involved in events creation, planning, management, marketing with a special interest in tourism and sports tourism since the early 1970s.

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ISSN 0799-4354

Cover and layout: Anya Gloudon-Nelson

Published by Charles Town Maroon Council
Charles Town, Portland, Jamaica

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7th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL MAROON CONFERENCE 2015

Theme: Maroons, Indigenous Peoples and Indigeneity
PART 2

The theme of this year's Conference *Maroons, Indigenous Peoples and Indigeneity* aims to link the Maroon people with Indigenous people and their allies, from around the world.

Since 2003, under the leadership of Col. Frank Lumsden, the Charles Town Maroons have held an annual Qua Day celebration on June 23rd. This day is designed to commemorate the life of the heroic Qua, one of the great defenders of the Maroon people and culture (whose image appears on the front of this magazine). Since 2008, the celebrations have incorporated three additional days leading up to Qua Day, which feature traditional Maroon dance, craft and cuisine demonstrations and an international academic conference on Maroon history and cultural heritage.

This year for the first time we are incorporating wrestling displays; wrestling being an important cultural activity of Indigenous peoples around the globe, a way of strengthening mind and body.

This diverse range of activities, currently span over four days, leading up to June 23rd, and have come to national and regional prominence. The events continue to serve to gather Maroons from local Maroon and non-Maroon settlements in Jamaica as well as those in Belize and in Suriname, providing an opportunity to celebrate Maroon history and culture. Additionally, the events at the Asafu Yard are part of local strategies employed by the Charles Town Maroon community to safeguard its intangible cultural heritage and to provide opportunities for the ongoing survival and transmission of sacred cultural Knowledge from Elders to the youth.

We ask that those who visit us come together to share, to learn and to celebrate. The Maroon peoples history and culture reflects that of the Indigenous peoples of the world in many ways. We seek to link the recurring struggles of Indigenous people, be it in Australia, Papua New Guinea, Suriname, Canada, North America, Mexico or Jamaica, around Indigenous rights. This year we will be welcoming scholars from Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, Jamaica, Morocco, Puerto Rico, Suriname, and the United States.

Above all, enjoy the beauty of the Maroon lands and the ambience of Charles Town – walk, swim, eat, listen, learn, make new friends, move to the rhythm and dance!!!

The Col. Frank Lumsden has a vision that unites the Indigenous peoples of the world as one people without borders. We welcome you to Charles Town to experience the ongoing cultural heritage of the Maroon people and that of other Indigenous peoples. Together we celebrate the ongoing relevance of our global Indigenous cultures!

From the Editor

Guudji yiigu!!! (greetings)

It is a privilege to be counted as a friend of the Maroon people and a fellow traveller in their quest for the transnational connection of Indigenous peoples "without borders". After all, the borders that exist in the world today are the constructs of the recent centuries of world colonisation - they are not "normal and natural" ways of being and they don't have to be there!

The Maroon people show great leadership in the worldwide movement of Indigenous peoples toward greater freedoms, better lifestyles and enhanced wellbeing. This is why it is such an honour for me to be invited to be editor of Maroon publications, including this magazine and a journal.

This first edition of the magazine, developed to mark the 7th Annual International Maroon conference has a variety of articles that begin to reflect this international Indigenous connection. Importantly, we begin with Maroon cultural ways and you will find important pieces on Maroon legacies throughout this journal – the Karamante drum; Marcia "Kim" Douglas' fascinating history of the Charles Town drummers and dancers; Leroy Mabrak Mattis explaining the Maroon proficiency with music and drumming; the spiritual and political importance of Flavius Laidley's concept of Interbeng, that draws on ancient wisdom. Importantly, David Brown explains the importance of the unique intangible cultural heritage of Windward Maroons

We are blessed to have the wonderful poetry of Afua Cooper in this edition. Her work is the living testament to the continued inspiration of Grandy Nanny, the "mother of us all", the agency of black women and the continued relevance of African culture.

The other side of the colonialist history, the perspective that gives Indigenous peoples agency, also connects us all. While the institution of slavery drove the colonialist ambitions of white people and had an indelible impact on our peoples now, in hindsight, the common experience of its impacts can unite us all. Within the Caribbean, the history of the Garifuna people of the island of St Vincent has resonance with that of many Indigenous people who took their freedom from slavery and resisted attempts to

Scenes at the Asafu Yard...



From the Editor - cont'd

re-enslave them with every fibre of their being. This too is the story of the Maroons, of the South Sea Islander and many Australia Aboriginal groups, to name but a few.

This contemporary and historical connection through the impacts of colonial slavery is eloquently expressed in the article by Kaiya Aboagye from Australia. It is also reflected in the aftermath of the human trade in the Pacific and the legacy of the Australian South Sea Islanders. The President of their association in Australia, Emelda Davis explains their history and connection in this publication. The article that I have contributed reveals what is not widely

known, that is, historic African Jamaican connections to Australia from the time of the First Fleet. The transportation of anti-slavery rebels and the arrival of free blacks, from Jamaica to Australia, connects us historically and is now reflected in Aboriginal families.

Many Aboriginal groups in Australia are beginning to learn of the wonderful culture of celebration and inclusion of the Maroon people. Paul Spearim a Gamilaray elder sends greetings from his people on the occasion of this conference, in his language with a translation into English. Even in this message we have an opportunity to learn something of the deep significance of Aboriginal belief. The Gamilaray understand the time of

creation as "before the big light", before the light of the sun was on Earth. It is this moment, a moment of the unity and interdependence of all life, that holds the paradigms for the way we need to live in this world.

This magazine would not have been possible without the dedication and coordination wizardry of Flavius Laidley of Slowly Jamaica. The wonderful layout and graphics are due to the artistic flair of Anya Gloudon. It is a joy to work with them - thank you!

Buwadi!!! (Let it be)
Yindyamarra!!!! (Respect)

– One love
Dr Victoria Grieves

Drums Music and the Maroons

Leroy Mabrak Mattis

The Maroons are from West Africa. West Africa has the highest level of Drum Music. They even developed the Talking Drum.

Ghana has the highest level of music on the Coast in that they play real Polyphonic Drum Music which baffles the world even today. They will use seven drums and play seven different melodic lines which synchronise and bring healing to individuals as we only have two ears and our nervous system has to process the sound.

Therefore you can be healed or they can make you feel high naturally. That is what happened to Dave Brubeck when he visited the West Coast of Africa and he heard AGBAJA. He came home and had to make TAKE 5 which was a big hit in the jazz community and in the western world but it was not his composition.

The Maroons are from the West Coast and mostly from Ghana, hence they can use their drums to send messages from hillside to hillside which they used against the British and they can have entertainment drumming for celebrations and enjoyment.



Their rich and deep cultural heritage allows them to just play and understand whatever they want to play as they are using “drum language” which snobbish individuals do not understand and think that they are just “beating their drums”. In traditional West Africa drums were played and were never beaten...

At the classical level of Drum Music the drums play specific melody lines to achieve synchronicity. There are AGBAJA & THE PUBERTY DANCE for example which the musicologists either hide or do not know about.

The Maroons in Jamaica in this time probably just play entertaining and celebration drums and rhythms but they come from a rich musical and cultural background from the West Coast of Africa.

As Jamaicans we are indeed a blessed country with very deep musical and cultural roots from the West Coast of Africa.



The Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Windward Maroons, Jamaica

In her book “Mother of Us All” Carla Gottlieb quotes from Leann Thomas Martin (1973, p.82) who writes on Maroon history and its impact on their identity:

The primary cultural tool for the Maroons, the primary factor in cultural identity and continuity is history...History is important to Maroon society for the following reasons: it provides explanations for contemporary customs, it is a major source of motivation for behaviour, it defends and maintains certain aspects of customs, and it contributes to the Maroon’s image of themselves.

The Jamaican Maroons hold as important points of their history, their guerrilla wars against the British army and the many victories and strategic advantages they made during the near century of battles that culminated with the treaties of 1739 (Leeward Maroons) and 1740 (Windward Maroons). Concomitant with the war years, were the many stories of survival, and the legends that were attributed to their leaders Kojo, Quao, and Nanny.

The Maroons have instituted set dates for the celebration of victories, treaty signings and for ancestral veneration. At these celebrations can be observed several intangible cultural heritage elements that form the basis of the Jamaican Maroon’s cultural identity. The celebrations and dates vary from settlement to settlement and are currently marked as follows:



A drawing depicting Maroons in the mountains.

- **January 6 – Kwado/Cudjoe/Kojo Day** in Accompong, St. Elizabeth (Leeward Maroons). This day marks Kojo’s “earthday” or birthday and is not to be confused with March 1 (1739) when Kojo signed a peace treaty with the British army’s Colonel John Gutherie and Captain Sadler;
- **June 23 – Asafu Yard** in Charles Town, Portland where the celebrations mark the anniversary of the signing of the peace treaty between the British army and Quao on June 23, 1739, following a famous victory for Quao over the British troops near the Spanish River in Portland;
- **3rd Monday in October – National Heroes Day.** This marks Nanny Day in Moore Town, Portland, and pays homage to the matriarch of the Jamaican Maroons;
- **August 1 – Emancipation Day.** This day is marked by the Scott’s Hall Maroons in St. Mary. The events in this community are not as elaborate as the other three and there has been a hiatus for several years

It is interesting to note that within their own communities, the Jamaican Maroons have not only initiated celebrations, but have created unique spaces of memory. In Accompong, St. Elizabeth ritualistic celebrations are centred around the sacred Kindah Tree and the peace cave; in Charles Town and Scott’s Hall, activities are centred at the Asafu Yard or meeting place; in Moore Town the Maroons gather by Bump Grave, the resting place of Granny/Grandy Nanny. It is interesting to note that no parts of these celebratory rituals are staged outside of the Maroon territories and as such they are organised, certainly at their genesis, as unique Maroon creations. Outsiders, non-Maroons or obroni have to journey to these spaces to observe the celebrations.



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Jamaica)*



INTERBENG

The abeng is the traditional communication device, made from a cow's horn, which is used by the Maroons to communicate. Interestingly, a similar device is used in the former Dutch Antilles territories such as Curaçao and Sint Maarten, where it is referred to as the Kachu di Baka. The abeng blower is versed in the art of the transmission of secret and sacred messages and holds a revered place in traditional Maroon society.

Interbang marks the evolution of this form of communication and speaks to the creative nexus between traditional Maroon communication and the most powerful and popular method of electronic communication, the internet. The Interbeng, conceived by the Charles Town Maroons, is the platform for the engagement of Maroons locally and in the Diaspora on all matters related to Maroon history, culture and socio-political and economic life. It will be launched on the occasion of the 276th anniversary of the signing of the peace treaty between the Leeward Maroons and the British, during the Quao Day celebratory activities.



Charles Town Maroon Col. Frank Lumsden blows the abeng

AYAWEAR

- Modern fashions
with an African resurgence



For the past 5 years, designer Arlene Passley has been presenting beautiful afrocentric fashions at the annual Charles Town Maroon Conference. She became involved after her first visit to the museum there in Charles Town where she saw her surname on a short list of maroon family names.

This discovery she said, prompted her to explore her own maronage, and has since been embracing and celebrating a proud maroon ancestry. This year she will be presenting a line of afrocentric children's wear, in addition to the usual array of amazingly beautiful pieces.

Ayawear is a fashion house built on the foundation of African sovereignty and serves to encourage others throughout the diaspora; especially Jamaican women, to let their fashion statement speak loudly and proudly of their African identity.

Blackbirding shame yet to be acknowledged in Australia...

Emelda Davis

As a second generation descendant of South Sea Islanders (kanaks) who were ruthlessly recruited (blackbirded) by third parties to serve in the most appalling conditions as plantation workers in the sugar industry of Australia in 1847 (starting in NSW) then an influx to Queensland between 1863 and 1904. I am apart of a family of activists who have sought to attain recognition and social justice for my people from the Australian Government.

Australian South Sea Islanders do not have an immigration history and are recognised as a 'distinct cultural group' suffering the same disadvantages as Indigenous Australian's still today. These findings are in the 1992 Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission report 'the call for recognition' which saw recognition for my people in 1994 by the Commonwealth, 2000 by the Queensland Government, 2001 implementation QLD 'Action plan' (de-funked 2010), 2013 NSW Parliament and 2014 Federal Parliament a 'motion of regret' acknowledgement debate on slavery.

Some 55,000 men and fewer women were brought from Vanuatu, Solomon's and eighty surrounding islands under what Australia called the indentured labour trade, which was akin to slavery. My grandfather was taken off the island of Tana in what is now the Tafea Province of Vanuatu in the late 1800's. He was one of the many children whose birth right of freedom was stripped from him at the age of 12 years old when he was taken to work in the sugar cane fields. He never returned home to his family. The experience and belief of our ASSI communities, passed down through oral histories, is that our forefathers were enslaved regardless of the pretence of contracts. Most definitely this was a legal framework for what was in fact criminal activity, which saw the early deaths of thirty percent of these 'labour recruits', buried in unmarked graves across north eastern Australia. It was illegal to bring children under the age of 16 years unless

accompanied by an adult however as we progress our agenda there are many community stories including my grandfathers that contradict those regulations.

The 1995 documentary 'Sugar Slaves' my grandfather's story is told by his eldest surviving daughter, Phyllis Corowa. She describes how he escaped deportation by the 1901 Pacific Island Labourers Act, which inhumanely deported some 7,000 people on mass, tearing established families and loved ones apart after forty years of existence. UQ professor Clive Moore has recently written of this deportation; the wages of 15,000 deceased Islanders were used for this deportation and furthermore the low hard earned wages of the Islanders were used to pay part of their fare to return to the islands that in some cases saw their whole male population kidnapped and was once their homes. This was a cruel, heartless process and one of shame to all Australians.

It gives me great pleasure however to know that the efforts of my grandfather and our kanaka men and women contributed significantly to building the strong foundations of the sugar, pastoral and maritime industries in Australia and that we are now the third largest sugar provider in the world as well as being one of the wealthiest countries. And what I find uncanny, and what seems to me like a strange quirk of fate, I discovered several years ago that from where I work in my home for the past 19 years at Pyrmont NSW I was overlooking Pirrama Park which was once called the 'Sugar Wharf' managed by CSR, and yes! Sugar ships docked here and refined the brown sugar from the cane farms in QLD. These ships were managed by Burns Philp and Co. in the City of Sydney, the same company that operated over labour recruiting and trading ships throughout the Pacific. CSR and



Emelda Davis with maroon feather - traditional Tanna Island women's ceremonial dress

Burns Philp were companies built on the backs of kidnapped Islander labourers. Further more notorious blackbirders Robert Towns and John Mackay both have cities dedicated in their names Townsville and Mackay respectively; Benjamin Boyd was another in this history who has been commemorated with the naming of Ben Boyd Road on Sydney's north shore.

Our lobbying has been arduous and has fallen on deaf ears with trinkets of acknowledgement and funding. We struggle with support for change in policy and the development of meaningful programs and services. The current demographic for our community is 40,000 strong, inclusive of 60% Torres Strait Islanders of South Sea Islander descent due to the 'labour trade' and the 'Coming of the Light' (Christianity) via SSI missionaries, and also east coast Aboriginal Australians, some 40% of whom are married into or have ASSI heritage. Through the agency of various South Sea Islander agencies, including Australian South Sea Islanders (Port Jackson) (ASSIPJ), the past five years have been instrumental in creating a blanket awareness throughout the nation of the untold history of our forefathers / mothers and surviving descendants and has set in motion a political focus to ensuring rightful recognition, inclusion and commemoration for our families.

Important challenges ahead include initiating strategies for ASSI to promote the implementation of policy changes nationally that will see: the development of meaningful

programs and services in health, education, employment and cultural recognition; the creation of visibility of our people, culture and history in the history curriculums of our schools and teaching institutions; a nation-wide survey undertaken of ASSI demographics

Faith Bandler, Shireen Malamoo and our patron the Hon. Bonito Mabo are amongst the most distinguished of our elders and activists); establishing a forum to assist ASSI communities in the Pacific to gain access to meaningful work opportunities in Australia and reconnecting our disposed families.

We have a long way to go for the successful establishment of the ASSI people within that of the great nation of Australia. It is journey to empowerment that I am proud to be part of.

Emelda Davis President of the Australian South Sea Islanders (Port Jackson) (ASSIPJ) © 3/6/15

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THE KARAMANTE (BENCH) DRUM

The Karamante (Bench) Drum is used by the Maroons to perform healing. It is often called "bench drum" because it is made in the shape of a bench. In the past the plantation owners would confiscate drums and other musical instruments in an attempt to control the slaves on the plantations. The Maroons cleverly created the drum to appear as a bench allowing them to be hidden in plain sight.

The Karamante drum is played for several reasons - to heal, communicate, charm and for recreation. The Maroons say the Karamante Drum speaks a language of its own, it speaks to the mind, body and soul. The Karamante drum is still used today and can be found in Charles Town and Scotts Hall Maroon towns.

In 2014, the Charles Town Maroon Council received the UNESCO Award of Excellence for Handicraft for the Bench Drum. On September 2, 2014 Marva Browne, Secretary-General of the Curaçao National Commission for UNESCO made the presentation to Col. Frank Lumsden. Sharing in the moment are Barlow White, who made the winning drum (3rd left), and Director of the UNESCO Kingston Office, Christine Anne Norton.



Programme

Saturday June 20, 2015

1:00–2:00 pm: METHODS OF MARRONAGE

“The Maroon Method”

*Dr. Paul Youngquist,
University of Colorado, Boulder*

“Maroon Is Not a Color: Physical and Cultural Sustainability in the Fugitive Slave Community of Jamaica”

*Dr. Robert A. Benson,
Professor of Landscape Architecture,
Ball State University*

“The Caribbean Court of Justice and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: the Case of the Maya v Belize”

*Mr. Marcus Goffe,
Attorney at Law, PhD Candidate, School of Law,
Queen Mary, University of London*

2:00pm–3:00pm: MAROON LEGACIES

“Maroons and the Colonial Police State”

Dr. Frances Botkin, Towson University

“Personalizing Tradition: Folkloric Interpretations of Maroon Music and Dance in Paramaribo, Suriname”

Dr. Corinna Campbell, Assistant Professor of Music, Williams College

“Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Windward Maroons, Jamaica”

*Mr. David Brown, Senior Research Fellow,
African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica/
Memory Bank*

3:00 pm – 5:00 pm: **Wrestling Competition in the Sand Pit**

5:00 pm–7:00 pm

Conversation between Rastas and Maroons with Mutabaruka

7:00 pm–7:30 pm

Phillip Supersad and the Akwaaba Drummers

7:30 pm–8:00 pm

Charles Town Maroon Drummers and Dancers

8:30 pm– 9:30 pm

Short Films from Zimbabwe

- **Jerusarema Dance - traditional Mbende dance**
"A short film showing performance of Jerusarema, a Mbende traditional dance in Zimbabwe which was recognized as World Intangible Heritage by UNESCO. (15 minutes)"
- **Mhuri Yekwa Simbanegavi (Simbanevagi family)**
"A short film about a rural family in Zimbabwe which makes and plays traditional instrument called mbira. (12 minutes)"

Sunday June 21, 2015

Quao Victory Day Celebration

1:00 p.m. **Procession of Colonels and Gaa' man**

Welcome – Colonel Frank Lumsden
Charles Town Maroons

Greetings – Colonel Wallace Sterling
Cultural Performance – Moore Town Maroons

Greetings – Colonel Prehay
Cultural Performance – Scotts Hall Maroons

Greetings – Colonel Ferron Williams
Cultural Performance - Accompong Maroons

Greetings from Suriname

Greetings – Gaa'man Gloria Simms,
"Mau Mau G"

Poem – Shauntay Grant, *Halifax*
Poet Laureate Emeritus

Capoeira Demonstration

Wrestling Demonstration

Special Guest Speakers

- Mr Robert Parua, Officer-in- Charge/
Programme Specialist for Education/
Interim Officer for Culture UNESCO
Kingston Cluster Office for the Caribbean
- His Excellency Ambassador
Masanori Nakano - Embassy of Japan

Presentations:

"Wrestling and the Prison System in Jamaica"

– Mr. Kevin Wallen, *President of the Jamaican Wrestling Federation*

"The Lukumi Health Initiative"

*Ms. Marisol Cribeiro, Priest,
Church of the Lukumi Babalu-Aye*

"Complementary Diagnosis. Working with other Healing Modalities"

*Jonathan Moore,
Doctor of Oriental Medicine*

Afrocentric fashion show by Ayawear

Presentation on the status and awarding of the nomination of the Blue and John Crow Mountains as a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Monday June 22, 2015

- Guided hike
- River bathing
- Beach visit
- Maroon culinary workshop
- Maroon stories and drumming by the River Park

Tuesday June 23, 2015

NOON: QUAO DAY

Discussions about Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Presentations

- Welcome from Colonel Frank Lumsden of the Charles Town Maroons
- Presentations and Panel Discussions on the Economic Development Models in the Cannabis Industry for Indigenous Communities
- Food Demonstrations
- Entertainment
- **PANEL ON ALTERNATIVE HEALING**
"Commonalities in the Healing Traditions in the Caribbean Region: Some examples from the Lukumi Tradition"
– *Ida Tafari, Ph.D., MPH, Barry University, Anthropology and Nursing,*
"Movement and Meditation: Exploring the Mind/Body Connection."
– *Khara Perkins-Chang, B.A. Florida International University*
"Cannabis Healing"
Bret Bouge, Jamaica
"Traditional Healing"
Kim Douglas, Charles Town

Jamaica Australia historical connections and the Black diaspora in the Australian Pacific Region

Victoria Grieves

The settler colonial history of Australia is known for its “secret histories” around the brutal displacement of Aboriginal people - the massacres, the rapes, the enslavement of Aboriginal people and also the transportation of South Sea Islanders to be slaved on the sugar plantations of North Queensland, for example. This history has only been emerging over the last four decades.

What is also not commonly known is that Black Africans were in Australia from the time of the First Fleet in 1788. This event is commemorated as the time of the birth of modern Australia, just as Columbus Day is in the USA. What is known is that there were 11 convicts of African descent and another five who may have been in this category amongst the 1000 or more convicts that were transported on this fleet. They arrived in Port Jackson, what is now known as Sydney, and many of them stayed and raised families.

One was John Caesar, originally a servant from Madagascar who is known as Australia’s first “bushranger”. He continually escaped from custody, ranging around the edge of the settlement and was often forced to come back in from hunger. He was extraordinarily strong and defiant, withstanding the most cruel of whippings. He was eventually shot for a bounty of five gallons of rum, after approximately 10 years in the colony.

Black Loyalists

The majority of the Africans transported in the early period were Black Loyalists who agreed to fight with the British in the North American War of Independence in return for their freedom. After this war many of them arrived in England penniless and in tough times, finding themselves caught up in the extraordinarily punishing convict system.

For example, a famous Sydney identity Billy Blue, who was the original ferryman across the harbour, arrived in 1801. Also John Mosley (from Virginia) John Randall and John Martin who arrived with the First Fleet were Black Loyalists. John Martin married the daughter of John Randall. These men were neighbours on their small farming ventures in the west of Sydney harbour. Another African by the name of Aiken married another daughter of John Martin. There are thousands of descendants of these men in Australia today.

Transportation of enslaved Africans

By far the largest single group of African men to be transported to the colonies in Australia were from the Caribbean. Between 1788 and 1831 the following Africans whose origin was in Jamaica were

transported to Australia – James Roberts, Thomas Winter, Robert Williams, Robert Camels, Phillip Rello, Thomas Biggs, William Sherwood, James Williams, William Wright, Julius Campbell.

This occurred after 1808 with the abolition of the trade, up to 1838 when slavery was abolished in the British colonies. After the abolition of the trade in 1808, enslaved peoples were anxious for freedom in their lifetime and became more rebellious. Transportation became important as way of controlling enslaved peoples in the many slave colonies of the British Empire.

The Scot historian Ian Duffield cites the example of Priscilla as a means of understanding the mood amongst the slaved peoples of the Caribbean at that time. In 1831 the Jamaican Priscilla was a cook, housemaid and laundrymaid of about 25 years old who stood under five feet high. She laced the food of the entire family of the master with arsenic but was detected and transported for life for this attempted poisoning. Priscilla found herself having to make a new life in Australia.

The Montego Bay Rebels

In December 1831 60,000 enslaved people rose up against their masters in the largest slave rebellion known in the British Empire and were savagely crushed by January 1832. The historian Cassandra Pybus has described the case of one of these men, Alexander Simpson who was charged with “making use of seditious language, joining and engaging in conspiracy, traitorous, rebellious or hostile acts against His Majesty’s government and against the peace and safety of the island”. For this he was sentenced to hang but this was commuted to transportation and he arrived in Van Dieman’s Land (now Tasmania) in May 1833.

Once in Australia Simpson reported his crimes defiantly: “Mutiny and exciting the slaves to rebellion. I was a slave myself”.

Duffield has identified other Montego Bay Rebels amongst convicts transported to Australia – these include John McBean, Richard Holt, Henry Gardiner, Robert Davis, Francis Smith, James Miller Fine, Colin Campbell, James Gavin or Garvie and John Tharpe. Also, Joseph Taylor, Joseph Butler Bonner, possibly Richard Lambert, Robert Stewart and William Buchanan.

Free Jamaican blacks arrive in Australia

There are many examples of free blacks arriving in Australia. It is claimed that my family is descended from one John Butler, said to be creole, who arrived in Australia a free man from Jamaica. He

formed a family with Matilda, an Aboriginal woman from the Warrimay people on the south bank of the Manning River near the present town of Taree in New South Wales. This couple are my great great grandparents.

One of the most notorious examples of a Jamaican in Australia is that of Douglas Pitt Snr, born on 31 January 1844 in Kingston. He is now recognised as the patriarch of an immense family in North Queensland and the Torres Strait Islands in Australia. Jeremy Hodes describes how Douglas Pitt Snr had a career in the South Pacific, marrying a woman in the Loyalty Island of Lifu who was the daughter of a chief. He owned a hotel in Noumea for some years and eventually arrived at Murray Island in the Torres Strait in 1878. He had at least eight children, and these children married into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander as well as Pacific, Asian and Malaysian families.

Pitt was a larger than life character who was a skipper in the beche-de-mer trade with a crew of Pacific and Torres Strait Islanders.

A directive by the Chief Protector of Aboriginals disrupted what had been a beneficial partnership between Douglas Pitt, his family and the Torres Strait Islander people. These “protectors” existed in every state and territory in Australia, essentially to police racial boundaries, enforce racial segregation and ensure that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had no opportunity to manage their own lives.

On 3 November 1916 an advice was issued that Pitt senior and his sons were not permitted to reside on any Aboriginal reserve in Torres Strait or recruit Torres Strait Islander men to work in their industry. They did not leave willingly.

The Protector received repeated requests to from Douglas’ son Ned Pitt to return to the Torres Strait, requests that were not granted, as he was considered to be “an undesirable.” In spite of this legal intervention into their lives, family members defied the ban. Douglas Snr’s son William visited Murray Island in 1919, leaving his son there, while his brother Edward Pitt also returned to Torres Strait in that year.

The first Aboriginal person to be commissioned as an officer in the Australian Army, Captain Reginald Saunders, was also descended from a grandfather who arrived in Australia as a free man from Jamaica. Also with the name of Saunders, he made a home with the Gunditjmarra people in western Victoria, marrying into this group and spending the rest of his days there.

The Jamaican legacy in Australia

There is a great need for more research to be done about the



Captain Reg Saunders

Jamaicans who came to Australia during colonial times and a greater understanding of their heritage and legacy that exists here. Many people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent are also African. We are proud of this link to Africa.

More recent African migrants to Australia for example, find it important to know that there is a history of African people in Australia from the very First Fleet. It is also important to know that these people have often had close ties and connections with Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples here, have been incorporated

into their families. They have shared the burdens and the struggles of the Indigenous people of Australia who live perilous lives in a settler colonial regime marked by mass child removals, incarcerations and deaths in custody.

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Dr Victoria Grieves is Warrimay from the mid north coast of NSW, Australia. An historian, her research interests are focussed on race and intersections with gender and class in the Aboriginal family in all of its complexity, including connections to people from across the globe. Vicki is deeply engaged with transdisciplinarity and approaches to knowledge production that privilege Indigenous knowledges.

Conference Flashback...



Induction of the GA AMA in 2014



Presentation in the Museum



Capoeira presenter



Taino delegation led by Kasike Roberto Borrero during the Call to the Sacred.



Section of the crowd in attendance.

Charles Town Maroon Council

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ART IN ASAFU YARD



(Above) Three-dimensional Mural in the Asafu Yard, created by Col. Frank Lumsden depicts the Maroon struggle.

(Right) Sankofa Bird emblazoned on the Museum doors.



Reflections on being an African Aboriginal in White Australia

- which by the way, has many hidden layers of Black in it!

Kaiya Aboagye

The hidden story of White Australia's Black history is also delicately etched across the mind and spirit of people of colour from around the world. Our dark and shared experiences of a harsh, all-encompassing colonial regime ignites a burning passion deep within us all, that works to forge a global Black Consciousness that connects us. United by our shared disdain for the misery of oppression and a fighting spirit for justice, Black people become amalgamated globally by a shared humanity that allows us to confront the pain of racism and cruel adversity.

White Australia has many hidden layers of Black in it, including those stories of people of African and Caribbean descent as well as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander peoples.

The domineering histories of a patriarchal White Australia have not only successfully written out the stories of brutal coercion into slavery in its history books, but also importantly the central and active roles of Africans and other members of the global African diaspora in the First Nations peoples pursuit for freedom and justice in Australia – as well as the Australian Indigenous peoples fight for global justice for all black people.

Afro Caribbean, African American, Africans and other Blacks have remained active and supportive of the Indigenous peoples fight for freedom and social justice in Australia. Aboriginal Australia has long-standing socio-political connec-

tions to the global Black diaspora, which has been and still remains a central facet in the shaping our nation's story. Sadly these chapters of the Nation's narrative have largely been excluded from its history pages.

I am the daughter of a West African, Ghanaian father, who married my mother, an Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander woman, from the Kukuyalanji people of far North Queensland and who is also of South Sea Islander descent. It is through my Torres Strait Islander heritage that I also hold bloodlines to Jamaica as a descendant of the freed Jamaican Douglas Pitt, born on 31 January 1844 in Kingston.

My father migrated to Sydney Australia in the late 1970s, an era in this country that welcomed not only what is known as the assimilation era, brought about by

the end of the White Australia Policy, but an emerging Black cultural renaissance notable in the city streets of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Darwin in Australia. This period of time saw the revitalisation of a local Black consciousness movement, exploring the terrains of a "new" Black diversity with the influx of African migrants, and a resurgent political resistance as was the case in Black America at this time.

The 1970s in Australia saw young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists and their supporters develop a Tent Embassy in the front of Parliament House in protest at not being treated as citizens of



Kaiya Aboagye, her cousin Shola Diop and her son Jawarn Aboagye pictured at a recent protest in Sydney.

this country. It saw them fight for the end of apartheid in South Africa through laying their bodies on the line to oppose the Springbok tours to this country. Each step of their protests were met by unrestrained police brutality. Some activists visited the Black Panthers in the USA and came back to build community organisations to provide much needed services for the people.

What is particular in this case however is the nature by which Black people responded to each other and engaged with political campaigns and importantly the family formations that brought together a space for Indigenous Australians to occupy alongside other people of colour from the Black diaspora. I am a direct product of the socio-historic cultural renaissance and this article responds to this legacy as an international and transnational connection between Black people across time and space, united by the fight for freedom in a context of ongoing racism and injustice.

Importantly, I embody a history of slavery through all four groups that I am descended from. The common thread linking these groups is the burning experience of the institution of slavery and the common experiences of oppression that unite people of colour around the world. We live within transgenerational trauma that is now made more complex by continuing policies of racism and oppression. The impact has also been to create ways for thinking about the world and knowing the impacts of world colonialism through a particular lens: the lens of the young black African Aboriginal that naturally understands the global sweep of oppression. We may wear different clothes and speak in different languages, but there is a common thread to the suffering of our peoples. We are all part of a global Black community of coloured peoples spanning the planet; this is the knowing, the Indigenous knowledges, that connect us.

We know of the sweep of global Black histories and the raw, material realities that tell the same narratives of poverty, repression and resilience. We recognise our own families and see the same faces: we see ourselves in these stories. This is the nature of our lives that enunciates our spirit as Black people, experiencing the same problems and struggling against the same alienation, marginalisation and sense of powerlessness.

This transnational consciousness so evident in Australia, shines in the richest shade of Black, colouring the very heart and nature of our Global Black diaspora. Our rich and deeply complex histories, the deeply connected stories, reclaim our right to Black identity and key ideals of Black consciousness. This is the most urgent project of decolonisation for our young people of colour around the world today. It is absolutely imperative and central that we unite globally and extend ourselves out into the world around us.

Subscribing to an Indigenous way of being, relating to the principles found in the Black consciousness arising, translates to a subscribing of the ideas and shared values of welcoming others. A key strength of Black communities is that our doors are always open to everyone. We value community, strength in collectively and productivity through peace and unity that we can actively create, and live our lives well. The shared cultural values of our peoples must guide all that we do, including across the seas, the waterways, the air we breathe, and the good earth and guidance left to us by our ancestors.

With a good heart and a good mind we must seek out our global Black brothers and sisters and recognise the good fight we fight together. The beginning is with us, in the hearts and the minds of our own Black people.



Kaiya Aboagye is Kukuyalanji from far north Queensland, Australia. She is also of African, Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander descent. She is currently the Project Officer developing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Portfolio in the Office of the DVC Research at the University of

Sydney. Kaiya is enrolling in a HDR program where she will more fully explore the issues raised in this opinion piece.

GAMILARAAY LANGUAGE

Yaamagara Nginda, Ngalay Ngiyaningu, ngiyaningu guliyaan dhiyaan Gamilaraay buruwi-y, Ngarri-y ngaragay bulayrr Ngiyaningu Dhuwi ngaragay Gii -Ga ngiyaningu yanguwii.

Ngiyaningu maran gaay, yugal ngaragay yulu-gi garrawa-li ngay mari dhawun ngaragay -DHi nhalay ngiyani galuma-li ngiyaningu mari nhama dhawun, bagay, dhii ngaragay nhama GAMILU BIDI-WII.

Ngiyaningu WII yilaadhu nhalay nhama dhuuraay nhama yaliwunga garrawa-li ngiyaninya Gamilaraay Mari -gu-Ga GAMILU BIDI-WII.

Yilaadhu nginaayngu dhiyaan marrabaa -Ga ngiyaningu gurru -Ga dhiirra-li ngiyaningu gaay, yugal ngaragay yulu-gi.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Welcome how are you, our new sprit family, this our Gamilaraay. Rest, sit and warm your soul and heart at our sacred fire.

Our ancestors stories, songs and dances keep my people grounded and from this we care for our people the land, rivers, animals and the universe.

Our fires are the light that always keep us Gamilaraay People belonging in GAMILU BIDI-WI - BEFORE THE BIG LIGHT/CREATION ITSELF.

Now your family, welcomed in our circle to teach/learn our stories, songs and dances.



Winanga-li Gii (to teach/learn from the heart). Paul Spearim has been imparting the cultural knowledge of the Gamilaraay Nation through song, dance and storytelling for more than 40 years. Within the Gamilaraay Nation the process that is used to pass on Gamilaraay cultural knowledge is unique. Each process is interconnected and is as important as the next to the overall creation story Dhiriya Gamil, and our existence as descendants of Gamilaraay.



The Child is Alive

Afua Cooper, Ph.D.

The following poem is inspired by the birth scene in the film *Sankofa*. A pregnant woman runs away. She is caught and taken back to the plantation. For her punishment she is given 100 lashes. The woman dies, her belly bulging in front of her. A midwife on the plantation decides to deliver the child from the dead woman.

The Child is Alive

And a niece of granny Nanny
an Akan woman, a woman who can see far,
a woman with the knowledge of herbs
a woman who works in the field, cutting cane
a woman who speaks the language of her grandmothers
a woman who tells stories of magical animals, of talking
trees, and of fabled cities beneath mighty rivers
a woman who was stolen from her village
when she was 14
a woman who was raped on the slave ship
by a white sailor
a woman who flies to Africa when she sleeps

This woman, this niece of granny Nanny
take her cutlass and runs with the swiftness
of Sogolon Conde in her guise as Buffalo woman
this woman runs with her machete
an ancient chant rising from her throat
an ancient chant imploring the God and all the
spirits that attend women in childbirth to come
to her aid

She calls her companions:

“form a circle around the dead woman
breathe, breathe deeply, give her breath,
give her life.”

This woman, this niece of granny Nanny enters
the circle and with her cutlass,
the ancient chant leaping from her lips,
cuts opens the belly of the woman
and releases the child
while her companions hum and chant softly.

Oh praise to the ancestors!
the child is alive
oh Onyame, take the spirit of the mother*
praise to the ancestors,
in the midst of misery and pain
in the midst of humiliation and grief
in the midst of this inhumanity
praise to the ancestors the child lives
oh Onyame, take the spirit of the mother

This woman, this niece of granny Nanny,
this ancient midwife
dances with the child, backward, forward, sideward
spins and joins her companions dancing
like the priestess she would have been
had not slavers stolen her away
from her people
the woman dances
east
south
west
north
she holds the child up to the sky
blessings

Oh praise to the ancestors
the child lives
oh Onyame, take the spirit of the mother
oh praise to the ancestors
the child is alive!
Woye! woye! woye!



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GARIFUNA PEOPLE - A SHORT HISTORY

The French missionary Raymond Breton, who arrived in the Lesser Antilles in 1635, and lived on Guadeloupe and Dominica until 1653, took ethnographic and linguistic notes of the native peoples of these islands, including St Vincent which he visited only briefly. According to oral history noted by the English governor William Young in 1795 Carib-speaking people of the Orinoco came to St. Vincent long before the arrival of Europeans to the New World, where they subdued the local inhabitants called Galibeis. They lived along with the Carib men. Young recorded the arrival of the African descended population as commencing with a wrecked slave ship from the Bight of Biafra in 1675. The survivors, members of the Mokko people of today's Nigeria (now known as Ibibio), reached the small island of Bequia, where the Caribs brought them to Saint Vincent and intermarried with them by supplying the African men with wives as it was taboo in their society for men to go unwed.

The Carib Expulsion was the French-led ethnic cleansing that terminated most of the Carib population in 1660 from present-day Martinique. This followed the French invasion in 1635 and its conquest of the people on the Caribbean island that made it part of the French colonial empire.

The Carib people had migrated from the mainland to the islands about 1200, according to carbon dating of artifacts. They largely displaced, exterminated and assimilated the Taino who were resident on the island at the time.[3]

In 1635 the Caribs were overwhelmed in turn by French forces led by the adventurer Pierre Belain d'Esnambuc and his nephew Jacques Dyel du Parquet, who imposed French colonial rule on the indigenous Carib peoples. Cardinal Richelieu of France gave the island to the Saint Christophe Company, in which he was a shareholder. Later the company was reorganized as the Company of the American Islands. The French colonists imposed French Law on the conquered inhabitants, and Jesuit missionaries arrived to convert them to the Roman Catholic Church.[4]

Because the Carib people resisted working as laborers to build and maintain the sugar and cocoa plantations which the French began to develop in the Caribbean, in 1636 King Louis XIII proclaimed La Traite des Noirs. This authorized the capture and purchase of slaves from Africa and their transportation as labor to Martinique and other parts of the French West Indies.[3]

In 1650, the Company liquidated, selling Martinique to Jacques Dyel du Parquet, who became governor, a position he held until his death in 1658. His widow Mme. du Parquet next took over control of the island from France. As more French colonists arrived, they were attracted to the fertile area known as Cabesterre (leeward side). The French had pushed the remaining Carib people to this northeastern coast and the Caravalle Peninsula, but the colonists wanted the additional land. The Jesuits and the Dominicans agreed that whichever order arrived there first, would get all future parishes in that part of the island. The Jesuits came by sea and the Dominicans by land, with the Dominicans' ultimately prevailing.

When the Carib revolted against French rule in 1660, the Governor Charles Houel sieur de Petit Pré retaliated with war against them. Many were killed; those who survived were taken captive and expelled from the island.

On Martinique, the French colonists signed a peace treaty with the few remaining Carib. Some Carib had fled to Dominica and St. Vincent, where the French agreed to leave them at peace.

Britain and France both laid conflicting claims on Saint Vincent from the late seventeenth century onward. French pioneers began informally cultivating plots on the island around 1710 and in 1719 the governor of Martinique sent a force to occupy it, but was repulsed by the inhabitants. A British attempt in 1723 was also repelled.[5] In 1748, Britain and France agreed to put aside their claims and Saint Vincent was declared a neutral island, under no European sovereign.[6] Throughout this period, however, unofficial, mostly French settlement took place on the island, especially on the Leeward side.

In 1763, the Treaty of Paris awarded Britain rule over Saint Vincent. After a series of Carib Wars, which were encouraged and supported by the French, and the death of their leader Satuye (Chatoyer), they surrendered to the British in 1796. The British considered the Garinagu enemies and deported them to Roatán, an island off the coast of Honduras. In the process, the British separated the more African-looking Caribs from the more Amerindian-looking ones. They decided that the former were enemies who had to be exiled, while the latter were merely "mised" and were allowed to remain. Five thousand Garinagu were exiled, but

only about 2,500 of them survived the voyage to Roatán. Because the island was too small and infertile to support their population, the Garifuna petitioned the Spanish authorities to be allowed to settle on the mainland. The Spanish employed them, and they spread along the Caribbean coast of Central America.

In recent history, Garifuna have thrown off their British appellation and encourage others to refer to them as Garifuna. The Garifuna population is estimated to be around 600,000 both in Central America, Yurumein (St. Vincent and The Grenadines), and the United States of America. The latter, due to heavy migration from Central America, has become the second largest hub of Garifuna people outside Central America. New York has the largest population, heavily dominated by Hondurans, Guatemalans and Belizeans. Los Angeles ranks second with Honduran Garifuna being the most populous, followed by Belizeans and Guatemalans. There is no information regarding Garifuna from Nicaragua having migrated to either the East or the West Coast of the United States. The Nicaraguan Garifuna population of today is quite small and community leaders are attempting to resurrect the Garifuna language and cultural traditions.

Three Diasporas: the African diaspora, the Garifuna diaspora, and the Central American diaspora

The distinction between diaspora and transnational migration is that diaspora implies the dispersal of a people from a homeland, whether voluntarily or through exile, to multiple nation-states rather than the bilocality generally associated with transnational migration. In addition, in contrast to the more intense contact transmigrants have with their country of origin, diasporic populations often have a more tenuous relationship to the "homeland" or society of origin because

there is little hope of return; the relationship is more remote, or even imagined.[7] Garifuna peoples materialize on the Caribbean island of St. Vincent, exiled to the Caribbean coasts of Central America, and then transmigrant to the United States. For Garifuna, the politics of diaspora are complex because they have several different homelands and different relationships to them: from the mainly symbolic relationship to Africa and St. Vincent to the more immediate relationship to Central America. The specific form the identification with each homeland takes has different political implications. Tracing the processes of this identification and the politics attached to them reveals the intersection of local, national, and transnational processes as well as the complexity of Garifuna identity in diaspora and the global arena of ethnic politics.

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Highlights of the Annual International Maroon Conference include nature hikes, traditional food demonstrations and a dip in the nearby river

Charles Town Drummers and Dancers

The Charles Town drummers and dancers have been working together since 1997. The gathering began under a big guinep tree where the group would drum and dance around a big tree that was lit, they would sing for hours. In 1990, members of the group went to Ghana and visited with the 'Quao people'. In that same year the Asafu Yard was established and the Quao people came to our first celebration which took place from June 19-20, where we honor Jamaica's Quao, our ancestors and strengthened the bond with the maroons in Africa.

In 2007, delegation went back to Africa with three of the original members in attendance. In 2009 a group of ten went to Canada for a tour of Ottawa, Halifax, and Toronto. The Jamaican flag was raised in Canada for the first time by the maroons.

The group has performed all around Jamaica, performing at schools and family gatherings. The group was also joined by the Edna Manley College School of Dance and created two dance dramas - "Affana" and "Return from Sambo Hill". Today we heal entertain and educate locals and tourists at various events.



Marcia "Kim" Douglas



UNESCO Kingston Cluster Office for the Caribbean is proud to associate and partner with Colonel Frank Lumsden and Charles Town Maroon Council on the occasion of Quao's Day during the 7th Annual International Maroon Conference under the theme "Maroon, Indigenous Peoples and Indigeneity". The support of UNESCO to this event is within the framework of the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights, freedoms and cultures of indigenous peoples, such as the Maroons of Jamaica. UNESCO is strongly committed to advancing the cultures and rights of the indigenous peoples of the world.



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