



THE CPAC INFORMER

Political Issues Impacting the
Caribbean American Diaspora

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Letter from the Chair

This year began with a change in leadership in the White House. With this came a flurry of executive orders closing the country's borders to immigrants and others. These orders have left many shaking their heads, some simply baffled and others petrified about the various "truths" surrounding immigration and deportation issues. With this in mind, C-PAC focused a significant portion of our efforts this year on updating our members with our monthly C-PAC CHATS <http://www.caribbeanpac.org/informer.php> on a wide variety of immigration-related matters. One issue focused on what our international students needed to know about changes in the law as they prepared to pursue internship opportunities in the US. We wish to thank immigration law expert and C-PAC founding member attorney Jay Anne Lowe for the tremendous work she did in this regard.

We know of the extensive contributions that members of the Caribbean Diaspora have made, and continue to make, to this country. We exemplify the value of hard work! Hard work is the hallmark of our members and provides fodder for the entertainment media with proclamations of "how many jobs do you have?"

Because of the President's Executive Orders, a blanket of fear has enveloped the immigrant community. Consequently, our immigration town hall meeting, held earlier this year, was not as well attended as we had expected.

<http://www.caribbeanpac.org/documents/press-release-cpac-immigration-town-hall.pdf>.

We were informed that there were many who wanted to attend, but were concerned that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) might "shadow" the meeting and arrest anyone found to be in the country illegally. However, we learned that:

- Washington, DC is a sanctuary city;
- Should an undocumented immigrant be arrested, he or she will not be held in custody by the Police and turned over to ICE;
- Pro Bono legal services are provided by the DC Affordable Law Firm to DC immigrant residents of all ages, nationalities or faith. Services include, "Know Your Rights" and "Citizenship workshops." (*Attorneys and speakers from the Caribbean Diaspora available to provide Pro Bono legal services should contact the DC Affordable Law Firm to formalize an agreement including an MOU for billable hours for handling a case.*)

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It is too early to assess the impact of the President's Executive Orders on the Caribbean American community, but I believe we can agree that the impact could be disastrous. And when evaluating responses to a disaster, the focus should be on community resiliency. Thus, communities ready for disaster will recover faster and face less of a negative impact. So, as a robust community let us

not sit back and ask, "How did this happen?" or "Why did it happen?" As C-PAC members, let us work together to support those who came here and are working to make a better life for themselves and their families. As Desmond Tutu once said, "*A time of crisis is not just a time of anxiety and worry. It gives a chance, an opportunity, to choose well or to choose badly.*"

2017 C-PAC Annual Founding Patron's Luncheon

We invite you to attend C-PAC's 12th Annual Founding Patrons' Luncheon this year to be held on Saturday, October 14th from 12:00pm-3pm at DoubleTree Hilton in Silver Spring, MD. This is our major fundraiser meant to honor the 100 members who came together and provided the financial support for the founding of C-PAC. Come out and renew your memberships, sign up others for membership, or just hear from political leaders in our region about how the needs of Caribbean Diaspora members are being addressed and how you can become engaged in the politics of our region. This year's Luncheon Chair is Ms. Keilia Phillips and she looks forward to another electrifying event. The direct link to get your tickets and renew your membership is <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/c-pacs-12th-annual-founding-patrons-luncheon-tickets-37031299614/>. See you there!

U.S.-Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act is now Law!!

On December 16, 2016, President Obama signed the U.S.-Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act into law. The first reporting requirement of the law was the issuance of a multi-year strategy to establish a framework for enhanced U.S.-Caribbean relations. On June 20, 2017, the U.S. Department of State issued "Caribbean 2020: A Multi-Year Strategy to Increase the Security, Prosperity, and Well-Being of the People of the United States and the Caribbean."

The challenge for our region is how to take this from a vision and make it a reality. We must work collaboratively and review the key pillars outlined by the strategy and then determine how as stakeholders, we can work together and build concrete collaboration to advance the goals of the law and make it a reality. See the strategy here <https://www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/caribbeanstrategy/index.htm>. Now; let's get busy by sharing our ideas with the US Department of State.



Spotlight on C-PAC Co-Founder Chris Gardiner

You were the visionary behind the Caribbean American Political Action Committee (C-PAC). How did this come about?

During my service as chair of the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Caribbean Community Affairs under Mayor Anthony Williams, I concluded that the best way for the Caribbean-American community in the DMV to affect political decisions was through a political action committee controlled by the community. I discussed the issue with two other members of the Commission, Denys Vaughn Cooke and Elizabeth Stanley. Together, we founded C-PAC to be the political voice of the Caribbean-American community in the DMV.

Are there any others who participated in the formation of C-PAC?

Yes, there were. To get C-PAC off the ground, the three organizers decided to reach out to the Caribbean-American community in an effort to identify 100 persons who would be willing to join us and support the formation of C-PAC financially. Our efforts were hugely successful. Those 100 hundred persons – including myself, Denys Vaughn Cooke and Elizabeth Stanley – are known as the “Founding Patrons.” We received contributions ranging from \$25 to \$5,000 from this group. The person most responsible for recruiting over sixty percent of the Founding Patrons was our current chair, Dr. Goulda Downer. She was able to convey C-PAC's vision and convince them to contribute financially. Without her tenacious efforts, we might not have succeeded.

How is C-PAC organized? C-PAC is incorporated under the District of Columbia Non-Profit Corporation Act as a membership organization. There is a Board of Directors which governs the organization. Members of the Board are elected by the membership in accordance with the bylaws of the organization.

C-PAC does not engage in elections for Federal offices (President; Senator; Representative). To do so would require C-PAC to register with the Federal Election Commission. We have chosen not to do so at this time because of the expense involved. Consequently, C-PAC engages in State (Governor; State Senator etc.) and local (Mayor; City Council; County Executive) elections only.

Why does the Caribbean Diaspora need C-PAC?

The Caribbean-American community, as a largely immigrant community, confront issues and obstacles that, while not entirely unique, are sufficiently so as to require distinct political action. We need a united, political entity to advocate on our behalf in this regard. C-PAC endeavors to fill that role.

Who can participate in C-PAC?

Membership in C-PAC is open to Caribbean-Americans and friends of the Caribbean. American citizenship is a requirement.

How is C-PAC funded?

C-PAC is funded by annual membership fees, donations and various fundraising activities. Our major fundraising event is our Founding Patrons Luncheon, usually held in the fall.

Who can receive contributions from C-PAC?

As a political action committee, by law, any funds raised by C-PAC can only be spent in support of candidates for political office, or advocating for a particular political cause. C-PAC is not a charitable organization as provided for under IRS Code 501c (3).

How does C-PAC decide which candidates to support?

The decision as to which candidates or political causes C-PAC should support (by endorsement and financially) is determined by a vote of its members – not the Board of Directors.

What difference has C-PAC made to the Caribbean Diaspora Community since its inception?

Over the last twelve years, C-PAC has become the political “voice of the Caribbean-American community” in the DMV. Candidates for office in the DMV routinely seek our endorsements and financial support. We were instrumental in the reactivation of the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Caribbean affairs in Washington D.C and the establishment of the Maryland Governor's Commission on Caribbean Affairs. And we have impacted the elections of local officials, including the Mayor of District of Columbia and the County Executives of Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties.

Where would you like to see the organization a decade from now?

I have always envisioned C-PAC, in time, becoming an established institution within the Caribbean-American community. But there are challenges. Caribbean-Americans to

a great extent are not burdened with the issues of language or religion as some other immigrant groups are. Consequently, we can more easily adapt, adjust and assimilate. This can result in the dissipation of the community's influences as we lose the active participation of second and third generation Caribbean-Americans. Be that as it may, in ten years, I would like to see C-PAC's membership populated by first, second and third generations of Caribbean-Americans who believe the organization speaks for them and benefits them.

Let me share an example here. With a request from members of the Caribbean Ambassadorial core, C-PAC was made aware of the issue of "De-Risking" and potential loss of corresponding banks in the US. Most of us send money back

to our families and remittances are a significant part of the Caribbean region's economy. The Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Center (FinCEN) has among other duties, responsibility for investigating and penalizing financial institutions that violate the Bank Secrecy Act's (BSA) anti-money laundering ("AML") rules. This includes lapses or failures to file suspicious activity reports (SARs). Outside of monetary fines, the reputational damage for financial institutions implicated in money laundering investigations can also be high. This leaves the bank in a quandary to decide if they should they provide banking services to customers that they believe present higher risks. Why should you care? If the banking system decides it will no longer will process remittances then we will be forced to find alternatives

to get funds home. This can not only be more costly but also make us more vulnerable to scams. The request came to C-PAC late, however we were able to secure a meeting with DC and federal government officials who were able to stymie the planned process.

What does C-PAC need to continue to be successful? We need to find a way to connect with younger Caribbean-Americans, and those of the second and third generations. If your great-grandfather/great grandmother was from the Caribbean, we consider you one of us. We also need to determine and define how we can impact the lives and aspirations of the individual. We have efforts in place to address these issues, and we believe they will be successful.

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's 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 C-PAC-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 when this initiative will begin in earnest.

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 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. Members serve staggered terms. Nominations are from *December 11-27, 2017*. The current positions to be filled are: Chair; Vice-Chair-at-Large; Vice-Chair, Membership.

NEWS You Can Use!!!

- Plan to attend the Annual Founding Patrons Luncheon to be held on Saturday, October 14, 2017 at noon <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/c-pacs-12th-annual-founding-patrons-luncheon-tickets-37031299614/>
- Annual General Meeting Saturday December 9, 2017
- *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.
- Are you or someone you know a millennial who is interested in getting involved in the political arena at the state or local level? Drop us a line at communication.pac.dmv@gmail.com. We will follow up with you and provide you with a mentor.
- The Inaugural C-PAC Caribbean Cruise Extravaganza sailing October 20, 2018 and returns October 28, 2018. Contact Dr. Frances Jefferson, C-PAC Vice Chair for financing at jeffersonfrankie@yahoo.com.
- Have some time on your hands? Volunteer with us and make our Caribbean Diaspora a powerhouse!!!

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We are in the process of planning our 12th Anniversary Celebrations. Share with us some things you would love to see! Have an idea? Send us a message!

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Email: 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!