



THE CPAC INFORMER

Political Issues Impacting the
Caribbean American Diaspora

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Letter from the Chair

As we close out the 2017 program year I take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy New Year and thank each of you for the work, commitment and dedication displayed throughout my tenure as Chair. Without a doubt, we could not have had the successes we have achieved, nor the impact we have had in our community, without you!

The program year began with a politically uncertain environment. Immigration issues were a key concern. And as a quiet sense of uneasiness loomed over the region, C-PAC kept our members updated through C-PAC CHAT, our communication vehicle.

During this program year, we have engaged in a significant number of activities. We sought to expand the visibility of C-PAC's unique role in our region, while concomitantly working to increase our membership - especially among young Caribbean-American professionals. To that end, we (a) contacted and updated the heads of Caribbean-led organizations in our region regarding C-PAC's activities (c) invited their active participation in reaching out to 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation Caribbean-American Diaspora (d) reached out to local Caribbean businesses to update them about the organization and to encourage their participation (e) insured that our Caribbean embassies are aware of C-PAC and what we do, and (f) connected our embassies to our State and Local political leaders.

In the upcoming year, we plan to significantly expand our membership and fundraising base. This will require strong board and committee leadership. This campaign is expected to be another triumph for C-PAC. And we will continue to maintain the stellar fiscal integrity of the organization.

Our luncheon took on an urgent focus this year. The catastrophic destruction caused by the hurricanes that passed through the Caribbean reminded us of the importance of maintaining linkages with our local political base. This connecting affords us access and prompt audience with our local politicians to solicit support when necessary.

For example, C-PAC was instrumental in arranging a meeting with the Mayor's Office of Religious Affairs and a visiting delegation of religious leaders from the Bahamas. C-PAC was also engaged in arranging a pending meeting between the Mayor and the Caribbean Ambassadors. Rushern Baker, on deciding to seek the Governor's Office in Maryland, reached to inform C-PAC of this fact. We believe that these relationships with our regional leaders, if well maintained, can score significant dividends for our community in the future.

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As we look towards the future, we believe that 2018 will be a pivotal year as we enter the local general mid-term elections. The scope of the issues in front of us demands our collective attention. And more than ever before, our shared values and governance have become critical as we face this challenging political climate. However, I am heartened by the knowledge that whatever path we carve for our collective future, it will have been developed out of a nuanced thought process, based on our shared values and rational inquiry. Our ultimate decisions will be based on clearly stated values

and thoughtful discussions that will reaffirm who we are and what we aim to become. We ask for your input; your ideas and suggestions; so that together we can decide who our elected officials will be. I encourage you to attend our political community forums; meet the candidates; discuss the issues that concern you; and ask the tough questions. Then hold them accountable for the promises that they make. See earlier issues of the C-PAC Informer by visiting www.caribbeanpac.org. Please be on the lookout for upcoming town hall “Meet-the-Candidate” meetings.

2017 Annual Founding Patron's Luncheon

The 2017 Annual Founding Patron's Luncheon was held on Saturday, October 14th at the Hilton DoubleTree Hotel in Silver Spring, MD. The keynote address was delivered by Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke (D-NY 09). A fierce advocate for human rights, she is well known for her steadfast dedication and unwavering advocacy in Congress on matters of importance to the Diaspora and Caribbean regions. Alert to the needs of the immigrant population, the congresswoman lamented the current climate of anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric in the country. She lauded the efforts of C-PAC and urged the gathering to not be silent. “Now, more than ever,” said Congresswoman Clarke, “we need organizations like C-PAC to make sure our voices are heard.”

Her speech was peppered with the fierce urgency of now is the time for Caribbean Diaspora member to become active in the politics of our region. She reminded the gathering about the ineradicable contributions Caribbean Diaspora

members have made to the United States. She urged attendees to become even more vocal and more active and to play an even greater role in the current political arena. She also addressed the devastation brought on by hurricanes throughout the Caribbean region. She pledged to continue to advocate for adequate disaster relief funding as well as for long term rebuilding support.

The Congresswoman paid tribute to C-PAC's co-founder Chris Gardiner for his visionary role in the founding of the organization. She was introduced by retired Congresswoman and C-PAC Advisory Board Member Donna Christensen (D-USVI). Congresswoman Christensen reminded the gathering of the deep roots of service from which Congresswoman Clarke is anchored. In 1991, her mother, former NYC Councilmember, Dr. Una Clarke, was the first Caribbean-born woman elected to the New York City's legislature. As is customary for the annual C-PAC Luncheon, a rich tapestry of Caribbean

Diaspora members were in attendance. They included local elected political leaders Hon. Shirley Nathan-Pulliam, Maryland State Senator; Karl Racine, Esq.; Attorney General, Washington, DC; Members of the Caribbean diplomatic corps; and leaders of myriad Caribbean organizations in the region. [Click here to see photos of the event.](#)

Well known Caribbean personality and C-PAC member Derrice Dean was MC for the event. Music was provided courtesy of FUSION by Dr. Lennard Jack. Students of Caribbean heritage currently attending area Universities and colleges also attended the event through sponsorship of the organization's Board members. The 2017 Luncheon Committee under the leadership of Dr. Frances Jefferson, Vice-Chair for Finance, and her committee, Ms. Keilia Phillips (chair), Jackie Allen-Reid, Dr. Berthie Labassierre, Marilyn McNish, and Marvena Simmonds expressed appreciation to the attendees and encouraged them to join the 2018 planning committee.

CPAC 2017 Luncheon Honorees:

Chris Gardiner and Roy Layne were both honored for their dedication and service to the organization during the luncheon. C-PAC

Founding Patron and Advisory Board Member Dr. Ivan Walks presented Mr. Gardiner with a plaque in honor of his vision in co-founding

C-PAC in 2005. Mr. Gardiner presented Mr. Layne a plaque for his long service as C-PAC's treasurer. Both are well deserved!!



During the last twelve years, C-PAC has achieved its founding goal of becoming the political voice of the Caribbean-American community in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Northern Virginia (the DMV). To that end, we have (a) endorsed political candidates (b) hosted political forums

in various communities (c) held fundraisers for candidates of our choice and (d) developed a periodical – The C-PAC Informer – to keep the community abreast of issues of importance.

Currently, C-PAC draws its most consistent support from the older, Caribbean- born members of our community. If C-PAC is to maintain the position its members strove for at its founding, we

must broaden our membership base. We must attract the younger, first and second generation Caribbean-Americans. Failure to do so will, no doubt, mean the death of C-PAC as the current generation of members fades away.

These young professionals have, to a great extent, achieved their parents and grandparents American dream. But their connection to the broader Caribbean community, as a separate identifiable “grouping”, is tenuous. In fact, in the case of the second generation, the connection is almost non-existent. C-PAC’s goal, through the Young, Professional Network, is to be a bridge between these young professionals and the Caribbean community, both for their benefit, and for the benefit of the Caribbean community as a whole. Our ultimate goal is to bring them into C-PAC’s membership.

In Appreciation

C-PAC benefits every day from the dedicated energies and time devoted by members of our various Boards and Committees. These members have provided steadfast and fierce commitment to C-PAC. They have devoted their time, wisdom, and selfless service in helping to guide the organization. We are fortunate to have the active involvement of the following individuals, and express our appreciation for all the time and effort they devoted in support of C-PAC:

- **FRANCES JEFFERSON, PhD** was appointed to serve on the C-PAC Board of Advisors in 2015-2017 and completed 1 one-year term of Vice-Chair for Finance.
- **LUIGI LEBLANC** who was appointed to serve as Vice Chair Membership, C-PAC 2015-2017
- **SUZANNE MATTHEWS-WILLIAMS** who was appointed to serve as Vice-Chair-at-Large, C-PAC 2015-2017

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C-PAC 2017 Election Results

Amidst the political upheaval going on in our region C-PAC members were undaunted and casted their votes for C-PAC Board members during the pageantry of the Christmas and New Years holiday season. Congratulations go out to:

- ★ Dr. Goulda Downer on her reelection as C-PAC Chair.
- ★ Ms. Marvena A. Simmonds on her election as C-PAC Secretary.
- ★ Ms. Suzanne Matthews-Williams as Vice-Chair of Membership (*write-in Candidate*).
- ★ Mr. Roy Layne as Treasures (*write-in Candidate*).
- ★ Ms. Jamila Thompson as Vice-Chair of Finance (*write-in Candidate*).

NEWS You Can Use!!!

- The 2018 *Annual Founding Patron's Luncheon* will be held on Saturday, October 13th.
- The 2018 *Annual General Meeting* will beheld on Saturday, December 8th
- Several *Community Meetings* including meet the *Candidate Forums* are scheduled throughout the year please be on the lookout for specific dates and times.
- Have some time on your hands? *Volunteer* with us and make our Caribbean Diaspora a powerhouse!!!

CPAC Newsletter Committee

Goulda Downer, *Editor*
Denise Baiey, MEd., *Associate Editor*
Jhanel A. Hart, LLB, *Associate Editor*
Jaye Ann Lowe, Esq.
Brendon Martin
Jacqueline Sealy, *Layout & Design*

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We are in the process of planning our 13th Anniversary Celebrations. Share with us some things you would love to see! Have an idea? Send us a message!

STAY IN TOUCH

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Email: Cpac.dmv@gmail.com



STAY INVOLVED

C-PAC will be celebrating 13 years this year. Stay tuned for more information on how you can get involved in our activities this year!

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