



THE CPAC INFORMER

Political Issues Impacting the
Caribbean-American Diaspora

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Greetings from the Chair

Dear Fellow Caribbean-American Diaspora Family, on behalf of the 2020 Caribbean-American Ecumenical Planning Committee, I wish to thank you for joining us this year for our 2nd annual Worship celebration in honor of Caribbean-American Heritage month. We celebrated the month to honor the almost eight million people in this country who were either born in the Caribbean or are of Caribbean heritage.

The public murders of Black men and women by police and others, and the many other atrocities visited upon Black people – worldwide-is not new. In August of 1920, Marcus Garvey and his organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, brought together 2,500 delegates from Africa, the Caribbean, North, South, and Central America to deliberate on the worldwide condition of the *Negro* people. The gathering produced a document titled, “*The Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World*”. This, the centennial year of that event, may mark the year that Marcus Garvey’s dream of uniting Africans and those of African descent all over the world begins its journey towards realization.

The song writer, Jeremy Riddle, wrote that, *God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform*. I believe that to be true. The murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others extends the seemingly permanent, permission to devalue our Black lives. Lives that were sacrificed first to build this country and then to permit its imposition of dehumanizing and unjust racial hierarchy that devalues it. Our very existence, despite the myriad centuries of atrocities, is a testament to the remembrance of our captured and enslaved ancestors who showed remarkable strength and audacity despite the systemic manifestations of violence and neglect brought on by slavery.

The vibrant, multiracial, multicultural protests in our streets, and the streets of major cities around the world - possibly made so because of the COVID-19 lockdowns – may be the result of God using an evil act to achieve a purpose that may not yet be clear to us.

But the “outlines” of that purpose may be visible. For the first time in history, the 54 countries of Africa, and Black people everywhere, united, stood up and said, “enough is enough” to the pandemic of abuse and the false taxonomy and hierarchy of humanity based on color, metered out to Black people everywhere.

Bob Marley sang it best; “*How good and how pleasant it would be, before God and man, to see the unification of all Africans.*” We are reminded that wherever we were born, or live, those of us who are “Black” are engaged in the same struggle against “racial” discrimination and white supremacy. We are all Africans.

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Greetings from the Chair (continued)

So, as we celebrate Caribbean American Heritage month in America, our spirits should be heartened. We do not stand alone in our fight for civil rights, justice, and equality. Buoyed by our ancestor's humanity, we are joined by our African brothers and sisters, the African diaspora, and people of goodwill of all "races," creeds, and colors. As we march into the future, we have much to be thankful for. And we should be comforted knowing that *God does indeed move in mysterious ways His wonders to perform.*

A heartfelt thank you go to men of God; *The Reverend Canon Dr. Kortright Davis*, whose sermon, "The Right Hand of God" became the perfect clarion call to the Caribbean community to create, participate, advocate, and consecrate ourselves as we become more engaged in our community. To *The Reverend Joseph M. Constant*, Rector of St. John's

Episcopal Church Zion Parish whose guidance, grace and leadership resulted in a meaningful worship experience for all. And to our planning committee of diverse Caribbean organization leaders who collaborated again to execute the event. They include, Caribbean-American Political Action Committee (C-PAC); Montgomery County Executive's Caribbean-American Advisory Group (CAAG); Caribbean & African Faith-Based Leadership Conference (CAFBLC); Caribbean-American Intercultural Organization (CAIO); Jamaican Nationals Association of the Washington DC Metropolitan Area (JNA); and St Kitts & Nevis Nationals Association of Washington DC. (SKNNA).

See the Caribbean-American worship service here <https://www.facebook.com/StJohnsZionParish/videos/818991018508631>

ELECTION 2020: Your Vote Counts



VOTE

Election Day on Tuesday, November 3, 2020 is less than 100 days away. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic it is anticipated that voting by mail, otherwise termed postal voting, or absentee ballot, is expected to be even higher in November. This is to help keep voters and poll workers safe and healthy. Whether in person, by mail or early voting, casting your vote is more important this year than ever before. The District of Columbia (DC) and Maryland are among the 32 states that allow early voting, with a few restrictions. Virginia lags behind. But like DC and Maryland, it has vote-by-mail.

Absentee ballots began during the Civil War to support the military. The practice has continued since then with some states allowing voters with permanent disabilities to apply for permanent absentee voter status. Other states allow all citizens to apply for permanent status and in so doing, they automatically receive an absentee ballot for each election. Still, other states require voters to request an absentee ballot before each election occurs.

It is estimated that 40 percent of Americans will vote early — some in person, but most by mail. Casting your ballot, regardless of how you do it, is key. Early voting is convenient, secure, and efficient. It helps to minimize exhaustive wait times and long lines by spreading the voting process over 14 days, plus Election Day. It also softens the barriers of a demanding job or inflexible hours that often impinges on a voter's ability to exercise his/her constitutional right to vote. This right should not be taken lightly. The late Congressman John Lewis said it well: "*The right to vote is precious, almost sacred. It is the most powerful nonviolent tool or instrument in a democratic society. We must use it.*"

Click the links below to get voting updates and important deadlines, including for absentee/mail-in, early or in-person voting.

DC: <https://www.rockthevote.org/how-to-vote/district-of-columbia/>

Maryland: <https://www.rockthevote.org/how-to-vote/election-dates-deadlines/maryland/>

Virginia: <https://www.rockthevote.org/how-to-vote/election-dates-deadlines/virginia/>

ELECTIONS

In addition to its impact on our daily lives, Covid-19 also caused several changes to the electoral process for regional elections in May and June. Despite this C-PAC, carried out our tradition of distributing questionnaires to several candidates seeking political office in the District of Columbia. The candidates' responses were shared with C-PAC's members, friends, and supporters. Based on their votes, C-PAC endorsed candidates who articulated policy positions that will strengthen the economic, educational, social, and cultural conditions of residents of Caribbean heritage. To that end, C-PAC endorsed Robert White for City Council At-Large, Brandon Todd for Ward 4, Vincent Gray for Ward 7, and Trayon White for Ward 8. Of our endorsements, all were successful except for Brandon Todd in Ward 4.

In Memoriam

We have also experienced the sad loss of two of our beloved members this year. We offer our continued heartfelt condolences for their family and loved ones.

On March 11, C-PAC Co-Founder, Denys Vaughn Cook passed away. Denys was a pillar of the DMV community, and the national Caribbean Diaspora community. He was a dedicated member of C-PAC. He served as Vice Chair for Finance, and as a member of the Board of Advisors. He was passionate that the political voice of the Caribbean-American Diaspora be heard. And, to that end, he was generous with both his time and his financial resources. We are grateful for Denys' contributions to C-PAC and the Caribbean-American community. And we will keep his memory alive.

We also sadly lost Eric Leopold Edwards on Sunday, April 25th. He was 95 years old. Leo - as he was affectionately and respectfully called - was a pillar of the Caribbean-American Diaspora and a Founding Patron of C-PAC. He worked tirelessly throughout his life in America on behalf of Jamaica, his homeland, and the Caribbean as a whole. His civic contributions were as broad as they were deep. His professional endeavors included matters related to politics, academia and research at the Local, State and Federal levels of Government. He also consulted with private businesses, foundations, Institutions, and Civic Organizations.

Leo was the founder of the Caribbean American Intercultural Organization (CAIO) of Washington, D.C.; the founding President of the Council of Caribbean Organizations, Inc.; a founding member and secretary of the Jamaica Nationals Development Foundation; Chairman of the Board of Directors of TransAfrica D.C. Metropolitan Chapter; and a founding member of the Board of Directors of the National Coalition on Caribbean Affairs (NCOCA). These are but some examples of the breath of his service to the Caribbean-American community.

In recognition of his many contributions, Leo was the recipient of numerous awards conferred by his peers and the Caribbean-American community. He was also honored by the Government of Jamaica, which bestowed upon him The Order of Distinction (Officer) for his "promotion of cultural relations between the United States and the Countries of the Caribbean, with special reference to Jamaica."

We offer condolences to our Vice Chair of Finance, Jamila Thompson who served as Deputy Chief of Staff for the Honorable Congressman John Lewis on his passing.

C-PAC 2020 Annual Founding Patrons' Luncheon

Our C-PAC Planning Committee *has made the difficult decision to cancel* the Founding Patrons' 2020 Luncheon this year, due to the coronavirus pandemic. While we wish we could celebrate together, your safety is our priority.

Instead, we invite you to join us at noon on Saturday, October 10th for the C-PAC Africans Unite Summit. Dr Julius Garvey, our Keynote speaker, will be joined by **H.E Dr. Barfuor Adjei-Barwuah, Ghana's Ambassador to the United States** and other notable guests.

We will discuss *The Rights of people of African Descent Worldwide*. We will also work to develop a plan on how best to realize Marcus Garvey's dream of uniting all Africans and people of the African diaspora.

Be Part of C-PAC's Leadership Team

As outlined in our bylaws, elections will be held for upcoming Board vacancies in December. C-PAC members are invited to run for the positions of Chair and Executive Secretary. Visit our website <http://www.caribbeanpac.org/documents/CPAC-Bylaws.pdf> to learn about these roles and responsibilities for these vacancies. Please also email us at cpac.dmv@gmail.org if you are interested or have questions.

These positions are excellent opportunities to give back to the DMV's Caribbean community, and to help strengthen C-PAC. The Executive Board meets monthly, primarily via conference call. Board Members have autonomy to develop their own teams in order to develop their portfolios. Candidates must be a member in good-standing and must have been so for the two prior years. Nominations will begin in December with election results announced by COB on Monday, December 21, 2020. We encourage you to become active and consider running for these positions so that we may remain the authentic political voice of the DMV's Caribbean community.

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CARIBBEAN-AMERICAN MONTH

C-PAC recognized Caribbean-American Month this past June with a series of profiles on some of our stalwart members as well as having a virtual church service. The profiles looked at our extraordinary members who have each made an indelible impact on the US society in the areas of science, arts, civil rights and business.

C-PAC celebrated international broadcaster Vonn Martin, psychologist Dr. Francis Jefferson, businessman Aubrey Stephenson, cell-biologist Dr. Winston Anderson, and obstetrician Dr. John George. The profiles showed the length and breadth of the incredible achievements of our members, inspiring the future to continue the work they have done.

C-PAC Newsletter Committee

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