

Taste of the Caribbean & Jerk Festival

2026



From chains to celebration:
Caribbean Unity & Spirit in Flavor



CARIBBEAN NIGHT + OCEAN VUONG

AUGUST 6 | 5-8PM | FREE ADMISSION



THE WADSWORTH

First Thursdays: Caribbean Night + Ocean Vuong is held in partnership with The Amistad Center for Art & Culture and Taste of the Caribbean Jerk Festival. First Thursdays is generously funded by Art Bridges Foundation's Access for All Program. The Wadsworth thanks the Ella Burr McManus Trust for the use of the Alfred E. Burr Memorial.

Image: Ocean Vuong, *American brothers*, 2024. Inkjet print. Courtesy the artist.

**FIRST
THURSDAYS**

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FOR ALL

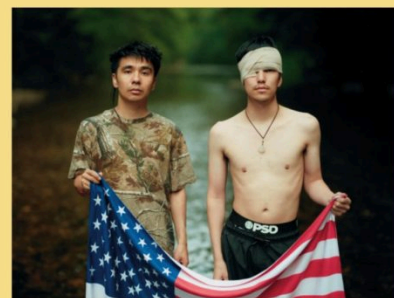


The Amistad Center
for Art & Culture
AT THE WADSWORTH ATHLETIC MUSEUM OF ART

JOIN US FOR A SUMMER LAWN PARTY

- The Sound Pipers Band
- Kaleidoscope Art
- The Jamaican Jerk Shack
- The Rolling Roti
- Lawn Games
- Screening of *Kes* (1969)

Bring your own picnic blanket or lawn chair. Program will move indoors in the event of inclement weather.



CELEBRATE THE OPENING OF

*Ocean Vuong / MATRIX
199 / I'm Sorry I Love You*

Artist Talk & Book Signing
5PM GALLERY VIEWING
6PM TALK

TheWadsworth.org



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2026 Greetings



Dr. Marva Douglas-Wilks
President

*The Taste of the Caribbean
Arts & Culture CT, Inc*



Leslie G. Perry
Executive Director

www.tastect.org

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the 21st Annual Taste of the Caribbean & Jerk Festival at the Mortensen Riverfront Plaza in downtown Hartford.

For 21 years, this event has brought together and entertained individuals from all cultures. As we celebrate on August 1, 2026 — also known as Emancipation Day — we couldn't be prouder to continue the legacy of Caribbean culture here in the Greater Hartford area.

This event is not the work of one person. I must thank all our committee members, especially our executive board of directors, and the founder of this event, Mr. Leslie G. Perry, whose vision and commitment have brought us to 21 years.

This free community event could not take place each year without our sponsors. We at Taste of the Caribbean are truly grateful for your ongoing support year after year.

Over the years, Taste & Jerk Fest has been known for amazing food and entertainment. But we are more than a festival. This year, we collaborated with the West Indian Foundation on Beyond the Barrels, sending clothes, non-perishable food items, and building supplies to communities in need.

In June of this year, we also sponsored an 8-day mission trip to Jamaica to support schools devastated by Hurricane Melissa. Our team conducted workshops and giveaways for 245 children and teachers, donating tablets, personal hygiene products, and school supplies.

I am so proud to be part of this organization and what we stand for. Please enjoy the food and entertainment, and consider joining our team. Help us see 21 more years of celebration, culture, and service.

On this our 21st anniversary of the Taste of the Caribbean and Jerk Festival being held on Emancipation Day, I extend a very special welcome. Thanks to the Board of Directors, Committee Members, Vendors, Entertainers, our many volunteers and to YOU the attendees for your overwhelming support and commitment. We also recognize the efforts of our host, Riverfront Recapture, Inc., The Town of East Hartford, and The City of Hartford, who have provided unwavering support throughout the past twenty years.

The Taste of the Caribbean and Jerk Festival is made possible with the assistance of our sponsors and grantors: Evelyn W. Preston Memorial Trust Fund Bank of America, N.A., Trustee, The Greater Hartford Arts Council, Ensworth Charitable Foundation, The George A. & Grace Long Foundation, The City of Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford Communities that Care, InterCommunity Health Care, EverSource, Avangrid Member of Iberdrola Group, Moses/Weitzman Health System and Connecticut Science Center.

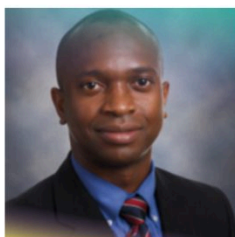
As this event continues to grow, so has the need for funding. We look to you and other entities within the community and beyond, to continue providing desperately needed financial support for this free family-friendly event. Please become a member of Friends of Taste of the Caribbean. The funding we seek assists us to produce and showcase quality diverse cultural entertainment. Contributions may be sent to Treasurer@tastect.org. The event provides local vendors and businesses the opportunity to promote their products and expertise to a diverse audience interested in Caribbean arts, culture and cuisine. This annual festival promotes economic development and provides a significant summer tourist attraction to the City of Hartford.

Thank you for your support of this 21st anniversary of the Taste of the Caribbean and Jerk Festival. Come out early and be sure to enjoy the diverse cultural offerings proudly presented by Taste of the Caribbean Arts and Culture Inc.

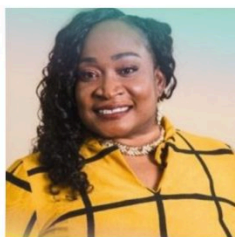
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Treasurer



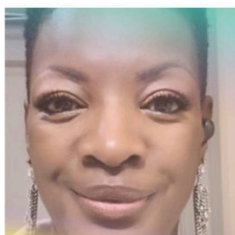
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Assistant Treasurer
Grants/Sponsorship - Chair



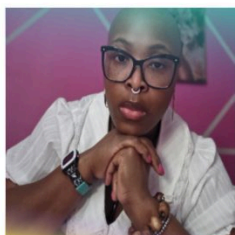
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Vanessa Miller
Executive Secretary



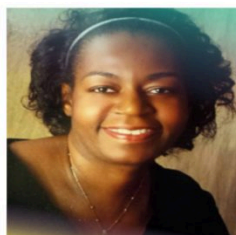
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Assistant Secretary
Entertainment - Chair



Felecia Francis
Children's Village - Chair



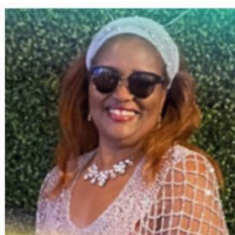
Ruth Rose
Children's Village /
Magazine - Co-Chair



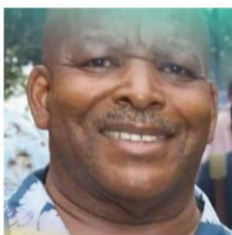
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Elorie Stevens
Fundraising - Chair



Marcia Esson Anderson
Hospitality - Chair



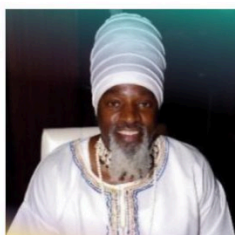
Ron Gibbs
Hospitality - Co-Chair



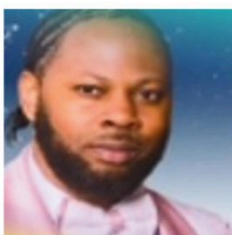
Grantley Adams
Magazine - Co-Chair



Marva Wilks
Marketing &
Publicity - Chair



Alphonso McGriff III
Vending - Co-Chair



Dean Wilson
Vending - Co-Chair



Children's Village
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Ruth Rose*†

Compliance
Carol Carnegie*†
Ruth Rose
Lavine Reid
Josette Hill Wilson
Vanessa Miller
Dorette Sterling

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Maxine O'Connor*†

Entertainment
Dorette Sterling*†
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Elorie Stevens
Kwame Gibbs
Eleanor Bolt
Tafari Cooper
Alphonso McGriff III
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Leslie Perry†

Hospitality
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Richard Sinclair*†
Ron Gibbs*†
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Winston Barnaby
Michael Bembridge

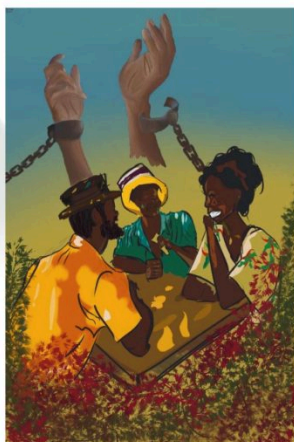
Magazine
Grantley Adams*†
Ruth Rose*†
Elorie Stevens
Leslie Perry

Marketing/Public Relations
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John Rhone
Paula McClean
Chenelle Wilks
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Steve Webber

* COMMITTEE CHAIR
† EXECUTIVE MEMBER

SPOTLIGHT ON



Jamaican-born and Connecticut-based, **Benaiah Reid** is a pharmacy student at the University of Connecticut, a devoted member of the Church of Christ, and an aspiring young leader with a passion for service. In addition to his studies, he enjoys drawing, writing short stories, and playing soccer and lacrosse. Benaiah actively gives back to his community by volunteering with organizations such as Taste of the Caribbean and the West Indian Foundation.

JOHNNY OSBOURNE



Johnny Osbourne (born Errol Osbourne, 1947) is a renowned Jamaican reggae and dancehall singer whose career spans more than five decades. Rising to prominence in the late 1970s and 1980s, he is best known for hits such as "Truths and Rights," "Buddy Bye," "Water Pumping," and "Ice Cream Love."

After beginning his career with **The Wildcats** and recording at **Studio One**, Osbourne spent several years in Canada before returning to Jamaica in 1979. His acclaimed albums **Truths and Rights** and **Folly Ranking** established him as one of Jamaica's leading vocalists, leading to a string of hits throughout the 1980s. He continued to enjoy success with producers including **King Jammy**, **Coxsone Dodd**, and **Bobby Digital**. His influence remains strong today, and in 2012 his song "Mr. Marshall" was sampled by **Major Lazer** on "Jah No Partial."

DERRICK BARNETT & THE STATEMENT BAND



Derrick Barnett is internationally recognized as one of Jamaica's premier bassists and a legendary figure in reggae and dancehall music. Raised in Kingston, Jamaica, Barnett was introduced to music by his father, J.T. Barnett, and inspired to pursue the bass guitar by Boris Gardiner. Guided by mentors Michael "Ibo" Cooper and Willie Lindo, he developed a career spanning more than four decades.

Known as "Dancehall's Greatest Live Bassist," Barnett has recorded with reggae icons including Bob Marley, Bunny Wailer, Dennis Brown, Beres Hammond, Gregory Isaacs, Marcia Griffiths, Maxi Priest, Black Uhuru, and many others.

As founder and leader of the Sagittarius Band, he helped revolutionize live dancehall performance, bringing the energy and spontaneity of Jamaica's dancehall culture to major stages worldwide.

A versatile multi-instrumentalist, singer, songwriter, and producer, Barnett has toured globally backing artists such as Yellowman, Toots Hibbert, Sister Nancy, Buju Banton, Cocoa Tea, and Ziggy Marley & The Melody Makers. He has also shared stages with international stars including Anita Baker, Chaka Khan, Missy Elliott, Busta Rhymes, Lauryn Hill, Aretha Franklin, and The Notorious B.I.G., cementing his legacy as one of Jamaica's most influential musicians.

DREAMA



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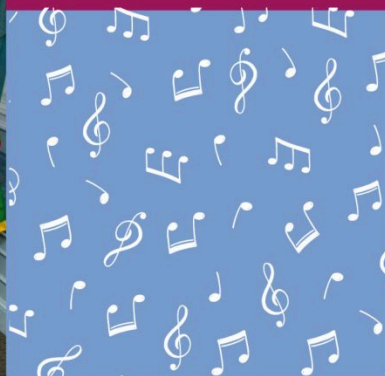
ST. LUCIAN AMERICAN LA-ROSE SOLO GROUP



CARIBBEAN AMERICAN DANCE COMPANY



SONS OF JAH WITH FIRE & ICE
(TAFARI E. COOPER & TWOLDE-ATIBA COOPER)



THE SOUND PIPERS BAND



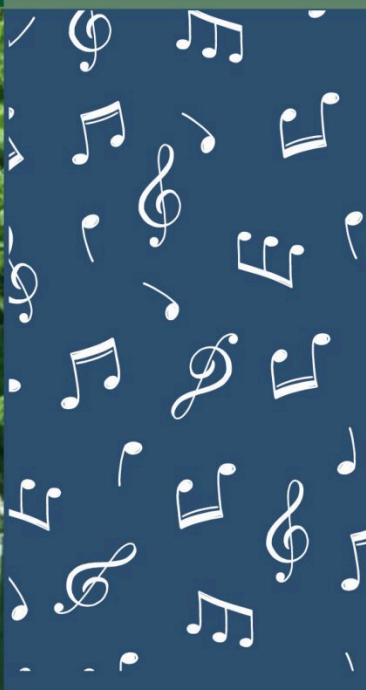
The Sound Pipers Band is self-described as a Caribbean Fusion Band, which means we incorporate Reggae, Soca, Ska, Rock Steady R&B, Blues, Funk and Pop into our performances. There is something for everyone! The Sound Pipers is made up of members from all over the Caribbean. The members' musical journey is influenced by some of the greatest legendary artists from Bob Marley to James Brown and many in between. An experience with the Pipers is more than just singing and playing instruments, it's fun time, engagement, interaction, reciprocal action, high energy and good vibrations. Just a moment to take your mind off the hustle of life and just have a good time.

TRIBAL LEGACY

Tribal Legacy is a high-energy Caribbean band featuring Richard "Ricton" Burton and Lima Calbio (lead vocals), Wayne "Bassie" Thompson (bass), Dareem Chandler (drums), and Owen "Dyno" Romeo (keyboards/vocals). Known for their signature blend of reggae, soca, funk, hip hop, and rock, they deliver dynamic performances that keep audiences dancing. The band has performed at major festivals and venues across the U.S., including Welcome Back to Brooklyn, One World Festival in NYC, Madison Square Garden, and numerous events throughout the Northeast. They have also toured college campuses, performed for state prison outreach programs, and served as the backing band for leading Caribbean artists.



IYAHPHONSO



MELISSA CRAIG



TOPLANE

Michael Bembridge, known as Toplane, is a Jamaican reggae artist from Portland whose music blends infectious rhythms, soulful vocals, and socially conscious lyrics. Influenced by reggae legends such as Bob Marley and Peter Tosh, he began performing in local schools and venues before releasing his debut album, *Trust the Process*, under the name Vitchous. Since rebranding as Toplane in 2021, he has continued creating impactful reggae music while earning acclaim for his energetic performances across the Caribbean and the U.S. Having shared stages with icons including The Skatalites, Third World, and Beres Hammond, Toplane remains committed to authentic reggae and positive social change.



MYSTICSAXX

Jarel Bartholomew, known professionally as MysticSaxx, is a Grenadian saxophonist whose soulful, high-energy performances blend Caribbean authenticity with global appeal. Inspired from a young age and encouraged by his late mother, he discovered his passion for the saxophone while attending Presentation Brothers' College in Grenada. After moving to the United States, he launched an international career, captivating audiences across the Caribbean, North America, and Europe. Renowned for his vibrant fusion of Soca, Jazz, Afrobeat, R&B, Reggae, Gospel, and Caribbean rhythms, MysticSaxx creates unforgettable musical experiences that celebrate Grenadian culture and connect people through music.



NELSON BELLO

Nelson Bello is a Connecticut-based percussionist, recording artist, educator, and Hartford native. He began his musical studies at age 13 at the Hartford Conservatory Jazz Summer program and continued at the Performing Arts Academy. At 15, he travelled to Cuba for the International Jazz Festival (with Latin Flavor, now better known as INSIGHT). He serves as both accompanist and bandleader in several groups in the regional Latin Jazz scene, including the Latin Jazz Bank 'TROMBEATZ'. Over the years, he has performed with Andy Gonzalez, Cheo Feliciano and Zaccai and Luques Curtis, among others. Nelson's energy on and off the stage is contagious, and his undying passion for arts advocacy and education is invaluable.





COCC is Proud to Support the 2026 Taste of the Caribbean & Jerk Festival

This celebration brings together the rich flavors, vibrant music, and powerful cultural traditions that strengthen our community year after year. We believe in investing in events that uplift local families, highlight small businesses, and honor the diverse heritage that makes Hartford such a dynamic place to live and work. To all the chefs, performers, vendors, and attendees - thank you for sharing your talent, passion, and culture.

About COCC

As an industry-leading fintech provider, COCC delivers innovative, comprehensive technology solutions and strategic partnerships with an unparalleled focus on service. Designated a Top Workplace in Connecticut and a nationally certified Great Place to Work, COCC recognizes employees as the core of our success! Our mission is to provide a great employee experience for all, one where each employee has the opportunity to carve their own path, be themselves, and thrive in their career.

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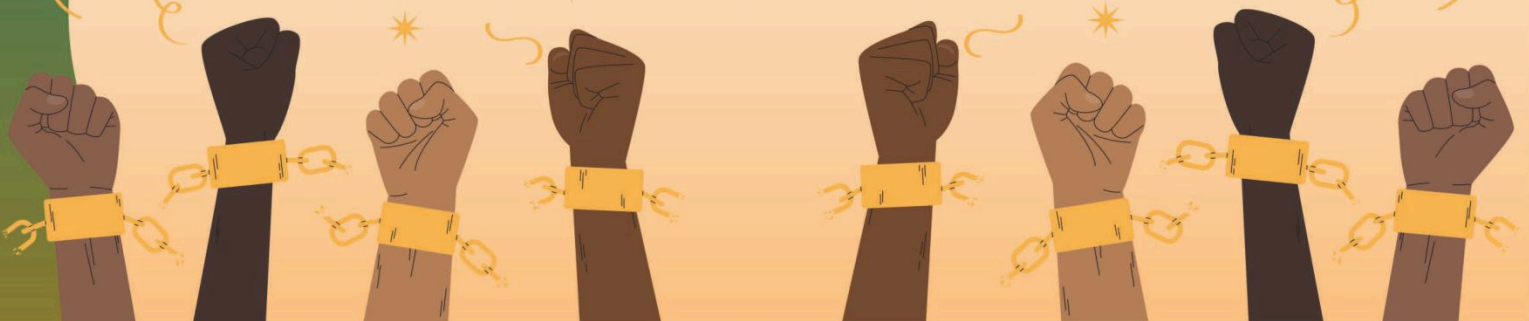
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Understanding Emancipation Day in the Caribbean

- ✦ Emancipation Day commemorates the abolition of slavery in the Caribbean.
- ✦ It is celebrated on **August 1st** in many Caribbean nations.
- ✦ The day marks the 1834 emancipation of enslaved Africans in British colonies.
- ✦ Celebrations often include parades, cultural events, and educational activities.
- ✦ It serves as a reminder of the struggles for freedom and equality.
- ✦ Various countries have unique traditions and historical contexts surrounding the observance.





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THE CHILDREN'S VILLAGE

THE TASTE OF THE CARIBBEAN



SAT., AUG. 1, 2026
1PM-5PM



THE RIVERFRONT

Connecticut
Science Center



\$\$ FREE \$\$



CRAFTS & MORE

Face Painting-Chaunie
Double Dutch- Lady Carrie
Cooking Demo-Farmer Whitney
Jewelry Making-Ms.Jackie
Hula Hoop-Diamond Tree
Talent Showcase @ 4pm
Soccer Demo-Hartford Lions



Live Music by
DJ Fire and Ice



BACK TO SCHOOL
GIVE AWAY @ 5:00



Tastect.org



There's power in creating good energy



CNG is proud to sponsor Taste of the Caribbean Arts & Culture CT, Inc. We're committed to supporting the arts, uplifting cultural organizations, and nurturing the communities that bring us together.

Because when creativity thrives,
it powers the connections that matter most.



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Three Rivers (Norwich) • Tunxis (Farmington/Bristol)

FAREWELL TO MUSICAL ICON JIMMY CLIFF

Jimmy Cliff, reggae legend whose unique tone and lyricism helped propel Reggae into the international spotlight, died on November 24, 2025, following a seizure and battle with pneumonia. He was eighty-one years old when he died. He was one of Jamaican music's early stars and one of its greatest ambassadors, emerging as Reggae evolved from the sounds of Ska and Rocksteady in the 1960's and early 1970's.

Born James Chambers in St. James Parish, Jamaica, one of nine children, he began singing in school and in church at the age of six. His father, a tailor, hoped that his son would study medicine. After being exposed to American music from New Orleans and Florida through the radio, James moved to Kingston as a teenager to pursue his artistic ambitions. He changed his surname to Cliff as a reflection of the heights of success he wanted to achieve.

His debut hit single in Jamaica was Hurricane Hattie in 1962. He was then selected to perform as a representative of the island, at the 1964 World's Fair in New York City. He then went on to pen several other hits such as, Many Rivers to Cross (1969), and 1972's The Harder They Come, which was featured on the soundtrack of the seminal Jamaican movie of the same name in which he was cast as in the lead role of Ivanhoe "Ivan" Martin. Though he initially struggled to find his footing with audiences abroad, Cliff earned critical and commercial success with songs such as Wonderful World, Beautiful People, and the protest anthem Vietnam. Despite addressing war and tragedy in his music, the artist infused his lyrics with a hopeful outlook.

Cliff subsequently appeared in other movies such as Club Paradise (1985), starring Robin Williams and Peter O'Toole, contributing several songs to the soundtrack. Later, he performed in the movie Marked for Death (1990) starring Steven Seagal. His 1993 cover of Johnny Nash's I Can See Clearly Now, was featured on the soundtrack of the sports comedy movie, Cool Runnings.

Over the course of his career, Cliff was awarded 2 Grammy Awards and landed 7 Grammy nominations. In 2010, Jimmy Cliff became the second reggae artist, after Bob Marley, to be inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

In its obituary, CBS News stated, "Cliff, along with other icons such as Bob Marley and Toots Hibbert helped give the music and culture of their relatively small Caribbean nation a global impact that endures today and far exceeds Jamaica's size in terms of population economy."

In a tribute to Jimmy Cliff after his death was announced, Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness called Cliff,

"A true cultural giant whose music carried the heart of our nation to the world. Jimmy Cliff told our story with honesty and soul,"

Holness said. "His music lifted people through hard times, inspired generations, and helped to shape the global respect that Jamaican culture enjoys today. We give thanks for his life, his contribution, and the pride he brought to Jamaica ... Walk good, Jimmy Cliff. Your legacy lives on in every corner of our island and in the hearts of the Jamaican people."



Jimmy Cliff is survived by his wife Latifa Chambers and their children Lilty and Aken.

FAREWELL TO MUSICAL ICON SLY DUNBAR

Sly Dunbar passed away at his home in Kingston, Jamaica on January 26, 2026. He was seventy-three years old. Born Lowell Fillmore Dunbar, he was the youngest of three children whose parents both worked at Kingston International Airport. Sly started playing on tin cans, after seeing Lloyd Knibbs and the Skatalites on television. "I saw Knibbs playing and I thought, 'I want to be a drummer' because he is the hardest worker in the band," he said in a 1997 interview. "He's my idol! In some ways, I am self-taught, but I got a lot of help from other drummers by watching them play."



Dunbar began his musical career at the age of fifteen, when he was in a band called The Yardbrooms. He then played with a variety of local groups to gain experience. He was then drafted into the Volcanos, the resident act at the Colony Club in Discovery Bay on the north coast of Jamaica. It was during this phase of his career that he received the nickname "Sly," due to his veneration of the American funk band, Sly and the Family Stone.

In 1972, Sly met bass guitarist Robbie Shakespeare and they eventually formed the rhythm section and production group, Sly and Robbie, which shot them into stardom. Their sound had a heavy emphasis on the beat – including the pioneering "rockers" rhythm, which introduced more syncopation and energy to the music. Sly and Robbie were one of the most creative and in-demand partnerships in reggae. They spent the 1970's working with major reggae acts like Gregory Isaacs, Black Uhuru, Dennis Brown, Jimmy Cliff, and Barrington Levy, while touring the USA with Peter Tosh. They had their breakthrough on The Mighty Diamonds' 1976 album "Right Time."

Sly and Robbie, the "Rhythm Twins," as they became known, also recorded and produced with Madonna, Mick Jagger, Joe Cocker, the Rolling Stones, Yoko Ono, Jackson Brown, Sinead O'Connor, Carly Simon, Gwen Guthrie, No doubt, Bob Dylan, Marianne Faithful, Herbie Hancock, and Grace Jones. In the early 1980's Sly and Robbie founded their own production company and Label, Taxi Records, and nurtured a new generation of Jamaican artists such as Shaggy, Shabba Ranks, Skip Marley, Beenie Man and Red Dragon. Then in the early 1990's they developed a bright and melodic take on dancehall music with the duo Chaka Demus & Pliers, scoring hits with Tease Me and Murder She Wrote. At one point, Robbie Shakespeare, who died in 2021, estimated that he and Sly Dunbar had participated in more than 200,000 recordings, either their own or as backup musicians or producers for other artists.

Over his career, Mr. Dunbar received 13 Grammy Award nominations and he won two. In 2015, he was awarded the Order of Distinction by the Jamaican government.

Lowell Fillmore (Sly) Dunbar is survived by his wife, Thelma and their daughter, Natasha.



Honorable Bobby Gibson
Connecticut State Representative
Deputy Speaker
15th District – Bloomfield, West Hartford



Congratulations to the Taste of Caribbean & Jerk Festival for 21
years of good memories and fun times!



THE ROLLING ROTI

At The Rolling Roti, we bring the rich flavors of Guyana to your plate, using time-honored recipes passed down through generations. Our cuisine is a vibrant fusion of Indian and Creole influences, reflecting the diverse heritage of our homeland. Our signature dish is Roti—a soft, flaky flatbread—served alongside a variety of flavorful curries, vegetables, and beloved classics like chicken and goat.

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w/Roti



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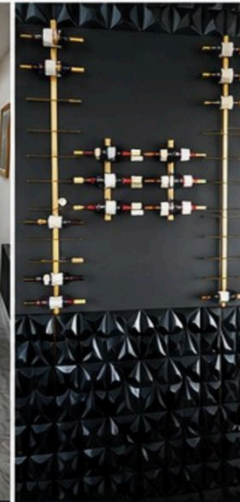
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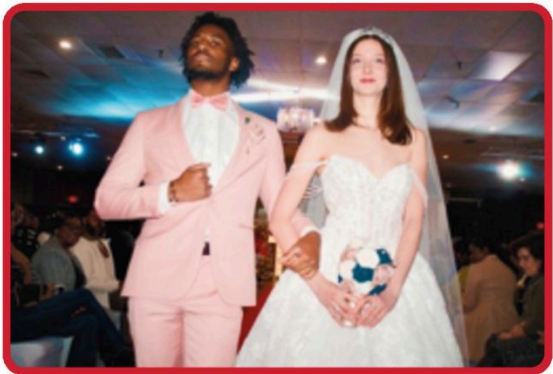


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Taste of the Caribbean Annual Fashion Show 2026



..... TASTE OF THE CARIBBEAN ANNUAL JAZZ FUSION 2026



TASTE OF CARIBBEAN - ANNUAL JAZZ FUSION HONOREES



Left to Right (Patrick Williams, Maxine O'Connor, Brian Brito, Fay Lindo Taylor, Debbie Hutchinson)

Congratulations

2026
AWARDEES

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WISC- BUSINESS & ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

Marva Wilks
100 Women of Color

Leslie Perry
WEST INDIAN FOUNDATION
FOUNDERS AWARD

Mike Whilby
100 Men of Color

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How to Travel the Caribbean Through Stories



Antigua

How about Forever by Rilzy Adams - Giselle Lorde and Roman Braithwaite share an instant, burning connection after meeting in Antigua during their best friends' elopement. They agree to a single, passion-filled night to get each other out of their systems—but the plan backfires. Terrified of the emotional depth of their connection, Giselle bolts the next morning and spends the next two and a half years running from her feelings.



Bahamas

Facing the Sun by Janice Lynn Mather is a YA coming-of-age novel set in a Nassau neighborhood in the Bahamas. Over one transformative summer, four friends—Eve, Faith, KeeKee, and Nia—face family struggles, personal secrets, and the challenges of growing up when a major resort development threatens their community's beloved beach.



Barbados

Smallie by Eden McKenzie Goddard is a multigenerational family saga that explores immigration, generational trauma, and the lasting effects of the Windrush scandal. The novel follows Lucinda Brown, who leaves Barbados for England in 1961, and traces the experiences of her British-Barbadian family across decades, culminating in the devastating consequences of the Windrush scandal later in her life.



Cuba

Now Then by Morgan Radford - follows a young black Harvard student navigating her own path to self-discovery while uncovering her mother's secret past fleeing the Cuban Revolution.



Dominican Republic

Dique Dominican by Ayendy Bonifacio is a memoir that explores the immigrant experience across the Dominican Republic and the United States. Through reflections on memory, language, and loss, Bonifacio examines the challenges of living between cultures and the lasting impact of a life divided by borders.



Grenada

A Trace of Sun by Pam Williams - a young man reconnected with his family in England, after years of separation - can they find their way back to each other?



Montserrat

Good Good Loving by Yvette Edwards - a family's secrets, love and loss told through the memories of Ellen as she lies dying in the hospital bed, with her children arguing at her bedside.



Haiti

Haiti - Dey by Edwidge Danticat - a timely story about a Haitian American real estate agent in Miami, Magnolia, whose life is upended after surviving a random mall shooting, forcing her to confront her identity, family and the meaning of home between Miami and Haiti.



Jamaica

Fireflies in Winter by Eleanor Shearer is a historical fiction novel set in 1796 Nova Scotia, following Cora, a young Jamaican Maroon orphan, who struggles to adapt to the harsh Canadian winter after being forcibly relocated.



St Lucia

Code Noir - Canisia Lubrin - The fifty-nine stories in this collection are each prefaced by one of Louis XIV's fifty-nine "Black codes," the rules of conduct in France and its colonies regarding slaves and slavery.



St Thomas VI

Land of Love and Drowning by Tiphonie Yanique - a Caribbean family saga set in the Virgin Islands following generations of women whose lives are shared by love, loss, magic, and the sea. Blending history and folklore, it explores the enduring bonds of family and the power of storytelling.



Trinidad

Golden Child by Claire Adam - This novel offers a gripping glimpse into the life of a family living in rural Trinidad. It explores the struggles of parents Clyde and Joy Deyalsingh as they care for their twin sons, Peter and Paul. Tensions rise when Paul, considered "different," goes missing, leading to devastating choices that challenge the family's bonds.

From the Caribbean to the World: Five Nations That Made FIFA World Cup History



Cuba (1938) – The ultimate trendsetters.

The very first Caribbean team to qualify, making it all the way to the Quarterfinals!

Haiti (1974 & 2026) – History makers? By qualifying this year, they broke a 52-year drought and became the ONLY Caribbean island to qualify twice.

Jamaica (1998) – Who could forget the legendary “Reggae Boyz” and their iconic 2-1 victory over Japan?

Trinidad & Tobago (2006) – Led by Dwight Yorke, they shocked the world with an heroic 0-0 draw against Sweden.

Curacao (2026) – The “Blue Wave” with just a population of 156,000 people, they are officially the SMALLEST nation by population to ever qualify for a World Cup.

DRIP RADIO 860 DRIP ONLINE RADIO

DRIP Radio 860, established in 2008, is an Internet Radio Broadcaster that provides a daily medium to Inform, Educate and Entertain the Hartford and other surrounding communities, and a Global International Reach.

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CARIBBEAN HERBAL MEDICINE aka BUSH TEA

Caribbean Herbal Medicine also known as Bush Tea is often used to improve health and manage illness while also providing nutritional value. Below is a list of Caribbean Herbal Medicines, each detailing its unique purpose.

**Please note that the author of this article is not a medical professional but is writing from the perspective of her own personal knowledge and experience. Please Consult Your Doctor, Medical or Mental Health Professional Before Using.*



Caribbean Herbal Medicine aka Bush Tea	Medicinal and Health Benefits
Ghini Hen	Combats certain cancer cells, including leukemia and breast cancer.
Sour Sop	Helps with Sleep and Relaxation, Calms the mind, Reduces Blood Pressure and Cancer.
Vervine	Calms the nerves. Good for digestion.
Mango Leaf	Treats diabetes, lowers high blood pressure, and reduces cholesterol.
Lime Leaf	Helps get rid of colds and flu, soothes stomach discomfort, reduces bloating and helps with digestion.
Star Apple Leaf	Helps to lower and manage high blood pressure.
Bread Fruit Leaf	Manages high blood pressure, diabetes, and kidney health.
Meringue	Lowers blood sugar levels and helps lower cholesterol.
Cerese	Diabetes management, cleanses blood and purges the body of toxins. Also helps with stomachache.
Fever Grass	Soothes stomach aches, helps with digestion and also helps to cleanse the body.
Nutmeg	Used to improve digestion, aiding in the reduction of gas, bloating, and indigestion. Helps to treat anxiety and depression.
Dog Blood Bush	Supports female reproductive health, particularly for increasing fertility, clearing fibroids, and aiding in womb healing. Detoxes the body and reduces inflammation. Helps with bodily swelling and pain.
Cinnamon Leaf	Helps regulate blood sugar, lowers inflammation, lower cholesterol and reduce blood pressure. Also, lowers stress and helps with early Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.
Leaf of life	Commonly used to treat colds and flu, sore throat, bronchitis and asthma.
Papaya Leaf	Helps to lower blood sugar levels, reduces growth of certain tumor cells - such as prostate and breast cancer. It also helps to alleviate constipation, gas, bloating and heartburn.
Guava Leaf	Commonly used to lower blood sugar levels, treat diarrhea, reduce stomach bacteria, and ease stomach issues. It is also used to treat acne, calm skin irritation and aid in hair growth.

Author: Andrea Genus



BEYOND THE BARRELS

Sometimes the greatest impact isn't found in what we deliver, but in the lives that touch our own.

Beyond the Barrels was built on the belief that real change happens when communities come together. What began as a collaboration between local West Indian non-profit organizations for Hurricane Melissa Relief, quickly became something much bigger, bringing together volunteers, donors, churches, schools, sponsors, and an entire community with one purpose: **to serve.**

*The barrels were unpacked.
The supplies were delivered.
The workshops were completed.*

But the greatest gift wasn't found inside a barrel.

**It was found in every smile, every conversation, every connection, and every child
who proudly stood and declared:**

WE ARE POWERFUL!!

Those words became more than a chant. They became the heartbeat of this mission.

The children reminded us of resilience.
The community reminded us of generosity.
And every volunteer left forever changed.

We came carrying supplies, but we left carrying hope, purpose, and a renewed belief that when a community comes together in service, there is no limit to the impact we can make.

Disasters may change landscapes, but they never have the final word. Hope lives. Compassion lives. Resilience lives. And when people come together to serve, love lives on through every act of kindness.

This is only the beginning. 🇯🇲❤️

by Angela Balfour



Dr. Marva Douglas Wilks

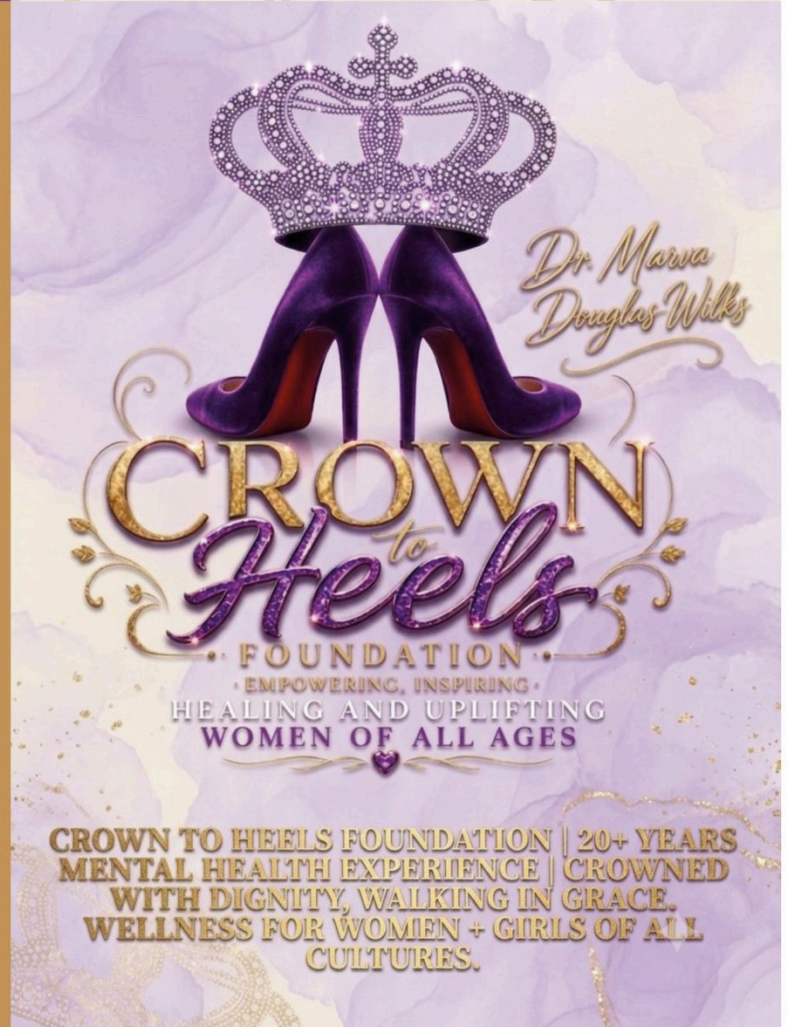
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Cou Cou

This tasty okra and mashed corn meal pudding is a Bajan National Dish. Traditionally, it is served with fresh flying fish cooked in gravy, but it can also be served with any other fish, meat or vegetable stew.

- 4oz okra (trimmed and roughly chopped)
- 1 oz – 2 Tbsp. butter
- 1 ½ cups coarse corn meal Salt and ground black pepper
- 2 ½ cups water or coconut milk

Method

Bring a pan of lightly salted and peppered water to the boil. Add the okra and cook for 10 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Discard half the cooking liquid and return the pan to the heat. Add the okra back to the pan and gradually beat in the cornmeal.

Cook over low heat, beating vigorously. Gradually add the water or coconut milk, beating well after each addition to prevent sticking.

Cover and cook for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the cornmeal is soft and cooked through. Then, cover with foil and a lid to keep warm and moist until ready to serve. Dot with butter before serving.



Mango Coconut Smoothie

INGREDIENTS

- *2 whole mangoes peeled and diced
- *½ cup Greek yogurt
- *1/8 cup lime juice
- *1/8 cup honey
- *½ tsp vanilla extract (optional)
- *½ cup ice cubes

Add all ingredients to blender. Blend until smooth and creamy. Taste and adjust sweetness, if needed. Pour into glass and serve immediately.



Guyanese Pepper Pot

A slow simmered stew made from cassareep, tender meats, warm spices and generations of flavor. This dish isn't just food.... it's heritage in a bowl.

Instructions

1. Season the beef with the brown sugar, salt, black pepper, thyme, cayenne, garlic, and ½ cup cassareep. Marinate if time allows.

2. Heat the oil in a large stockpot. Sauté one-third of the onion and the garlic until fragrant. Add the beef and brown well until dark and caramelized.

3. Cook the oxtail and cow heel separately until tender, reserving the cooking liquid.

4. Add the oxtail, cow heel, reserved liquid, remaining cassareep, spices, peppers, and onion to the beef.

5. Simmer uncovered over low heat for 2–3 hours, stirring occasionally, until the meat is tender and the sauce is rich and thick.

6. Skim off excess oil, adjust the seasoning, and let rest for 15–20 minutes before serving.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs. beef (bone in preferred, cut into chunks)
- 1 lb. oxtail
- 1 ½ cups cassareep
- 1 lb. cow heel (optional)
- 6 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper (to taste)
- 2 Tbsps. brown sugar
- 1 medium onion chopped (optional)
- 2-3 wiri wiri peppers (or 1 scotch bonnet, whole)
- 2 tsp dried thyme
- 2 Tbsp oil & Salt & black pepper to taste

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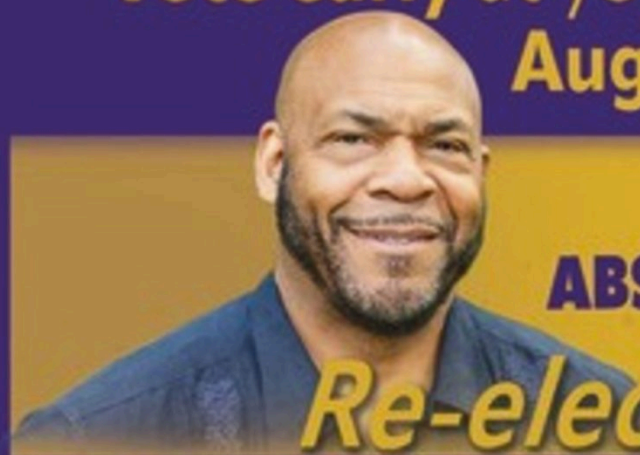
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Few of us will have our lives unfold across a century, much less 103 years. Kenneth Bennett had such an honor. He lived an inimitable life as a centenarian, a paragon of virtue, love, family commitment, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement. Kenneth P. Bennett Sr. grew up on a farm in Clarendon, Jamaica, one of nine children in a family that grew coffee, sugarcane, and cocoa, and raised goats, pigs, and cattle on land his great-grandfather had inherited after Emancipation. It was, by his own account, a life of relative means compared to many of his West Indian neighbors — but World War II brought that world to a halt. Imports and exports dried up, money grew scarce, and opportunity for young men on the island narrowed to almost nothing.

At just twenty years old, Bennett was among the thousands of British West Indian men recruited to fill wartime labor shortages in the United States. He passed the rigorous physical examination required of recruits and, in 1943, sailed for five days and four nights from Jamaica to the Gulf of Mexico — one of 8,244 men to arrive that year, a number that would grow to nearly 21,000 by 1945. He was assigned first to a canning factory in Hudson, New York, and later moved to Connecticut, where he worked the shade tobacco fields, training American college women, many of them from the South, who came north each season to work alongside the West Indian laborers. He would go on to train as a machinist, working twelve years at Billings & Spencer and twenty-eight more at Stanadyne before retiring.

It was on a Connecticut tobacco farm that Bennett met Eva Mae McDowell, a student at North Carolina Central University who had come north for seasonal work like so many others of her generation. They married in 1952. Together they built a life defined by industry and partnership: alongside his work as a machinist, the couple purchased and managed rental properties and, in 1961, founded Bennett Caterers, preparing American, French, and Italian fare for the Greater Hartford community. They raised nine children and for decades, made many others feel like they were a part of the Bennett family.

Bennett's civic life was as full as his working one. He and Eva were lifelong, founding-era members of the West Indian Social Club, from its home on Barbour Street to its Main Street location. He served for years as its chairman, and though he was asked more than once to run for president, he stepped back in deference to his family and his belief that the role deserved someone who could give it undivided attention. He helped raise funds that sustained the club through its strongest years, and he never stopped worrying over its future — pressing, even in his nineties, for the club to find new ways to serve a West Indian community that had grown beyond Hartford's borders. His commitment to community extended well past the club. He sponsored family members' immigration to the United States, including two of his sisters. He and Eva were active in the Urban League and the NAACP, in their local church, and in the civic life of Bloomfield, where they moved in 1970 in search of better schools for their children. Bennett served as a wetlands commissioner for the town and sat on its 100th-anniversary committee as its oldest member — a role that mirrored his standing, in his final years, as the oldest active member of the West Indian Social Club itself.

That move to Bloomfield was not without its costs. A white neighbor who had once happily shown Bennett around his own property — mistaking him for a groundskeeper — refused to speak to him once he learned Bennett was the homeowner next door. Bennett's response was characteristically unsentimental. Like many other West Indians, he kept his eyes on the prize: his family and his community. The home he built there became, in time, a piece of the generational wealth he passed to his children — one of several properties he and Eva accumulated through decades of disciplined work.

Bennett's story is one of cementing a life: meeting his great love, finding his vocation as a machinist, pursuing successful entrepreneurial ventures, rearing his family, sponsoring family members' journeys to America, and giving of himself to his fraternal and social organizations and to his community. He navigated America's changing racial, social, and economic landscape with discipline, hard work, and respect, bearing the indignities placed before him with a grace expressed best in his own words: "You do the best you can, to all the people you can, and as long as you can." His selfless life of honor and service, spanning 103 remarkable years, is a testament to the hopes and dreams of West Indian immigrants who made their lives in the United States. That we could be so lucky to follow in his footsteps and lead the fulfilling life we are celebrating today.

Dr. Fiona Vernal, University of Connecticut



In 1979, Evans made the courageous decision to bring his family to the United States, driven by a deep desire to build something better for those he loved. And build he did - not just a life, but a home, a community, and a reputation that preceded him wherever he went. He was a man who showed up, rolled up his sleeves, and gave everything he had.

Caesar was one of a kind - outgoing, generous, and genuinely interested in the people around him. He made you feel seen. He made you feel welcome. And he made wherever he was, feel a little more like home. That is the gift he gave, and it is a gift that does not fade.

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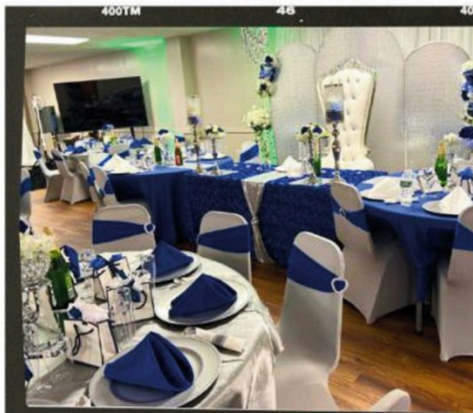


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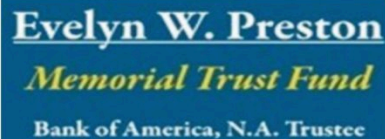
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- 2 Early August 3-9, in person
- 3 On Election Day, Aug. 11, in person



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TOC SCHEDULE OF EVENTS 2026

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1:00pm – 1:30 pm.....	Music on the Plaza (DJ Big O)MC/ Carl Jacobs (CJ)
1:30pm – 1:45pm.....	Welcome – Leslie Perry / Marva Douglas
1:45 pm – 2:45pm.....	Carnival Parade/Flag Raising Ceremony /Caribbean American Dancers Melissa Craig – Stilt Walker / Grace C. Wright Performing Arts St Lucian American La Rose Sole Group
2:45pm – 3:05pm.....	Harmony Music Makers
3:10pm – 3:30pm.....	Music on the Plaza (DJ Big O), MC/Gregory Mark (Wasine) MC / El Capri
3:30pm – 3:55pm	Toplane
4:00pm – 5:00pm.....	Nelson Bello (Salsa/Merengue/Reggaeton)
5:05pm – 5:20 pm	Harmony Music Makers
5:25pm – 6:15pm.....	Music on the Plaza (DJ Big O)
6:15pm – 7:00 pm	Sound Pipers Band

MAIN STAGE

2:00pm – 2:30pm.....	Music on the Main (DJ Badda Snipes) MCs/ Carl Jacobs (CJ), Elorie Stevens (El Capri), Gregory Mark (Wasine)
2:30pm – 2:40pm.....	Welcome – Leslie Perry / Marva Douglas
2:45pm – 3:15 pm	Yasmine Clahar
3:15pm – 3:45pm.....	Jamaal Minott
3:45pm – 4:05pm.....	lyaphanso
4:05pm – 4:30pm.....	Music on the Main (DJ Badda Snipes), MC /Elorie Stevens (El Capri)
4:30pm – 5:15pm.....	Terry Gajraj
5:15pm – 6:00pm.....	Tribal Legacy Band
6:00pm – 6:30pm.....	Mystic Saxx
6:30pm – 7:00pm.....	Dreama
7:00pm – 7:15pm.....	Raffle
7:15pm – 7:30pm.....	Music on the Main / (DJ Badda Snipes), MC / Gregory Mark (Wasine)
7:30pm – 7:45pm.....	Derrick Barnett & The Statement Band
7:45pm – 8:45pm.....	Johnny Osbourne



KID'S CORNER 1:00 - 5:00 (SCIENCE CENTER PLAZA)



MCs.....	Elorie Stevens (El Capri), Gregory Mark (Wasine), Carl Jacobs (CJ)
DJs.....	Big O, Badda Snipes
Audio.....	SoundGuyz – Event Solutions Inc. Michael Powell, CEO
Producer Committee.....	Taste of the Caribbean Arts & Culture CT, Inc. Dorrette Sterling-Chair, Anthony Fenton-Co-Chair, Aliena Ali, Elorie Stevens, Kwame Gibbs, Tafari Cooper, Alphonso McGriff Barbara Fenton, Eleanor Bolt-Cooper, Sepiya Heatherman, Carol Carnegie



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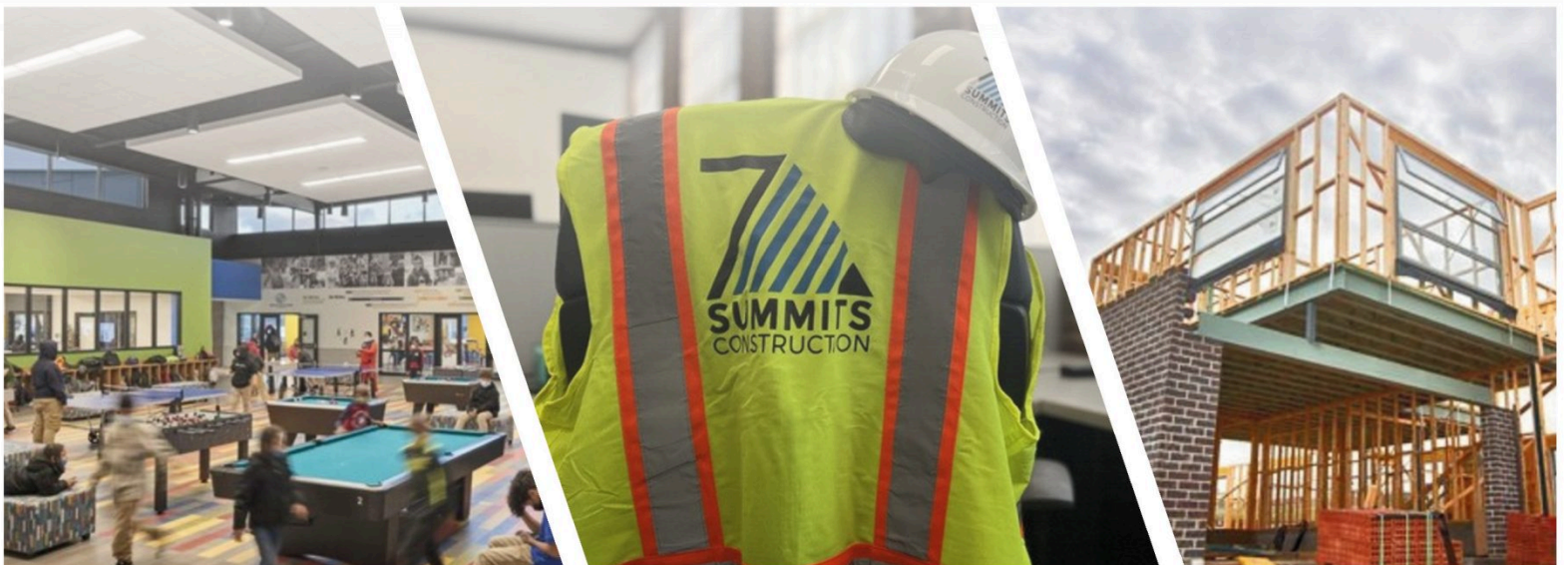


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