



# THE CPAC INFORMER

Political Issues Impacting the  
Caribbean American Diaspora

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## Letter from the Chair

We all can agree that the 2016 election cycle was anything but unconventional, and the outcome wholly unexpected by many. What is factual though, is that, while the United States continues to await its first female President, the Caribbean region has continued its progressive approach with the election of Sharlene Cartwright-Robinson of the People's Democratic Movement (PDM), to be the first female Premier of Turks and Caicos Islands on December 15th.

The stage is now set for President-elect Trump to fulfill the promises he made during his run for the oval office. And while some of these promises may change and others abandoned all together, others are expected to be fully implemented. Consequently, we encourage the Caribbean Diaspora to continue to be engaged in the politics of our communities, states and regions. Our very presence in this country allows us to become strategically involved in matters of importance to the entire Caribbean region.

Last summer, C-PAC was instrumental in coordinating a meeting between the CARICOM Ambassadors and Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins of the State Department. The purpose of the meeting was to enlighten the Ambassadors about the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) of the United States. A subsequent meeting was held at Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and included representatives of the State Department, the White House, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Howard University.

This past November, as chair of C-PAC, I was invited to participate, together with other Caribbean leaders, in the inaugural Caribbean regional GHSA meeting. This five day strategic planning session was facilitated by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It included various federal US government agencies as well as PAHO, the World Health Organization (WHO) and representatives of academia and the private sector.

The billion dollar GHSA was launched in February, 2014 by President Obama. It is a multilateral and multisectoral effort to accelerate development towards a world protected from the threat of infectious diseases. CARICOM was added to the GHSA partner list in November 2015. At the meeting, participants were tasked with expanding on already implemented country-specific strategies, and to develop a "roadmap" with the required capacities necessary to prevent, detect, report, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks in our regions. The emergence and resurgence of vector borne diseases (to include Chikungunya, Dengue, Zika and Malaria) strongly attributed to climate change, makes this particularly relevant for the Caribbean. The roadmap will serve to document the Caribbean's initiatives, identify milestones for future work, and detect areas where additional support is needed to achieve regional health security.

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In this issue of the C-PAC Informer, we say “thank you” to five dynamic members who have served C-PAC over the years: D’shawna Bernard; John George, MD; Francis Jefferson, PhD; Roy Layne, CPA; and Denys Vaughn Cooke. We also highlight the need to support and mentor our young Diaspora professionals politically. In keeping

with that theme, we talk with two of our dynamic members who have been actively involved in politics at the local and national levels. They are: D’shawna Bernard, C-PAC’s Vice-Chair for communications and Jamila Thompson, C-PAC’s Advisory Board Chair. Visit our website at [www.caribbeanpac.org](http://www.caribbeanpac.org).

## Dynamic Politically Active Young Caribbean Diaspora Members

### D’SHAWNA BERNARD

With roots in Trinidad & Tobago D’shawna Bernard joined C-PAC in 2014 and was appointed as our Vice-Chair for Communications. Ms. Bernard recently worked with the Democratic National Convention (DNC) Committee aimed at electing Hilary Clinton President of the United States.

#### *What was it like working with the DNC Committee?*

Phenomenal! The Clinton campaign was more than just the standard political experience. I gained a new network of family and friends which I will certainly cherish moving forward. The way folks gelled together inspired by each other and for the greater good is something that can’t be described in words. In spite of the

results, we made history and I will always be honored that I was apart.

#### *What are some of the issues that are not normally brought up in discussions of young people and their political behavior?*

Engagement with the younger generation always presents a unique opportunity not just in discussing the issues but it

forces us to think of creative ways to do so. In my opinion many of the issues were discussed, I don’t believe there was a stone left unturned. If anything the challenge is always marrying the issues with the constant shift in our millennials. They no longer just vote based on party, they vote based on interest and have no qualms about changing the game if they need to.

*How important is it to you to be politically engaged and informed about political policy issues of importance to members of our Caribbean Diaspora?*

It is vital! Politics is apart of our daily lives and I always strive to encourage my community to recognize that we are affected. From our school boards to our congressman, as I have often heard “ if you don’t have a seat at the table, you are on the menu”. Our community is vulnerable to decisions made therefore remaining engaged is inevitable.

*In your opinion, what makes a person from the Caribbean Diaspora participate or not in the political process?*

Inclusion! I am a strong advocate for ensuring that folks are not just “included” on paper but they are represented and have an active role. Our terminology, our practices, the way in which we engage has significant impact on how we participate. Even though Caribbean Americans are known to be politically active, it cannot be taken for granted.

*Historically speaking, people between the ages of 18-29 vote at substantially lower rates than every other age group. What should politicians as well as Caribbean Diaspora leaders do to appeal to and engage effectively with young voters?*

I think elected officials and Caribbean leaders need to reach folks where they are. Too often they are stuck in standard practices and it is at our own lost. The way they engage should shift to accommodate the current season. I firmly believe that engagement should be year long not just in an election cycle. Like any relationship, it can not be one sided, consistency is key.

*What advice would you give to the average millennial who is unsure about a future in politics?*

My advice would be to “be still and quiet the noise’ you can be active politically in so many ways and there is never just one path. Being unsure is apart of the process but the only way to determine the next move is to zero in on your contribution, remove distractions and then leap forward.



## JAMILA THOMPSON

With roots in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Jamila Thompson joined C-PAC as a founding member. She has served in several positions to include Board secretary and currently serves a Chair for the Advisory Board. Ms. Thompson works in the office of Congressman John Lewis (D-GA).

*Tell us about your work with Congressman Lewis.*

Congressman Lewis is simply amazing -- thoughtful, intelligent, energetic, and kind. He is a senior statesman and policymaker who has been in Congress for 30 years. He is a member of the House Leadership and the Ways and Means Committee. This committee is tasked with crafting tax, trade, health, and social insurance policy. As legislative director, I am responsible for managing and developing his legislative staff and agenda. We try to be thoughtful and mindful in engaging with our constituents and strive to develop and consider legislation and policies in a manner that is consistent with Mr. Lewis’ values and our constituents’ priorities.

*What advice would you give to the average millennial about the challenges of a career in public policy?*

This is a profession where patience and strategy are key. So much work is required for the tiniest bit of progress, and some find it difficult to invest in and commit to the long game and piecemeal successes. Even during the most trying times, public policy is a constant classroom where you learn more from setbacks than success. Personally, I strive to remain open to the lessons that can be gained from both negative and positive experiences so that I can be better prepared for the next challenge.

*How important is it to be politically engaged and informed about political policy issues of importance to members of our Caribbean Diaspora?*

Each person is immediately and personally impacted by local and regional government decisions. In order to be respected and included in policy decisions, it is critical that we are informed, visible, and vocal. I do not think people truly realize the extent to which the squeakiest wheels get the oil. If you do not speak up, policy makers will not know. They are guided by their constituents. It is amazing to see how effective coalitions can be when they are collectively, proactively, and unrelentingly engaged.

*Historically speaking, people between the ages of 18-29 vote at substantially lower rates than every other age group. What should politicians as well as Caribbean Diaspora leaders do to appeal to and engage effectively with young voters?*

One of my colleagues – a social worker — always stresses the importance of meeting people where they are. If young people are not voting, there are reasons. Active listening, without judgment, might be a good start in understanding why people choose not to vote. It is important to create spaces where people talk through — not to—issues. Planting seeds of mutual respect and goodwill can be used to build opportunities that can show how people of every age and background can become effective change agents.

*In your opinion, what makes a person from the Caribbean Diaspora decide whether or not to participate in the political process?*

This probably differs for every individual, but usually there is an action, policy, or experience which encourages or enrages you. The real choice is whether to become involved or to disengage. I was inspired to work in public policy because of unique opportunity to support those whose convictions and priorities reflected my own in the pursuit of peace. This was a personal decision to move from the sidelines of complaining about the status quo and get into the game to change it.

*What made you join C-PAC?*

Mr. Denys Vaughn-Cooke, one of the original C-PAC co-founders, called me out of the blue one day and asked me to meet him for coffee. I only knew him from the tennis courts and was humbled and honored to learn that Mr. Vaughn-Cooke and the other visionaries were personally recruiting so many people of all ages and origins to build this organization. Most importantly, there was no litmus test to join; every person who shared the same mission was welcomed and respected. Throughout the years, I stayed involved with C-PAC because it remains inclusive — without ego or country competition. I was also able to study and practice skills that are useful for my professional work. Even after eleven years, C-PAC continues to recruit, embrace, respect, and create opportunities for young people of all backgrounds to listen, learn, develop, and apply their talents.

## C-PAC YOUNG ADULT INITIATIVE

**WHY:** With less than 10% of members being young adults, C-PAC seeks to increase the number of young adults (thirty-five and younger) who are actively engaged in the political process of our region. We recognize that young adults throughout history have made significant contributions to changes in political systems that impact their lives. And, as a group, in any society or community, they can be a dynamic, formidable force. However, meaningful youth participation and leadership require that appropriate opportunities be available for that purpose. With this in mind, one of C-PAC goals is to increase opportunities for our youth to engage in its governance, and to participate in our political and decision-making processes.

We wish to encourage our “seasoned” members to serve as mentors to our young adults. This would give them the opportunity to learn, implement, and receive feedback on the skills developed during their mentorship, and in so doing, equip them with the necessary tools to succeed as leaders in the political arena. We strongly feel that one of our signature roles is to create a network of emerging regional political leaders. To that end, we established the C-PAC Young Adult Initiative (CPAC-YAI).



**WHAT:** The CPAC-YAI is an outreach program to young adults of Caribbean descent and is aimed at strengthening their capacity to take initiative and become leaders in our regional political activities. CPAC-YAI is aimed at participants aged 25-45 from the Caribbean Diaspora. Please be on the look out for updates on when this initiative will begin in earnest.

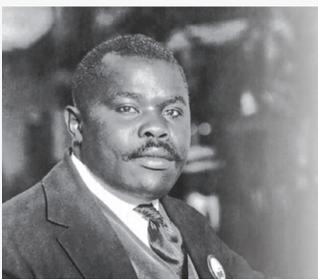
# Annual Founding Patron's Luncheon

The 2017 Annual Founding Patron's Luncheon was held on Saturday, October 14<sup>th</sup> at the Hilton DoubleTree Hotel in Silver Spring, MD. The Keynote address, provided by retired Congresswoman Donna Christensen (D-USVI) reminded those in attendance about the indelible contributions Caribbean Diaspora members have made to the United States. She extolled our contributions to the economic, social, cultural growth of the country and urged us to play an even greater role in the political arena.

In attendance also, were members of the Caribbean diplomatic core and Dr. Julius Garvey, son of late civil rights pioneer and Jamaica's first national hero, the Rt. Hon. Marcus Mosiah Garvey. Dr. Garvey updated the gathering about his work to petition President Obama to grant a posthumous presidential pardon to his father for his unjust conviction on Federal charges. He also used the occasion to thank C-PAC and members of the Caribbean Diaspora for working with him to help bring greater national and global awareness to push for the pardon.



## C-PAC and The Marcus Garvey Pardon Request



**MARCUS GARVEY** was a pioneer in the civil rights movement and the founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL). The UNIA grew to encompass nearly six million members in forty countries. Its mission was to foster economic development, dignity, self-sufficiency, pride and self-improvement in black communities worldwide. For his activities, Garvey was deemed a threat to the security of the United States by J. Edger Hoover and others.

A racially charged, and politically motivated, investigation ensued. Garvey was wrongfully convicted in 1923 of mail fraud and was eventually deported back to Jamaica. The request for a presidential posthumous pardon, which was filed last year by the Garvey family, seeks to make amends for this miscarriage of justice. Working with Caribbean students from the Diaspora within our region as well as throughout the Caribbean, C-PAC helped spearhead the *students4garvey* movement, which urged students to write letters to President Obama encouraging him to

grant the pardon. Prime Minister Andrew Holness of Jamaica, numerous prominent individuals and organizations, including the Congressional Black Caucus and other members of congress joined the effort. Nelson Mandela's grandson, Ndaba Mandela urged the President to act; students from Miekleton Preparatory, St. Dominic Preparatory, Ewerton Primary as well as Linstead Primary and Junior High s in Jamaica sent over eighty handwritten letters to the president requesting that he grant the Pardon. We hope he does.

## 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 C-PAC:

- **D'SHAWNA BERNARD**, was appointed to serve as Vice-Chair of Communications from 2015-2016. In this capacity, she expanded C-PAC's social marketing and multi-media presence to include the monthly C-PAC CHAT. She also expanded our out reach to the millennials.
- **YVONNE ESTIMÉ, ESQ.** served as secretary on the Executive Board of C-PAC in two, separate terms. She also served on the Advisory Board and participated in the committee review and updates of the by-laws where she applied her legal expertise in ensuring that the organization kept abreast of it legal and ethical obligations.
- **JOHN GEORGE, MD**, founding member, was elected during the 2015 Annual General Meeting to serve as the Vice-Chair for Membership. **Frances Jefferson, PhD** was appointed to complete Dr. George's term through 2017.
- **MR. ROY LAYNE, CPA, CMA, CGMA** has served as treasurer to C-PAC for over 6 years. He took over from Chris Gardiner, C-PAC Co-founder in 2014. Under Mr. Layne's leadership, C-PAC has retained its fiscal integrity.
- **MR. DENYS VAUGHN-COOKE**, former Vice-Chair for Finance, is one of the founders of C-PAC. For his many contributions to C-PAC and the wider Caribbean community, he was selected as the C-PAC member of the year in....? In the early days of its formation, he worked hard to encourage his vast network of friends and colleagues to support C-PAC. Without his efforts C-PAC may not have survived its early years.

## Be Part of C-PAC's LEADERSHIP TEAM



C-PAC members are invited to run for positions on the Executive Board. Please email the [cpac.dmv@gmail.org](mailto:cpac.dmv@gmail.org) if you are interested in standing for office. These positions are excellent opportunities to give back to members of our Caribbean Diaspora community and help strengthen the mission of C-PAC. The Executive Board meets bi-monthly primarily via conference call. Board Members have autonomy to develop their own teams in order to develop their portfolios. Candidates are required to have been a member in good standing in 2016. Nominations are from January 23-30<sup>th</sup>. The current vacancies include the following:

1. **Treasurer** is responsible for all financial records, accounts, receipts, deposits, and disbursements. This individual is responsible for submitting appropriate forms, statements, reports and other documents with the District of Columbia Office of Campaign Finance, the Internal Revenue Service and any applicable state or local governmental entity regulating campaign finance to the extent required by applicable federal, state or local law.
2. **Vice-Chair, Communications** coordinates all social and electronic media, drafts and distributes the *C-PAC Informer*, press releases, brainstorms new C-PAC branding and publicity initiatives, and serves as the organization's spokesperson.

## NEWS You Can Use!!!

- *General Elections will be held in December 2017 as well for the following positions* President; Vice-Chair-at-Large; and Vice Chair Membership. We encourage you to be active and consider running for these positions as we continue to strengthen our voice and remain the authentic political voice of the Caribbean Diaspora.
- Plan to attend the Annual Founding Patrons Luncheon to be held on Saturday, October 14, 2017
- Annual General Meeting Saturday December 9, 2017

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## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We are in the process of planning our 12<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:Cpac.dmv@gmail.com)



### STAY INVOLVED

C-PAC will be celebrating 12 years this year. Stay tuned for more information on how you can get involved in our activities this year!