



Caribbean-American Political Action Committee

Advancing the political agenda of Caribbean Americans



THE CPAC INFORMER

Political Issues Impacting the Caribbean American Diaspora

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Letter from the Chair

Dear C-PAC Members, Supporters, Well Wishers and Friends.

As we close out the year and enjoy the pageantry of the season, this is the perfect time for reflection and planning of the future. C-PAC's Executive and Advisory Boards are deeply grateful for your ongoing engagement with us. We wish to express a heartfelt "thank you" for your continued support of C-PAC. And, we take this opportunity to wish everyone a joyful Christmas season and a happy and prosperous New Year.

On a personal note, I wish to thank our Executive and Advisory Boards for all the incredible work done, and the dedication and commitment exhibited throughout the year. Without a doubt, it is your hard work that made this the successful year it has been.

Our region will soon be consumed with the activities of the 2020 political campaigns - both at the local, regional and national levels. This will be an excellent opportunity for us, under C-PAC's banner, to collectively weight in on the selection of this next set of regional leaders. This is the fundamental reason for C-PAC's existence: to ensure that the concerns of the DMV's Caribbean community are addressed by our political leaders.

During the year, we embarked on several activities aimed at expanding C-PAC's reach and influence. These include:

- Improving communicating with our members and supporters through our periodic C-PAC CHAT (The Chat): The CHAT emphasizes issues of importance to our members. We have used questionnaires, such as our *Immigration Periodic Questionnaires* - to focus on specific of interest to the Caribbean community. Our bi-annual C-PAC Informer also serves as a well-resourced communication vehicle.
- Collaborating with other Caribbean Organizations: This year, C-PAC invited several Caribbean organizations to partner with us in the holding of the *Inaugural Caribbean Diaspora Ecumenical Service of Remembrance and Celebration*. This dual-purpose event commemorated the 400th year of the arrival of the first Africans, in bondage, in the Americas and the Caribbean. We celebrated the indomitable spirit of our ancestors, and our pride in being descendants of those extraordinary human beings. Thus, the event honored our past, celebrated the present, and embraced our future. The event was held at Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ in the District of Columbia. It was well attended. Speakers included leaders of the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Ras Tafari faiths. The

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Letter from the Chair (continued)

sermon was given by Rev. Joseph Constant, who is of Haitian heritage. Partnering organizations included:

- o The Caribbean Council of Prince George's County;
- o Caribbean and African Faith Based Leadership Conference;
- o Caribbean American Intercultural Organization;
- o Jamaican Nationals Association; and
- o Montgomery County Caribbean Advisory Group

- Continuing to appraise local politicians of the concerns of the DMV Caribbean community and, concomitantly, update them about the opportunity to dialogue with us about culturally specific strategies to addressing these concerns.

Meeting with Prince George's County Executive: After a series of planning meetings during the year, a C-PAC delegation met with Prince Georges County Executive (CoEx) Alsobrooks in early October to discuss a wide range of issues. These included education, immigration, business development, and Caribbean culture. With the exception of the Chair and C-PAC co-founder Chris Gardiner, the delegation was composed of Prince George's County residents. The CoEX invited members of the delegation – as representatives of C-PAC - to participate in the following endeavors now underway by her administration:

- **Dr. Allan Johnson**, who spoke to the issue of education, and was invited to join the CoEx's team in her efforts to educational reforms;
- **Attorney Jaye Ann Lowe** was invited to engage with the CoEx's Office on the issue of immigration and to help with the upcoming County census;
- **Regarding business development**, the CoEx invited Mr. Royston DeSousa to join the County's Trade Center planning group;
- **Regarding the recognition of Caribbean culture in the County**, the CoEx expressed great enthusiasm for Caribbean culture – especially Carnival. She invited Laughton Sargent to engage with her administration to explore ideas surrounding this issue.

The meeting ended with the CoEx's promise to establish the a Prince George's Caribbean-American Advisory Group (the Advisory Group)

The Advisory Group will be charged with ensuring that the CoEx is well informed of the needs and concerns of the County's Caribbean American residents.

Prince George's County boards and Commissions: Earlier in the year, in working with the Alsobrooks administration, we invited Caribbean-American residents of Prince George's County to submit their resumes to C-PAC if they were interested in serving on a County Board or Commission. The resumes were sent to the County's Boards and Commissions for consideration.

C-PAC actively supported passage of the following bills:

- Passage of the Bill SB0472 lauding August as Caribbean Heritage Month in Maryland Legislation.
- B23-0201 - to establish an Office of Caribbean Affairs (OCA) in Washington DC. During his first few months in office in 2015, C-PAC's Chair, Dr. Goulda Downer and Vice Chair for Membership, Mrs. Suzanne Matthews-Williams, met with Councilmember Brandon Todd to advocate for an Office of Caribbean affairs. They also advocated for increased funding to support the Office. We applaud Doreen Thompson, Esq. for keeping the issue alive and are grateful to Council member Todd for advancing this effort.

Meeting Facilitation: C-PAC facilitated several meetings of interested parties with various political leaders. In particular, C-PAC facilitated meetings with the President of the DC Chamber of Commerce on behalf of the Ambassador and the Consul General of the Bahamas. We also arranged a meeting with Mayor Muriel Bowser for the Ambassador and the Consul General. Both meetings focused on hurricane relief for the Bahamas. The Chair of the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Caribbean Community Affairs also attended the meeting with the Mayor. The Mayor was represented at the meeting with the Chamber of Commerce by a member of her staff.

Grow value for our young adults by playing to C-PAC's strengths: We continue to work diligently to encourage our young-adult Caribbean-Americans to participate in C-PAC. Uptake has been slow but, we remain committed to igniting our young folks to engage in the political process and become active members of C-PAC.

Annual Founding Patron's Luncheon

Dr. Julius Garvey, the keynote speaker at the C-PAC's 14th annual Founding Patrons' Luncheon, called on attendees to train their minds to fulfill their potential, and to continue the organization's good work. Held on October 12th in Silver Spring Maryland, the well-attended event saw the son of Jamaica's first national hero encourage the attendees to remember their history and roots and to use it to propel themselves to greatness.

"Marcus Garvey said God and nature first made us what we are, then out of our own creative genius, we make ourselves into what we want to be," he said. "The starting point is that we can transform ourselves, we can work on our minds to change the way we experience ourselves and the world. We're born with the necessary equipment to live lives that are satisfactory and fulfilling and to function in harmony with nature and with others," he said.



Dr. Julius Garvey
(Photo courtesy of Fotosbygene)

He continued: "A mind awakened to its full potential knowing who you are and what you are, the way things are and what you should do under all circumstances... without such a clear purpose in life we won't know where we're going and what we're doing, just wandering around lost in a repetitive cycle of someone else's propaganda that has enslaved our minds. Marcus Garvey said we should liberate our minds from

mental slavery," he said. Dr. Garvey said when people are disciplined, then they can become transformative agents for their communities. "Such a person who stays the course is a hero. We start with ourselves and become the change we want to see. Then perhaps following our example, friends and family may want to change, then others at a distance," he said.

Dr. Ivan Walks, Chair for C-PAC's Advisory Board in introducing Dr. Garvey spoke of his scholarly work as a surgeon and his passion as an international humanitarian. After giving his speech, Dr. Garvey was honored with an official citation from the Maryland General Assembly, which was read by Maryland State Senator Arthur Ellis. The citation congratulated Dr. Garvey on his work to improve the health and well-being of people in the African Diaspora through teachings of 'unity and self-sufficiency.'

D.C. councilmember Brandon Todd, the Ward 4 representative who attended the luncheon, shared that a bill for an Office for Caribbean-American Affairs is making its way through the D.C. legislature. Todd said that the bill which was introduced earlier this year would make such an office a first in the District for Caribbean-Americans. He is hoping to have the bill passed in January and the office fully funded for the 2021 budget. "Because of your advocacy we were able to introduce that bill and your continued



C-PAC Luncheon Committee (Photo courtesy of Fotosbygene)

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Annual Founding Patron's Luncheon (continued)



Dr. Garvey and C-PAC Co-Founder Chris Gardiner (Photo courtesy of Fotosbygene)

advocacy will make sure that it is law and your priorities for the Caribbean-American community is forefront in the District of Columbia," he said.

C-PAC co-founder, Chris Gardiner acknowledged the progress the group to garner political support. "In this our 15th year, C-PAC is beginning to reach beyond DC, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Baltimore, and Northern Virginia, and into Charles County and Howard County. This is evidenced by the number of elected officials from these areas that are beginning to attend our events and seek our support," he said.

Kojo Nnamdi, another founding member of C-PAC praised the founding members of the organization and encouraged the present generation to continue the work.

In recounting the year that just passed, chair of C-PAC Dr. Goulda Downer showcased some of the highlights of the organization's work for the period. Dr. Downer highlighted the fact that communication and collaboration was key to moving C-PAC forward. Dr. Downer highlighted that there were less than 137 active Caribbean organizations in the region and the goal in the next two years would be to identify as many to forge partnerships and inter-organizational relationships. "This process has already begun. Our shared collaborative vision was the inaugural Caribbean American ecumenical service of remembrance and celebration. A diverse set of Caribbean organizations partnered with C-PAC to make this seminal event very successful," she said. Dr. Downer invited 6-year-old Amari Green, whom she announced as, "C-PAC's future Chair" to join her on the podium and as she ended her speech. Amari quoting Garvey's speech, "Up you might race; accomplish what you will" received a



Dr Garvey and Amari Green (Photo courtesy of Fotosbygene)

thunderous applause. He attended the luncheon with his Dad, C-PAC member Dr. Delroy Green.

C-PAC continues to remain in good financial standing with the DC Board of Elections, Office of Campaign Finance. Treasurer Roy Layne, CPA reported that the organization had \$40K plus in its bank account.

Luncheon Chair Dr. Frankie Jefferson expressed appreciation to the Luncheon sponsors and attendees. She conveyed her deep gratitude for the unwavering dedication of the members of the luncheon committee whose efforts make the annual luncheon events informative and fun-filled.

In Appreciation

C-PAC benefits from a committed dedicated group of individuals who unselfishly gives of their time and energy to the various Boards and Committees. 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. We express our appreciation for their devotion to C-PAC as their terms end in 2019:

- **Roy Layne, CPA** served as Treasurer from 2018-2019. In this capacity, he oversaw and maintained C-PAC's financial integrity.
- **Dr. Frances Jefferson** served as Vice Chair-at-Large from 2018-2019. Under her leadership the Founding Patrons' Luncheon remained a highly successful and well-attended event.
- **Suzanne Matthews -Williams** served as Vice Chair for Membership from 2018-2019. This position coordinates the recruitment, enrollment and retention of members and is responsible for ensuring a fair and accurate list of members in good standing for the administering the election for members of the Board of Directors.

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 noted below. Please email C-PAC at cpac.dmv@gmail.org if you are interested in doing so. 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 advance their portfolios. A 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 Saturday, December 21, 2019. Our monthly C-PAC CHAT provides the needed details for the election process. We encourage you to be active and consider running for these positions so that we may remain the authentic political voice of the DMV's Caribbean community. The Board Vacancies and their core tasks are as follows:

- **Treasurer (2 years):** The Treasurer has custody of the financial records and shall keep full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements.
- **Vice Chair Membership (2 years):** The Secretary is responsible for all matters related to the recruitment, enrollment and retention of members.
- **Vice Chair At-Large (2 years):** The Vice Chair At-Large serves as a liaison between the membership and the Board of Directors.

Fond Farewell: Senator Shirley Nathan-Pulliam



We bid Senator Shirley Nathan-Pulliam a fond farewell on her retirement from the Maryland General Assembly because of health issues. Senator Nathan-Pulliam is the first Caribbean-born person elected to the Maryland General Assembly. She was also the first politician to publicly applaud the formation of C-PAC. She publicly expressed her elation that a Caribbean PAC was "finally formed." She thought it of utmost importance that the Caribbean community become involved in the political life of the DMV and make its voice heard in the regions' political forums. She pledged her commitment. She paid her annual membership dues. And she has continued her strong support of C-PAC since its founding. Our members, friends and supporters wish for Senator Nathan-Pulliam a full recovery as she beings the next phase of her life-journey. We offer a heartfelt "thank you" for a job well done.

NEWS You Can Use!!!

➤ 2020 Census - You Matter! Get Counted

Every ten years the U.S Constitution requires that America's population is counted! An accurate count allows for appropriate federal funds to be given to states, counties and communities. These funds support critical programs such as health care, housing, employment, education, transportation and public policy. C-PAC encourages you to visit www.Census.gov and keep abreast of the census in your community. As always, each one tell more than one!

- See photos from our luncheon [link](#).
- Renew your membership or become a member here [link](#).

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We are in the process of planning our 16th Anniversary Celebrations. Share with us some things you would love to see! Have an idea? Send us a message!

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STAY INVOLVED

C-PAC will be celebrating 16 years this year. Stay tuned for more information on how you can get involved in our activities this year!

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