

TEENTIMES 25

FOR THE YOUTH, BY THE YOUTH!

Febrary 2021
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CELEBRATE
BLACK HISTORY
MONTH

ACHIEVEMENTS CONTRIBUTIONS
THROUGHOUT HISTORY

REBELLIONS

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FOR FREEDOM

Reparations and Apologies for slavery

By Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann

The 20th anniversary of the UN World Conference on Racism, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, will be celebrated this August. There was much discussion at the conference about reparations to Africa for the trans-Atlantic slave trade, in which millions of Africans were captured to provide free labour in North and South America and the Caribbean for over four and a half centuries.

Unfortunately, the conference was overshadowed by the 9/11 attacks on the US several days after it ended. The question of whether reparations should be paid to the continent of Africa for the trans-Atlantic slave trade is still being debated.

It is unlikely that former Western slave-trading countries will engage in reparative measures in the near future. The turn toward authoritarianism, xenophobia and racism in Western democracies makes it unlikely

that even well-intentioned governments will propose reparations to Africa.

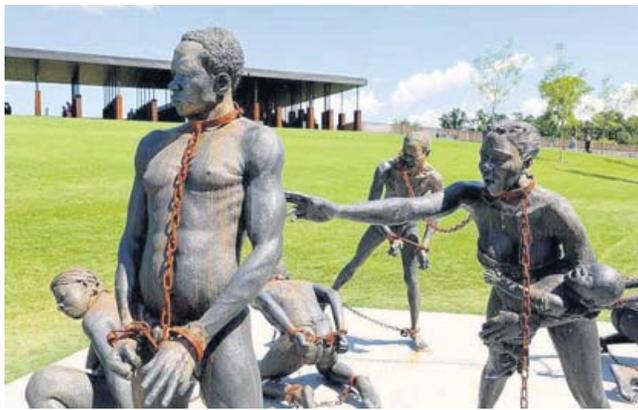
But, despite these political changes in slave-trading nations, there remains a strong case for why the fight for reparations shouldn't be abandoned.

A 2005 United Nations document discusses different aspects of reparations, including apologies for past harms, the right to know the truth, and financial compensation.

Over the past 15 years (following the 2005 UN report) there has been no progress on these issues, not even over the issuing of an apology.

At the 2001 conference a Dutch representative spoke of his government's "deep remorse" for the slave trade and enslavement. In 2006, British Prime Minister Tony Blair issued a statement expressing "sorrow" for the slave trade, but not apologising. None of these amounted to an apology. Nor has the US issued one.

Some people might object to their government apologising for the slave trade on the grounds that neither they nor their ancestors were involved. But as the late Kenyan-American scholar Ali Mazrui argued, if you are a citizen of a country, you must take on its responsibilities as well as its benefits. Western slave-trading countries have a moral, if not a legal, obligation to apologise.



My Love For You

My love for you goes way beyond
The things I can say
Like how amazing you are
Or how you light up my day

You're stuck on my mind
But that's where I want you all the time
I can't stop thinking about you
Because you are all mine

My love for you is unconditional
I adore and cherish you
And without you, I don't know where I'd be
You're all I ever wanted

I love you for a lifetime
Not only for a day
I love you for who you are
Not what you do or say

Chantalia Van Heynegen

I Love You!!

I love you, I love you
I love you Divine
Will you be mine forever
Please give me a sign

Just saying I love you
Never seems enough,
You complete me
Make me the happiest man alive
And be my wife?

XOXO

Chantalia Van Heynegen



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By :Mary-Jean Acevedo

Name: Juleissy Sanchez

Age: 17

School: Charlotte Brookson Academy

Class: 4th form

What is the artwork about?

This artwork is about a little girl overcoming her dreams, and shows that no matter what status you come from you can do it!

What inspired you to create this artwork?

This artwork was inspired by a movie about ballerinas.

Name: Mia Ornella Manca Zamoni

Age: 15

School: Sint Maarten Academy

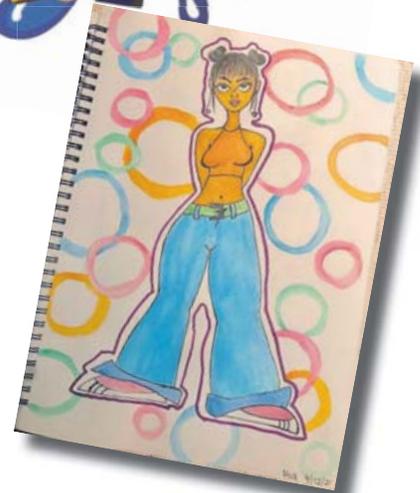
Class: 3rd form

What is the artwork about?

This artwork is about 90's movies and the style back then.

What inspired you to create this artwork?

I was inspired by 90's movies and their style, with that type of nostalgic bubble background which you used to see in those days.



NIPA SCHOOL OF NURSING

Written by: Vanessa Mathew

Despite only being a few weeks into 2021 and the horrendous pandemic, schools have already welcomed their students, teachers and facility workers back. Some students have even started new classes and new programmes. In this article, I will be elaborating on one such school, NIPA School of Nursing (SON).

NIPA SON has partnered with the American University of The Caribbean School of Medicine AUC and Chamberlin University (CU) which are both very well-known facilities that provide high-quality education. Do keep in mind that NIPA SON is not a part of, nor does it fall under, CU or AUC. Upon graduation, graduates will receive a diploma from NIPA and not the above-mentioned schools. The 3-year programme, which was originally set for 2 years, prepares registered nurses for an entry-level practice in different healthcare settings. According to NIPA, the goal of the partnership is aimed at developing a new programme that will enhance the quality of nursing on St. Maarten. In other words, this will help to better meet the needs of the constantly changing local and global healthcare environments. They have developed a totally new associates degree in nursing (ADN) and will hopefully be doing the same for the Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) programme.

The programme opened their admissions from July 1, 2020 until August 31, 2020, after which candidates were chosen to conduct an interview with SON administrator Damali Bryson, nurse instructor Valone Adams, and nurse instructor Hazel Gonsalves. Following the interview, the selected applicants



had to pay a fee of US \$150 to access the ATIs SMART PREP study package, which is a mandatory nursing

exam taken prior to acceptance. From there, candidates are then fully accepted into the programme.

exam taken prior to acceptance. From there, candidates are then fully accepted into the programme.

The programme allows students to earn their associate's degree in 3 years while practicing in the train-

ing field via the St. Maarten Medical Center (SMMC), White and Yellow Cross, as well as district nursing, and The Mental Health Foundation (MHF). They also offer an advanced simulation training on-campus. Students are also prepared for the NCLEX-RN exam and are given the opportunity to further their nursing education at CU.

The cost for this program is as high as the education. The tuition fee is US \$3,500 per year, including books and uniforms.

According to the school, students must make a 50 per cent down payment of the tuition fee in order to be accepted. They will also grant them 4 months to pay off the remaining balance. As modern-day technology is gradually advancing, the School of Nursing is moving along with the changes, and has introduced a new programme from America. This will give students access to any and all necessary books and courseware to carry out their 3-year program.

At the end of the program, students should and will be able to provide safe, high-quality nursing care, as well as provide holistic nursing care to individuals, families and groups in different communities. Lastly, they will learn to accept responsibility and take accountability for their own nursing practice, which will also be helpful for any ongoing personal or professional development. According to SON, registered nurses play a critical role in the provision of quality healthcare to individuals, and much more. They are members of the healthcare team, mainly in hospitals, mental institutions, rehabilitation centres and more – nurses provide care to all patients.

With all that has been said, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the students who have successfully gotten into this program. You and your talents are greatly needed – even more so in this devastating time. So, thank you for pursuing a career that not only puts you on the front lines, but also pushes you to the best of your abilities. After all, what is a doctor without a nurse?

Inspiration: When you are a nurse you know that EVERY DAY you will TOUCH A LIFE or a life will TOUCH YOURS!



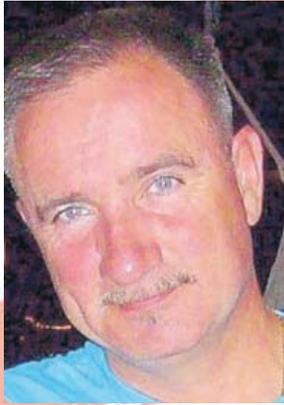
Feature

HAVING GIVEN SO MUCH OF HIMSELF, DR. VAN OSCH MARCHES INTO RETIREMENT

~ Architect of our HIV/AIDS knowledge ~

By Kandice Chambers

As Dr. Gerard van Osch, affectionately known as Jerry, marches off into retirement, we thought this would be a great time to not just feature Doc in an article, but also to talk about HIV/AIDS in general, and how so many, especially young people, have stopped talking about HIV/AIDS.



Speaking to Doc is also special to us because he has been a contributor to *Teen Times* in the early days of the St. Maarten AIDS Committee and when the Junior AIDS Committee was just starting up. Dr. van Osch is a part of our 25-year history and we wish him nothing but the best in his well-deserved retirement.

Here's "Part 2" of our two-part interview with Dr. Gerard van Osch

3. As a doctor, do you think we're going to see the HIV/AIDS epidemic end?

I would not have said this about 10 years ago, but there have been so many great developments in the treatment of HIV that now I think we may eventually be able to create a (clinical) cure. In fact, there have already been a few persons worldwide that have been cured of HIV because they had a certain type of cancer (leukaemia) for which they had to undergo a bone-marrow transplant – an extremely costly and dangerous procedure. They received bone marrow from a person that is resistant to HIV (about 1 - 3 per cent of persons worldwide seem to be resistant due to a genetic difference) and started 'growing' white blood cells from the new bone marrow that were resistant to the HIV they had, and so their HIV couldn't multiply anymore and basically died out in their bodies. This treatment cannot be used for most persons, but it gave new ideas for research and further development into a possible cure for the future. Also, there are medications being developed today (that are almost available) that work longer than the daily pills. These are usually injectables which would have to be taken once a month for instance. There is also ongoing research to find a way to reach the dormant white blood cells, and the HIV in those dormant white blood cells, to try and stop production in the entire body and possibly eradicate the virus from the body. Several other research projects are ongoing to develop stronger and less toxic medications, as well as treatments that work by giving the infected person certain types of antibodies that help fight the virus. Unfortunately, an effective vaccine has not been developed despite much research in the field. HIV is like Sars-cov-2, the virus that causes COVID-19 an RNA virus and these viruses tend to mutate rapidly, so at least for HIV with many different mutated forms worldwide – which all basically weaken the immune system – there is still no effective vaccine. Many would say that Big Pharma earns more money on a life-long treatment that needs to be taken daily, and so vaccine development may be flawed, but all in all I do think there are many persons/universities/laboratories worldwide trying to find a more permanent solution for a cure and prevention with a vaccine.

4. How should we reduce the stigma

against HIV-positive individuals? Despite the tremendous improvements in treatment, and the possibility to keep HIV infected person's healthy while preventing further transmission of the virus to others, the stigma, often followed by discrimination, is still ongoing. In certain groups of the population more than others. It has a lot to do with education. Once persons understand that this infection can only be transmitted through a few ways (unprotected sex with an infected person, sharing needles during IV drug use, infected mother to the foetus/baby). To understand that it can be treated effectively, and prevention of transmission is not only done by consistently using condoms, abstinence, staying in a monogamous sexual relationship where both partners are tested HIV-negative to prevent sexual transmission, needle exchange programs to prevent transmission amongst IV drug users, reduction of poverty, strengthening of at-risk groups (such as women, men having sex with men, prison populations, etc.), the fear of HIV and much of the stigma tends to reduce. We've seen quite a bit of stigma reduction – even on St. Maarten – but it seems that the fear we installed a few decades ago, when treatment was less effective and the infection was deadlier, still lingers on. It's time we all educate ourselves and learn that HIV is a preventable infection, treatment will keep infected persons healthy for the duration of their lives, and effectively treated persons cannot transmit the virus anymore. This way, we should be able to create an environment free of stigma and discrimination. Some persons living with HIV also have what we call internalised stigma or self-stigma. They perceive that others will stigmatise them and discriminate against them, but when they tell others or others find out about their HIV status, the perceived stigma proves to be much less or even non-existent and they even receive support from the persons around them.

5. How do you measure the success of your work with the AIDS foundation on SXM?

Prevention wise I think we have great



youth programmes in the secondary schools (Girl Power and Real Talk). These programs are evaluated and updated every year, and are welcomed by students and schools. We also have the Youth Wing – a group of young people we train to become peer educators. We've reduced quite a lot of stigma and discrimination measured by the fact that in the early years, persons living with HIV were thrown out of their houses and ostracised by their loved ones, while employers usually tried laying persons off as soon as they found out he or she had HIV. Nowadays most if not all employers are supportive, and families and friends give support when necessary. Knowing your HIV status and promoting the treatment of HIV/AIDS like any other medical condition has also helped. In early nineteen hundred (last century), the foundation offered free, confidential HIV tests through the Health Information Centre, but only 11 persons came over a 3-year period. Now, we have test days in the districts where we offer free, rapid, confidential HIV testing and we test between 60 - 200 persons a day with the assistance of young doctors from AUC medical school. We test between 700 and 1,200 persons a year, and persons come to our office opposite Tropicana Casino (former Blue Point/Intertoys building) on a daily basis for information and a free, rapid and confidential HIV test. The education and testing we offer in the local dance clubs and brothels is also well attended, while out-reach in the community usually finds great response. The free care and treatment we offer for uninsured persons living with HIV has assisted close to a hundred persons over the years. Our Facebook page (Sxmaids-foundation) has 1,500 followers and our website (www.sxmaidsfoundation.org) continues to get thousands of hits a year, while we continue to receive anonymous questions through our "Ask Annie" webpage. Soon you'll also find us on Instagram. There are still improvements to be made but we've come a long way from the small group of volunteers that started the AIDS Committee.

6. Do you have any regrets or wish there were things you could have done differently?

I don't really have regrets. Things that don't go well are always lessons to learn for the next time. What I would have liked is that persons living with HIV would have supported our mission more and would feel comfortable enough, due to reduced stigma, to come forward openly and assist in education and awareness. It continues to be a struggle to keep the foundation financially afloat. The Stronger Together Red Ribbon Campaign we used to have with support of Scotiabank has stopped, and there are of course other pressing medical situations that need urgent attention and finances. It would however be a shame – no, let me rephrase that – a stupid mistake, to think that HIV/AIDS doesn't exist anymore and that we can just let our guard down. The Foundation is still waiting on word from government, who hasn't done much, if anything, since the dissolution of the HIV/AIDS Management team concerning the 2019 (!) and 2020 subsidies, to keep the office open. If the subsidy doesn't come

through in the next few months, we'll be forced to lay off our very dedicated staff and close our office which would result in a near standstill in all our programmes. Same with the treatment for the uninsured. If funding doesn't come through, we'll be forced to stop that program mid next year. That would not only put those persons at high risk of falling ill, but since HIV on St. Maarten is a sexually transmitted condition, it would increase the risk of new transmissions and an upsurge in new infections.

7. HIV/AIDS seems to have taken a back seat in the terms of being talked about. Do you think we are being nonchalant about it? If yes, what would you advise young people?

I do think there is a level of HIV/AIDS fatigue, absolutely. Many people think there is effective treatment, so when you get it you just take a pill and done, so why bother. Other chronic medical conditions like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and cancer all take their toll and need attention. Obviously COVID-19 has taken over almost everything at the moment. However, we can't stress enough that HIV/AIDS is not gone. On St. Maarten, between 1,500 and 2,000 persons are living with it and need access to the treatments. The numbers are still rising yearly. The Caribbean remains the number two region in the world with the most persons living with HIV. We're not anywhere out of the woods as it stands now. Taking medication for the rest of your life and reaching 99 per cent accuracy in taking them daily is not easy. Being reminded daily that you have this disease is no fun. HIV may have become a chronic manageable condition – although still deadly if you don't take your medication – I have always said it's a life changing condition. Let's say for young persons, and we currently have several teen agers undergoing treatment, you want to study somewhere else. Will you be able to afford and access the treatment wherever you go? What long term side effects will the treatment give you? If you miss your pills and the virus becomes resistant, how many pills would you then need to take? There is still stigma and discrimination in different parts of the world and also on St. Maarten. Many insurance companies, especially locally, still don't give you life insurance when you're infected with HIV, so buying a house or building a business will be difficult if you can't get money from the bank. On St. Maarten, your only medical insurance option is SZV or to work as a civil servant, because private insurance companies will refuse to give you medical insurance with this pre-existing condition. It also means that you can't earn more than the threshold of SZV, because above the threshold you are thrown out of SZV and you need private insurance which you can't get. The list goes on, but I think you get the message. Prevention remains better than the cure.

Well, there you guys got it! Although the article was a long one, the message is very straightforward. Preventing is better than treating. The well-being of the human body is very significant, and you should all be conscious of it. Please take the time to get screened for the virus when it is possible.

YOUNG & BLACK-OWNED

By: Kandice Chambers & Cecilly Nicholas

Are we becoming ambitious? In this month's article, we have decided to highlight two black, locally owned, start-up companies. The two young entrepreneurs are Jareem Smith, owner of "Apply the Pressure" and "Unruly Minks" owned by Chadalina Edwards. Young adults like them are increasingly stepping into, and slowly taking over, the cosmetology and fashion industries on the island. Our senior writers interviewed these entrepreneurs, and here is their feedback.

How did you get the idea or concept for the business?

- Well, there was a point when I was living in the Netherlands and I kept telling my friends to apply the pressure with everything they do, push themselves beyond their furthest expectations, with whatever I applied to. As a young male, I was always intrigued by fashion, constantly wanting the latest clothing sets because I enjoy looking and dressing well. Fashion is my passion! With that being said, I decided to initiate my own clothing brand line known as "Apply the Pressure". (Jareem Smith)

- I've always wanted to be in the field of entrepreneurship. In 2019, I started wearing eyelashes, and I can honestly say that I became addicted. From purchasing them to running home and watching tutorials on how to apply them, I just loved the empowered feeling they gave me. Thus, the idea to launch my own lash line stemmed from that period in time. I eagerly wanted to do something more in life apart from my 8-5 job. So, I began researching vendors, noting ideas, sampling eyelashes and constantly hustled day in and day out. I was determined and excited to start this journey, and once I found my ideal product it was time to start my business. "Unruly Melanin Lashes", now known as "Unruly Minks" was launched on February 2, 2020. At that time, Valentine's Day was approaching, so I decided to create the "Valentine collection". I had no official logo, eye-catching packaging, or slogan - just some lashes and a vision! Looking back now, I can admit that I was not fully prepared, but I am very happy that I started. The term "Unruly" became part of the brand name because of my favourite dancehall artist Popcaan, also known as "Unruly God". When you hear the word unruly you may automatically think disor-

derly, but when I hear it, I recognise it as headstrong. Once you're headstrong and ambitious you won't let anything discourage you from achieving your desires.

(Chadalina Edwards)

What service(s) or product(s) do you offer/manufacture?

- At this moment I'm currently only distributing t-shirts and shorts on St. Maarten. I am looking to expand into more apparel such as hats and bags in the near future. (Jareem Smith)

- As an upcoming cosmetics business, I offer quality mink eyelash strips, latex-free hypoallergenic eyelash adhesive (glue), eyelash applicators, and eyelash/eyebrow spoolies. A few more items are in the process of being revealed throughout this year. (Chadalina Edwards)

How do you advertise your product/service?

- I advertise and market my business via social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. I also participate in giveaways. Whenever someone shares a post or purchases an item, I repost them to keep my audience engaged. For upcoming designs, I plan on also doing a giveaway. You can find us on Instagram @applypressuremerch_ (Jareem Smith)

Social media is very influential, so I use it to my advantage and advertise my products on platforms, namely Facebook at "Unruly Minks", Instagram @minksbyliina, and Snapchat. I also use my business and loyalty cards as another means of advertising. (Chadalina Edwards)

What's your business's goal?

- An objective is to bring my other designs to life. I also want to have a published website. Having my brand become international and sold in numerous global shops, is personally the most important thing. (Jareem Smith)

- As a young entrepreneur, I have set both long- and short-term goals, but I will mention two long-term goals. I want to ensure that my products are the most convenient to enhance any look in seconds. Secondly, I also want my business to become globally known, but in the process of doing so, I want to continue to provide excellent customer service for everyone's satisfaction.

(Chadalina Edwards)

What made you choose this type of business and how is it unique?

- I've always been passionate and interested in clothing. The fashion industry truly fascinated me since I was a child. Thus, I decided to take the leap of



faith and create my own clothing line. My business is unique because not only is it a fashion item that many individuals can wear, but it's also a powerful reminder, when anyone sees the logo or wears any product, to keep pushing forward and apply pressure in everything you do. (Jareem Smith)

- My love for eyelashes and the way it enhances your natural features is what led me to my choice of business. Though many persons are providing similar products, Unruly Minks is indeed a unique business. We provide different lengths of lashes ranging from 16mm-25mm, some of which are limited edition or are featured in our lash books. This allows us to cater to a variety of customers. (Chadalina Edwards)

Do you feel supported by St. Maarteners?

- Yes, I do feel supported. Many friends and family promote and wear my brand of fashion items. I also have a wide audience showing interest and supporting me. They support by sharing, liking and commenting on Instagram posts as well as purchasing the products. (Jareem Smith)

Yes, I do feel supported. Though it took some time to get my name out there, I now have a great clientele. I am beyond grateful for this opportunity to further promote my business as I am positive that I will receive

more support, whether it be locally or internationally. (Chadalina Edwards)

If you had one piece of advice for someone just starting out, what would you advise?

- Just keep pushing, beginnings are always the toughest. Remain humble. Push through the tough times. In the end, it'll pay off. Don't forget - tough times won't last forever, and success is a must! (Jareem Smith)

- Congratulations on your venture into entrepreneurship. Don't solely be passionate about being the best at what you do, but also be patient. Being proud of your work helps increase sales because your actions will show it. As a beginner, the sales can be slow, but don't let this demotivate you. Purchase a notebook for your business to write down any goals and ambitions so you can continue to look ahead when you feel discouraged. Take things one day at a time and remember, everything is a learning process. I wish you much success. (Chadalina Edwards)

Well, there it is guys. Make sure to follow and support these young entrepreneurs, because it goes a long way. A simple share, like or even speaking highly of their business can have a huge impact on the business. Thank you for reading our article and stay tuned for part 2 coming next month!

FEATURE

BLACK HISTORY MONTH - AN AMERICAN TING

Every February, people in the United States (US) celebrate the achievements and history of African Americans as part of Black History Month.

HOW IT STARTED

In 1915, in response to the lack of information on the accomplishments of Black people available to the public, historian Carter G. Woodson co-founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. In 1926, the group declared the second week of February as "Negro History Week" to recognise the contributions of African Americans to US history. Few people studied Black history and it wasn't included in textbooks prior to the creation of Negro History Week.

1963 March On Washington

This week was chosen because it includes the birthdays of both Frederick Douglass, an abolitionist – someone who wanted to end the practice of enslaving people – and former US president Abraham Lincoln. President Lincoln led the United States during the Civil War, which was primarily fought over the enslavement of Black people in the country. Many schools and leaders began recognising the week after its creation.

The week-long event officially became Black History Month in 1976, when US president Gerald Ford extended the recognition to "honour the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavour throughout our history." Black

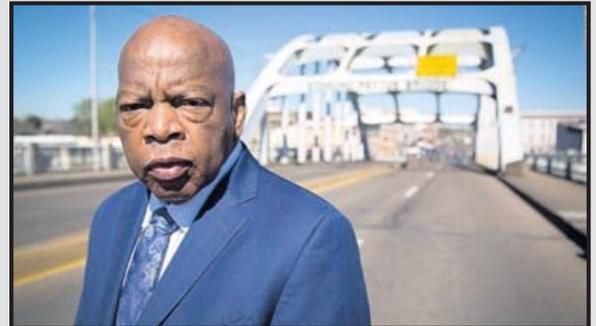


History Month has been celebrated in the United States every February since.

WHAT IT HONORS

Martin Luther King Jr. delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech.

Black History Month was created to focus attention on the contributions of African Americans to the United States. It honours all Black people from all periods of US history, from the enslaved people first brought over from Africa in the early 17th century, to African Americans living in the United States today.



Among the notable figures often spotlighted during Black History Month are: Dr. Martin Luther King

Jr., who fought for equal rights for Blacks during the 1950s and '60s; Thurgood Marshall, the first African-American justice appointed to the United States Supreme Court in 1967; Mae Jemison, who became the first female African-American astronaut to travel to space in 1992; and Barack Obama, who was elected the first-ever African-American president of the United States in 2008.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH TODAY

Since the first Negro History Week in 1926, other countries have joined the United States in celebrating Black people and their contribution to history and culture, including Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands.

Today, Black History Month continues the discussion of Black people and their contributions through activities such as museum exhibits and film screenings, and by encouraging the study of achievements by African Americans year-round.



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

DO AFRICANS, CARIBBEAN-AMERICANS FEEL LEFT OUT?

By Aaron Morrison

Many aspects of Kwesi Amissah's life reflect his blended heritage – he's the son of a Trinidadian immigrant father and an African-American mother. Since last September, Amissah (29) has worked at Nicholas – a New York City Afro-Caribbean and Pan-African novelty shop that sells shea and cocoa butters, fragranced body oils, incense, and T-shirts bearing the faces of black historical and cultural figures like Bob Marley, Nat Turner and Nelson Mandela.

During Black History Month, when people across the United States (US) are encouraged to honour the African-American experience, Amissah has struggled to find a diverse representation of black America beyond the doors of the Brooklyn storefront where he's employed. He said he'd love to see Stokely Carmichael, the Trinidadian-American revolutionary who led the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Black Panther Party, receive as much shine in February as Rosa Parks and Frederick Douglass.

"I want to know my history, fully and comprehensively," Amissah said in interview this week. He echoes a sentiment widely felt within the black community – that Black History Month is losing its relevance in an increasingly diverse America. "If you're only telling 5 per cent of who we are, that's not enough to tell the whole story," he said. "What's the other 95 per cent that we don't know?"

Even as some Caribbean-Americans revere black American figures like the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, there is an apparent exclusion of Caribbean-Americans in Black History Month. The largest foreign-born black population in the US, West Indians have even advocated for a separate National Caribbean-American Heritage Month, which is observed in June, not February. That raises the question: Is Black History Month too American-centric for immigrants of African descent and their families?

"For Haitians and Haitian-Americans, Black History Month is different because we received our independence in 1804," said Samuel Pierre, a 31-year-old Brooklyn-born entrepreneur whose mother emigrated to the US from Haiti in 1980. "If you asked my mother right now, she'd say they didn't have a civil rights movement like the US. She doesn't know what it means to need a Black History Month."

But Pierre's mother does understand the value of hard work. With just an eighth-grade education, she worked as a janitor to provide for Samuel and his siblings, Pierre said.



As the executive director of the Haitian American Caucus, a tech-themed coalition catering to the community, his own work ethic is a shared pan-Caribbean value that hasn't been snuffed out by American racism and discrimination, he added.

Figures like Philippe Wilson Desir, the former Haitian consul general in New York known for his fierce advocacy in the 1980s and 1990s, would be someone to celebrate in February, Pierre said. Desir, who died in 1995, exemplified the spirit of Caribbean people who were trying to build new lives in the US and maintain a connection to their homeland.

New York and Florida are the major hubs for the Caribbean-American

community, which was estimated at 4 million people nationwide in 2014, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's most recent statistics. Over the last five years, immigrants from countries including Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Haiti have increased their populations in the U.S. The African immigrant popu-

lation, by comparison, was estimated at 1.9 million people in 2014.

Many Caribbean-Americans come to the U.S. from a diverse array of cultures and political climates in majority-black nations looking for economic opportunity — and they tend to find it.



Feature

8 AFRICAN HEROES WHO LED MASSIVE SLAVE REBELLIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN, BUT ARE LESS CELEBRATED

By Elizabeth Ofosuah Johnson

A little over the past decade, the stories of powerful Kings and queens who worked hard at building powerful kingdoms and sustaining them for centuries have been unearthed to redefine the history of Africa, as opposed to what has been fed to the masses by the West for several decades.

Tales of Mansa Musa, Prince Nicolau, Queen Ranavanolla III and the one-eyed Queen Amanirenas have been told over and over to elevate African history, sense of pride, and identity. Aside from these powerful Kings, Queens, royals and many who were exiled for resisting colonisation and western oppression, there are also tales of powerful warriors, both male and female, who risked their lives to protect their royals, Kingdoms and people.

Despite the new energy in the black community to discover and tell their own stories, many stories are still yet to be discovered or told. Through several readings and research, it is safe to assume that the African connection to the Caribbean is an area of research yet to be fully looked into and uncovered.

The Caribbean has a rich presence of African cultures and personalities who added to history through their voices and actions against the slave trade, colonisation, racism and many other black-related issues between the 15th century to date.

Here are 8 iconic personalities in Caribbean history who rebelled against white oppressors during the slave trade period.

Sam Sharpe

Sam Sharpe was the slave of an English attorney. At the time, the British allowed slaves to hold religious meetings. Sharpe took advantage of the meetings



and started preaching to people about the need for freedom from slavery. When the British Parliament began discussing the abolition of slavery throughout the Empire in 1831, Sharpe followed it closely through several newspapers. In December 1831, Sharpe began a protest after his belief that the British Parliament had granted freedom to Jamaica, but the local planters had ignored it. Slaves agreed not to work and to demand freedom from their plantation masters. This led to some of the slaves marching and torching plantations, an action which was not in accordance with Sharpe's initial plan of a non-violent resistance. Their strike action had a damaging effect as it took place at a time when sugar cane crops ripened and were due to harvest. Fourteen plantation masters died in the 10-day clash, and over 200 slaves were left dead. Sharpe later surrendered to the military troops and accepted blame for the failed revolt. He was hanged in Montego Bay on May 23, 1832. His revolt is believed to have played a huge role in the



British Parliament's deliberations over the following months that finally led to the Slavery Abolition Act.

Breffu – The St John Slave Revolt

In 1733, Breffu, originally a Ghanaian woman, was sold into slavery in Jamaica and owned by Pieter Krøyer in Coral Bay. She led other enslaved Akans from the Kingdom of Akwamu in Ghana in a massive



revolt against slave masters. With the support of Christian, another slave, she empowered over 150 slaves to stand up for their rights,

few slave masters managed to escape the island on their boats, and the Akwamu people took control of most of the island. They were successful until early 1934 when the French military had finally agreed to help the Danes regain the island and their lost plantations. At the death of Breffu in April 1734, many were shocked and mortified that a woman single-handedly led one of the most extended rebellions and take over known in the New World.

Bussa – Barbados Revolt of 1816

The Barbados Revolt of 1816, also known as the Bussa Rebellion is recorded in history as the largest slave revolt in Barbados that took place in 1816. Despite only being a two-day rebellion, it had a huge impact and caused several other slaves to rebel across the Caribbean and put a sense of fear and awareness in the Westerners.

Bussa is believed to be of Igbo descent from Nigeria. Slavery had been legal in Barbados since 1616. Though the British Slave Trade was officially abolished in 1807, it was by no means an end to slavery, as it still persisted in some British colonies, especially the Caribbean. The Act made the buying and selling of slaves from British ships illegal, but had no provisions to free people who had already been enslaved. This was misinterpreted by slaves in Barbados who had hoped that the terms included in the Act would cater for their freedom, but it didn't, and led to a series of revolt and rebellion against Barbadian slave masters. Bussa was a freed slave and ranger who was an officer among enslaved workers of an estate. He led four hundred slaves to set several cane fields ablaze, overthrow the white planter class, regain freedom, restructure the politics of the island and create a better life for black and coloured people. Unfortunately, Bussa died in the revolt along with fifty other slaves. One hundred and forty-four slaves were executed, and another one hundred and thirty-two slaves were sent away to another island.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

AFRICAN HEROES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Akua

Akua is popularly known as Cubah Cornwallis, and she was from the Ashanti Empire in Ghana which was then the Gold Coast. Nothing much is said about her life before being captured and sold off as an enslaved girl to the Caribbean. She was purchased by Captain William Cornwallis who later had an affair with her and made her his house help. William Cornwallis left Jamaica and Akua moved to Port Royal permanently, and purchased a house that later became a hospital and short stay hotel. Her hospital and short stay hotel became the most visited in Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean. Akua treated people of all races from all walks of life, and after a while, was recognised and crowned the Queen of Kingston, as elected by slaves in Kingston. It is believed that she is closely linked to slave rebellions, especially the Tacky Rebellion that lasted from May 1760 to July 1760. The British were highly suspicious of Queen Akua's involvement in the rebellion and were worried about the power she possessed because of her supposed Obeah black magic practises. She was accused of taking the role of resistance force and was almost killed by the British. Rather than be killed, the British ordered that she be transported from the island in order to bring her power to an end. The plan was to sell her off to slavery again, but Queen Akua was successful in bribing the captain of the ship and was left on the western shores of Jamaica where another group of Fantis were. While in the western shores, she joined the Fanti community and later joined the leeward rebels. Unfortunately for Queen Akua, she was recognised, recaptured and executed by the British.

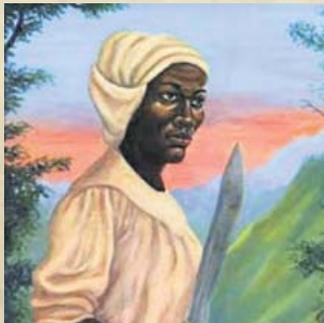
King Takyi – 1760 Easter Rebellion of Port Maria

In his home, Ghana Takyi was a chief, a wealthy merchant, and slave trader himself until he was captured during the Kommender Wars and sold off into slavery when his state was defeated. In 1759, after years of toiling and suffering on the plantations, Takyi and his allies escaped into a cave far beyond their plantations to plan a rebellion. The rebellion took place a year later

to become the second largest and most shocking rebellion 30 years after Breffu led the Akwamus in the 1733 St John slave insurrection. The massive revolt is considered one of the longest lasting rebellions recorded in the history of the Americas. Takyi and his followers started the revolt in the early hours of the morning, starting at the plantation where they worked, killing the owners and thus freeing all the slaves. The rebellion lasted until July, when Takyi was gunned down and killed by the British. After he was shot, his head was cut and displayed in the centre of the town to indicate that the rebellion had been stopped and the freed slaves and Takyi's army were now in danger.

Queen Nanny – Leader and founder of the Maroons

Born in Ghana to the Ashanti tribe, Nanny was brought to Jamaica as a slave and ended up being a Maroon leader in Jamaica during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Along with her four brothers



who she had reunited with in the Caribbean, she escaped from the plantations into the mountains and jungles of Jamaica and eventually founded a village in the Blue Mountains, on the Eastern side of Jamaica, which became known as Nanny Town. During a period of 30 years, she contributed to the escape of more than 1,000 slaves and helped them resettle in the Maroon community. As the Maroons grew in their numbers, the British colonial administration became threatened, and upon further calls by plantation owners who were losing slaves and crops, the British forces attacked Queen Nanny's settlement.



In 1733, during one of the bloody battles, Nanny was killed. The war still went on until Cudjoe, a maroon leader and brother of Nanny, signed a peace treaty with the British in 1739.

Cuffy – Guyanese Revolt of 1763

Even though not particularly in the Caribbean, Guyana is a small country in South America that is closely linked to Anglo-Caribbean countries and community through history, culture and most importantly its people. The country also suffered colonisation and the serious slave trade. Cuffy, also referred to as Coffy, Kofi or Koffi Badu, was an Akan slave from Ghana who was transported to the Dutch colony of Berbice, which is present-day Guyana. He lived as a slave in a plantation in Lilienburg on Canje river and after a few years of slavery, he led a slave uprising of over 2,500 slaves. In February 1763, Cuffy and his followers seized artillery and gunpowder and proceeded to take over the plantations in his community and those within close vicinity. Though Cuffy and his supporters agreed to cease their operation, they killed many and captured the wife of the Bearestyn Plantation owner with Cuffy keeping her as his wife. The revolt lasted for a while until a civil war ensued between Akara and Cuffy in which Akara won and Cuffy committed suicide in May 1763. Akara was a follower of Cuffy who took orders from him, but decided to take actions into his own hands attacking and killing Dutch

colonisers. To date, the anniversary of the rebellion on February 23 is celebrated in Guyana as Republic Day.

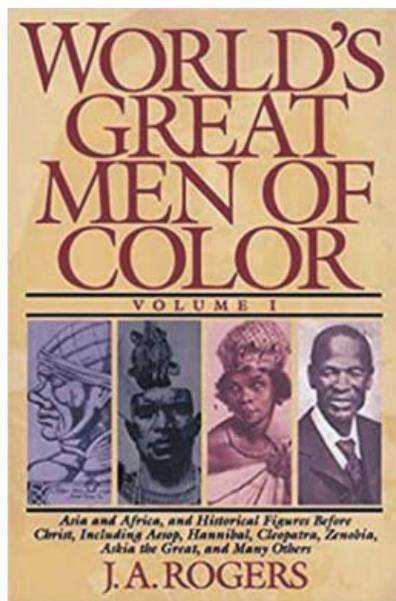
Fedon – Fedon Rebellion of 1795

Born on the island of Martinique, Fedon was the son of a free African woman and Pierre Fedon, a French jeweller who travelled from Bordeaux, France, in 1749 to the island of Martinique. Drawing inspiration from the French Revolution in France, Fedon wanted to make Grenada a "Black Republic just like Haiti". With his vision in mind, backed with the support of several troops of around 100 freed Blacks, on the night of March 2, 1795, they began attacks against the cities of Grenville, Gouyave, and St John, looting and burning houses and executing British settlers on the streets. In the course of time, between 14,000 and 28,000 slaves supported Fedon's intentions, as he also got support from French people who wanted the British off the island. By 1796, Fedon and his rebels were controlling the whole island. Towards the end of the rebellion, Fedon's brother was killed by the British and he retaliated by having 48 British hostages executed, including the governor of Grenada, Ninian Home. Fedon and his group were defeated in June 1796, but history says tensions remained until slavery was abolished in 1834. He was, however, never captured, with the shared belief being that he died at sea on a canoe.



MUST READ BLACK HISTORY BOOKS

By Ralph Cantave

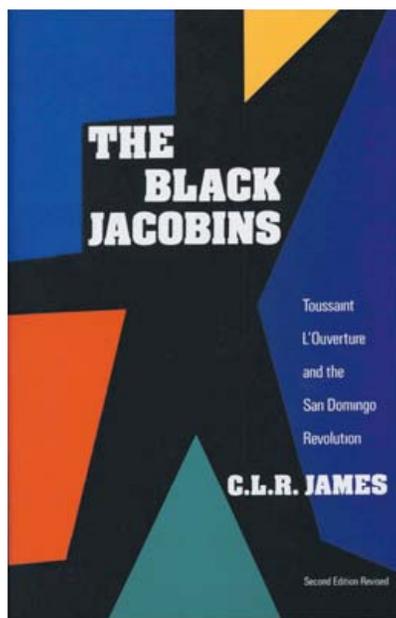


World's Great Men of Color

J.A. Rogers was a Jamaican historian, journalist, and scholar who published many books and articles about African history before slavery. Rogers often travelled as a researcher, and highlighted the role of Africans in shaping early civilizations. One of Rogers' premier books is *World's Great Men of Color*. In this book, he shares the biography of black people in Africa, Asia and Europe, who influenced the world or were outstanding in various fields and positions. This book has multiple volumes and shares narratives of black people in history before Christ, up until modern times. Rogers is regarded as one of the pioneers to popularise the study of black history – specifically, African people and civilizations.

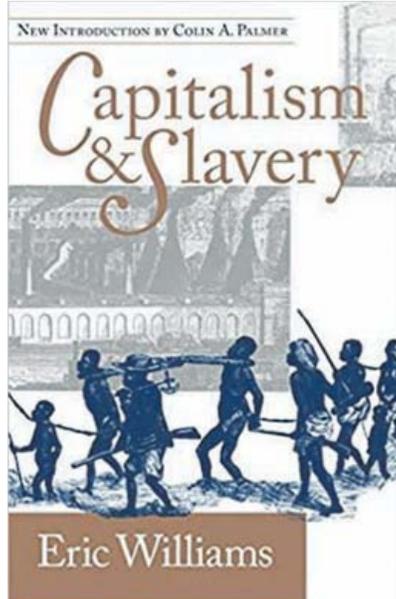
The Black Jacobins

C.L.R. James was a Trinidadian historian and journalist. James was a dedicated political advocate of anti-colonial struggles and the liberation of the “coloured” world. He was also well travelled, and his work was recognised in many countries. One of his premier books is *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. This book gives a thorough detail of the Haitian Revolution and Toussaint L'Ouverture, who organised and led the island into overthrowing the slave system. Although Toussaint died in a prison in France, James expands on his role and decisions which allowed the former slaves to gain victory in the revolt. This resulted in Haiti becoming the first independent nation in the Western world that was free of slavery and also the first black republic. The Haitian Revolution inspired dozens of results once the news spread across the region.



Capitalism and Slavery

While slavery was not the only significant part of black history, its existence still affects many black communities and families to this day. In *Capitalism and Slavery*, Dr. Eric Williams wrote a thesis on the economic system created by the slave trade. He provides a total view and breakdown of the organisation of slavery and the role it played in making Britain and European nations economic powerhouses even after the abolishment of slavery. One of the highlights of the book is also how capitalism eventually led to the destruction of slavery. Williams was also the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

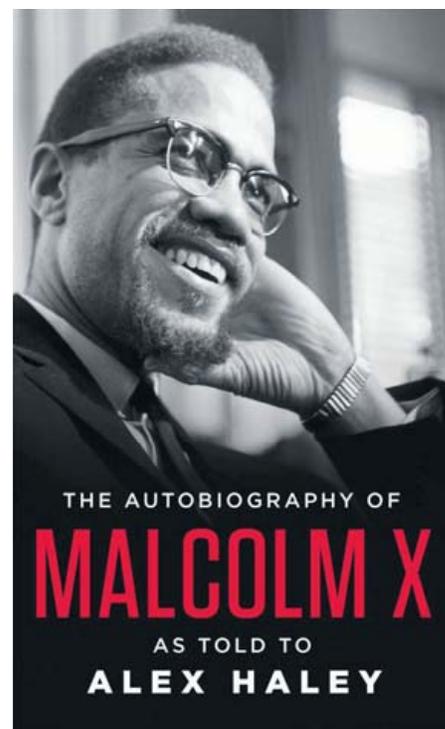
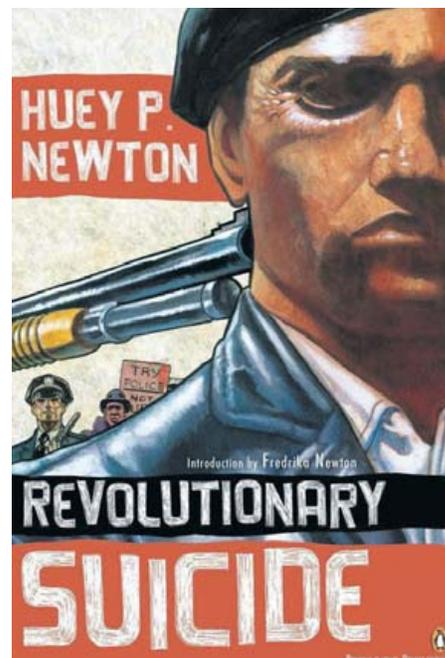


Revolutionary Suicide

After the deaths of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, many black youths felt the need to redirect the peaceful approach to civil rights, and become more radical in defending black people and black communities. The Black Panther was one of the organisations that became frontline defenders in the black power movement. One of the founders of the organisation was Huey P. Newton, a scholar and activist. In his book *Revolutionary Suicide*, Newton shares his personal story, ideologies, observations and beliefs that inspired him to dedicate his life to fighting for blacks in America and the rest of the world.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

At one point, Malcolm X was branded as the most dangerous man in America. He hovered above 6ft, was brazen in his speech, and unapologetic about the rights of black people in America and the rest of the world. The former drug dealer, pimp, and hustler became one of the most feared or revered activists in the world.



His transformation from thug to minister began in prison, and from that moment his only focus was the upliftment, protection, and development of black people. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* is still the most googled autobiography there is. This book is mandatory reading for anyone interested in an amazing story and exploration of the mind of Malcolm X.



Let that "Fro" Grow!

By: Evelyne Ilceus

Every year, from the 1st of February to the 1st of March, we celebrate Black History month. Typically, Black History month is acknowledged by highlighting the black historical figures who have made striking contributions to the African American community, and this year will be no different. For 2021's Black History month celebration, we will be taking a look into the contributions of Melinne Delices Gumbs Milz to the African American community of St. Maarten.

Melinne Delices Gumbs Milz is the founder of "La Rose Hair Oil", and is often found posting videos on Facebook addressing issues surrounding the behaviour of young females in St. Maarten, sharing her life experiences, and giving advice. On July 4, 2020, Melinne Delices shared an inspirational post in regards to texturism – a common issue in the black community where looser-curl patterns are thought to be more superior than "kinkier" textured hair.

"My hair used to be called all kinds of ugly names," is a comment made by a woman in response to Melinne. Coco plaits, nappy, hard hair – these are all very offensive terms. It seems that everything except for beautiful words are used to describe our hair! Coolie hair is, and always has been, great and magnificent. This is why most hair-care lines use models that have curly hair as their main spokesperson. They want to show-off that unique type of natural-looking hair to the world in a way that everyone should feel confident about it.

Women who have type 4C hair grew up being told that their hair was nappy or ugly. Although it may not be the typical hair texture, the tightly coiled strands tend to be more fragile and have a very tight zigzag pattern which is sometimes looked down upon for being different.

Most females with this type of hair today always try to modify their hair because they are not happy with it. With society telling them they do not look like the rest, their insecurities overcome them and they begin to add various products to achieve the "regular" curly textured hair. This has created a vicious cycle and it is our duty as youngsters to break it!

I want each and every one of you to embrace your hair. That lustrous, thick, artfully messy and shiny hair cannot be replaced or duplicated. It's resilient just like you, and should not be hidden from the world. Give love to your hair in all the right ways and I am sure it will love you back. We will



slowly build each other up, making everyone stop and stare at our exclusive hair.

In the post, "This is personal for me." Melinne Delices Gumbs Milz highlights the problem of texturism in the hair industry and how it's effects cause black girls with kinkier textured hair to view their hair. From here on, she vowed to always be the spokes person for "La Rose Hair Oil" and has, to this day, stuck to her word. The reactions to her uplifting hair campaign, slogans and various motivational videos has led to more 4C haired girls in St. Maarten not feeling afraid or ashamed anymore. These powerful young ladies have made use of her encouragement, taken the beneficial tips and are now ready to just let their "fro" grow!



SPREAD THE LOVE-VIRUS, NOT CORONA-VIRUS

By Lavisha Dadlani

I get it, your mind is clogged up with last minute Valentine's ideas as it's a time to display your affection and gratitude to the love of your life. But how could this day be special at all while adhering to COVID procedures?

As Valentine's Day is around the corner, it is inevitable we have to face our annual love day with extra caution. Keeping this in mind, we can still celebrate this memorable day and create more magical moments.

So, let's get you started with 10 ideas that you and your significant other can indulge in to make the most of this pandemic-stricken love season!

For those sporting enthusiasts, we suggest starting off the day with an early morning hike to watch the panoramic sunrise. This can be followed by a romantic breakfast date after the amazing adventure.

Smooth jazz playing, a cosy blanket, soft pillows to cuddle, a few candles, and some favourite treats is the perfect setting for an indoor picnic in your garden or patio, setting the mood for this year's pandemic-love day theme number two. A candlelight dinner while watching your favourite romantic movies to spice up your evening is the perfect recipe for our cinephiles.

Photographs of all your cherished moments can be creatively scrapbooked to create memories to reminisce later on. This would also make an ultimate handmade gift for a special occasion. Also, the time spent making this enhances the bond with your Valentine.

Keeping with the theme of future memorandums, a time capsule is another unique way to treasure your moments spent together. Gather your favourite trinkets, love notes, and other keepsakes in a box and bury it. In a few years, you can open up your capsule and relive the special moments.

Bring some laughter and competition into the mix by playing a series of games. From Uno to Monopoly, Heads-up to Taboo, the options are endless and the fun is limitless.

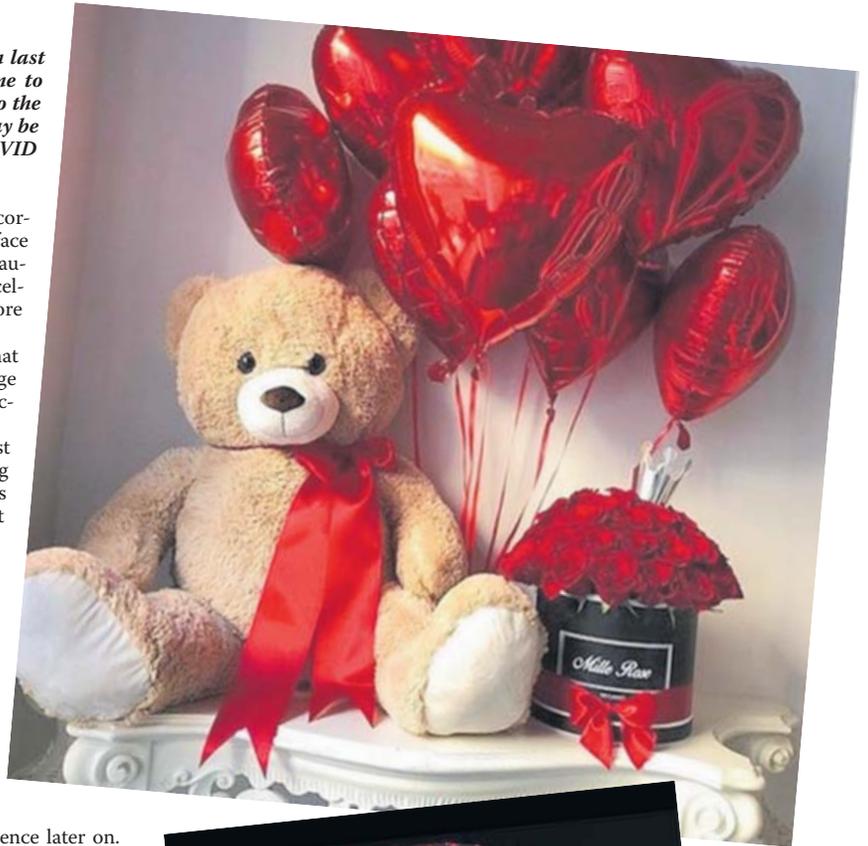
Spice up your date by following recipes either virtually or alongside your loved one to make a gourmet dish, dessert and a mocktail to create that magical lunch or dinner date.

Painting portraits or abstract art to create heart-work is another idea for a wonderful personalised gift. This is therapeutic and could also help uncover a hidden talent. Besides, you're enjoying precious time with your partner!

Rejuvenate your mind and body by visiting a spa safely or giving each other massages at home. Releasing tension brings a sense of serenity that leaves you and your Valentine in a calm, relaxed mood which is ideally suited for this day.

Lastly, a fitting end to your romantic day can be one with a warm and snug outdoor bonfire. Singing, chatting, roasting marshmallows and even star gazing, could create the perfect scene for you to express your appreciation for that special someone.

With this list we hope to have sparked some innovative ideas to inspire you to brighten up your love life during this Valentine season. Remember that we must be mindful of our actions in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but this definitely does not restrict spreading the Love-Virus!



What are young couples doing this Valentine's Day

By Henny Ramchandani and Juliana Gueriña

Valentine's Day – the day when lovers express their feelings and affections with gifts and greetings. Some couples even celebrate this day with candlelit dinners, movie nights or couple massages, but this year things have changed. With the rise of COVID-19 cases, many may find it difficult to celebrate this day with their special someone. The pandemic has definitely put a halt to many of our daily activities and special plans. However, many are still trying to find creative ways to enjoy this love-day amidst this difficult time. But, how exactly? We asked a few of our teenage friends who are in relationships how they will spend their 2021 Valentine's Day, hoping to inspire our audience with their innovative ideas.

1. Do you guys have any plans this Valentine's Day?

- - Yes, this Valentine's Day we are planning to go for a picnic, eat all of our favourite foods, and give each other our gifts while being COVID-19 safe.
- - Yes, during Valentine's Day I am planning to surprise my significant other with a movie night at my house with all her gifts laid out, and all of her favourite foods and snacks. This is a great way for us to spend time together while still being COVID safe.
- - Yes, my favourite girl and I will be staying together on Valentine's because of COVID. We have plans, but she doesn't know about them because these plans are a surprise.
- - Well, we don't have any sort of plan for Valentine's Day, at least not for this year because it's a hassle.

2. What was your ideal Valentine's Day plan (before COVID-19)?

- - Before COVID our ideal Valentine's Day plan was going to a nice dinner then going to watch a movie.
- - Before COVID my ideal Valentine's Day was to definitely take my significant other to a fancy dinner, and then go by the beach at night while I surprise her with all her gifts, but since there is a global pandemic, I had to alter my plans.
- - In the day, we would give each other our gifts and then go shopping for her, and at night we would go out for a nice dinner, and then come back home to one of our houses and watch some mov-



- ies or "Netflix" together while eating some snacks.
- - We are both still kids, so of course we both have an "ideal" Valentine's Day, but being kids we aren't exactly able to do everything we want, but for now a decent day would be just being able to spend time with each other.

3. Are you as excited for Valentine's Day as you would normally be?

- - Yes, I am always excited to hangout and see my significant other regardless of the circumstances, because we are always able to have a great time.
- - Yes, I am very excited for Valentine's Day because my significant other is always appreciative of the smallest things, which makes me really happy. And I am excited to see her reaction to my surprise.
- - I am actually a bit more excited for Valentine's day because this time we get to spend the whole day together doing so many things that I have planned.
- - No, because of COVID probably nothing is going to happen.

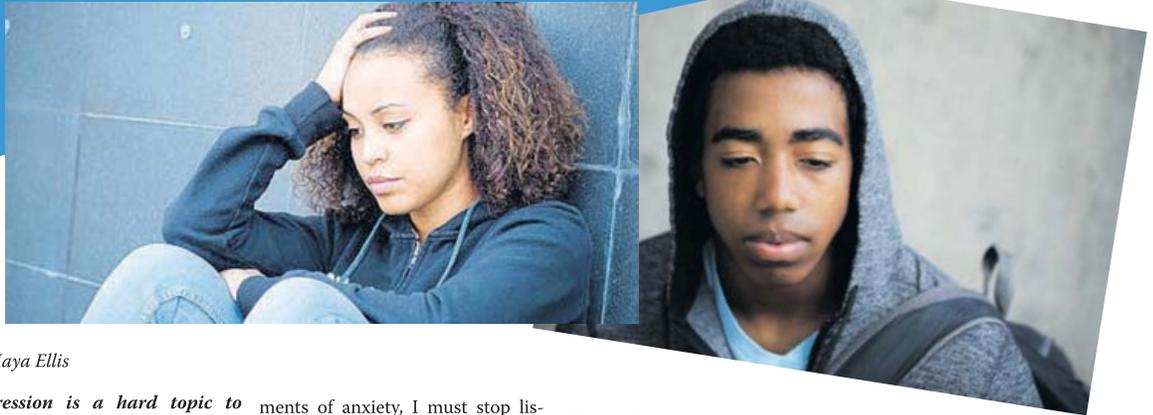
4. Do you think COVID affected your Valentine's Day plans? Why or why not?

- - I don't think COVID affected our Valentine's plan because we are still able to go out and enjoy our time together on the special day.
- - COVID definitely affected my Valentine's Day plans because I wanted to go all out on that day, but I am still happy and grateful that I figured something out.
- - COVID did affect my Valentine's Day plans, but in a good way. Instead of going out and driving around and doing things where we would be around a crowd, we will spend the day in each other's company, and have so much fun! I can't wait to be with my special girl.
- - Yes, COVID did affect anything we could have possibly done. Last year, we were able to hang out all day on Valentine's Day and had the opportunity to go out at night, although getting a "yes" to go out from our parents now is very unlikely and obstructs anything we could've possibly done.

As shown in the responses, many couples are still able to figure out romantic and memorable ways to spend their Valentine's Day regardless of the circumstances. All the couples made adjustments to their plans and are making sure to adhere to the COVID-19 guidelines. We would like to take this moment to remind you all to continue practicing social distancing, washing/ sanitising your hands regularly, and limiting movements so that we can quickly return to celebrating these special occasions with normalcy. With that said, *Teen Times* would like to wish you all a Happy and Safe Valentine's Day!



LET'S TALK ABOUT: TEENAGE DEPRESSION; TIPS FOR PARENTS



By Maya Ellis

Depression is a hard topic to touch on for many people – especially young teens. Many people do not realise how it affects our days.

Anybody who has ever gone through depression will tell you that it's not just something in your mind, it's also something you feel in your body. As much as it's in your head it's also in your stomach.

This is a picture of what anxiety and depression at times feels like.

Having anxiety and depression is like simultaneously being scared and tired. It is the fear of failure, with no urge to be productive. It is wanting friends, but hating having to socialise. It is craving to be alone, yet not wanting to be lonely. It is feeling everything at once, but then feeling paralysed to the point of numbness.

What I am now beginning to realise in life is that it is fear that causes the anxiety.

I have learned that in these mo-

ments of anxiety, I must stop listening to myself and start talking instead!

You feel that urge to reach out to your parents, but don't know how? Depression is already an exhausting and painful battle. Everyday chores get neglected, going to school and work becomes a repeated struggle, and it gets hard to pull yourself out of bed in the morning when that alarm goes off. The whole world is moving except for you and it truly feels like someone pushed the pause button on your life.

Depression can sometimes also feel like your only companion.

Depression is like LeBron James' hairline – it leaves and then it somehow comes back.

It's not like you don't want to be happy, but rather no matter how hard you try, that happiness always feels out of reach. You feel suffocated, embarrassed, and ashamed, while the thought of, "why did I have to be this way," runs through your mind. You have a great family, amazing friends, everything is okay, and yet all you ever seem to notice is

all the sadness.

Society will tell you to try yoga, go for a walk, meditate, but you try to tell them that this cannot be solved by a mere exercise or meditation. It is a disease that constantly affects every aspect of your life.

I understand how intimidating it is to approach your parents when you need them the most.

Parents should open their eyes wider to notice those behavioural changes in their child. These will be the biggest indicators when they go silent.

Here are 5 ways to help your child with depression:

Recognise that clinical depression is an illness and should be treated like any other illness your child may have.

Do not freak out – being in denial will not help your child, face it as calmly as you possibly can.

Do your homework – read about anxiety and depression and try to understand the nature of it.

Talk to your child frequently.

Do not be afraid to bring up the topic "Suicidal thoughts" – ask them about it.

There is a common misconception that depression is easy to spot.

Depression is not always obvious which is why so many of us struggle with it silently.

Sometimes it means smiling on the outside when in reality, we are "dying" on the inside.

Sometimes it feels like no one really understands what we are actually going through.

One moment you're okay – smiling and laughing. Then other times, all you want to do is lock yourself in a safe space. The days become darker and you barely recognise your life, but you do not care. They will ask you "Why are you doing this to yourself?" Actually, I am not, but it is hard to describe so I just spare them the explanation and reply, "You won't understand," while it keeps suffocating me until I lose my breath.



WHAT'S UP WITH THESE VOLCANOS?

By Diya Sachdev

Can you imagine the toll a natural disaster would take on a country and its people in these already unfavourable conditions? Unfortunately, this may eventually become the pitiful state of reality for one of our fellow Caribbean neighbours. La Soufrière volcano in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a stunning site and eminent tourist attraction, now poses a threat to the island with the passing days, as signs that point to likelihood of an eruption are gradually rising. This once-dormant volcano that has been quiet for decades, is now rumbling back to life in the eastern Caribbean, prompting officials to issue alerts and intriguing scientists to rush in to study this activity that is claimed to have not been observed in years!



The most recent warning was issued on the December 22, 2020 for La Soufrière volcano in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a chain of islands home to more than 100,000 people. Monitoring systems, satellite imagery and visual observations have confirmed increased seismic and fumarolic activity, strong gas emissions, emergence of a satellite dome on the south-east of the existing volcanic dome and changes to the crater lake. Also, not too long ago, on the night of

January 16, there were reports of a 'red glow' coming from the summit of the volcano. The National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) of St. Vincent and the Grenadines explained that La Soufrière continually undergoes effusive eruptions, as hot magma approaches the surface at extreme temperatures. In the nights, this phenomenon appears as fire or a bright red glow above the crater. As the dome grows, making its way to the rim of the crater, such a 'glow' will be seen on clear nights. With all this activity occurring, the alert level for this volcano has been elevated to orange – the third highest of four levels. This level of alert means that there is highly elevated seismicity or fu-

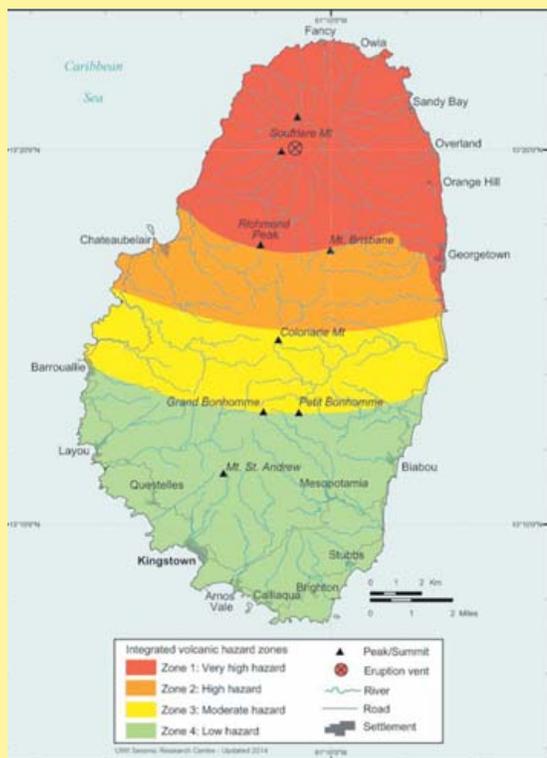
marolic activity, among other unusual circumstances. This called for the government to warn those living near the volcano to prepare to evacuate if needed, since eruptions may be probable with less than 24 hours' notice.

Similar to other natural disasters, volcanic eruptions are accompanied with adverse consequences, not only for St. Vincent in this case, but rather more of our fellow Caribbean islands. Should the severity of the matter increase, and this explosion become a more violent one, health concerns, death, property loss, economic recession, environmental degradation and much more harm is to come.

Volcanoes spew hot, dangerous gases, ash, lava, and rock that are powerfully destructive. Volcanic ash and gases are the major contributors to health threats and high fatality rates after an explosion. Exposure to volcanic ash and gases, can be equally as harmful to healthy individuals and vulnerable individuals, i.e., those with asthma, emphysema, and other underlying chronic lung diseases, infants and elderly individuals. Volcanic ash and gases have the potential to accumulate in low-lying areas and blow away. In either case, exposure to these harmful substances in lower levels, can irritate the eyes, nose, and throat. Meanwhile, at higher levels, they can cause rapid breathing, headache, dizziness, swelling and spasm of the throat, and suffocation leading to death. This information can be supported by past incidents. For instance, La Soufrière, located near the northern tip of the main island of St. Vincent, last erupted in 1979, and a previous eruption in 1902 killed some 1,600 people. Another quite prominent example would be the Montserrat eruption that occurred in 1997, from which the ashes spread, facilitated by wind currents, over much of the Caribbean, including St. Maarten. Aside from the impairment presented by volcanic ashes and gases, lava consumes everything in its path, and not to mention the major loss the economy would face in the presence of such a disaster.

Although it is in everyone's best interest for the situation in St. Vincent not to worsen, there are chances. With an

ongoing pandemic, such added tragedy can be quite difficult to cope with, by presenting further hazards to our health and economy. All in all, one can only hope everything will work in our favour.



Feature

Updates on COVID-19 Vaccines

By Diya Sachdev

One of the greatest challenges mankind has faced since World War Two, an unforeseen and uncompromising health and socio-economic crisis, the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic has a climbing death toll and has now reached the tragic milestone of a million deaths. Aside from this suffering faced by the human race, this pandemic adversely impacts any country it touches socially, economically and politically, leaving deep scars. We must work together to slow the spread of the coronavirus through precautionary measures such as sanitising, wearing a mask and social distancing. Despite the success of these mitigation measures in containing the virus, they are engendering economic degradation. This situation calls for us to take a step further. Thanks to some brilliant minds at work, we will soon gain access to vaccines intended to aid in the prevention of spreading the virus in a less economically challenging manner.

Given the severity of the matter and the fact that vaccines are a current public and political obsession, scientists are racing to produce safe and efficient coronavirus vaccines by next year. Vaccines generally require years of research and testing before reaching the clinic. The testing process involves three major phases of testing:

Phase 1: Tests for the safety of the vaccine by determining whether it triggers an immune response in a small group of healthy individuals.

Phase 2: Broadens the selection of individuals to include those who are already exposed to the virus or are susceptible to infection.

Phase 3: Expands the testing pool to include thousands of individuals to test the vaccine's safety and efficiency among a wider selection of individuals, considering immune responses may vary based on age, gender, ethnicity and presence of underlying health issues.

Most vaccines that exhibit signs

of success during phase 3 of the testing process become approved. There might be a few hindrances that follow in terms of pricing, production and distribution – who should be the initial target audience.

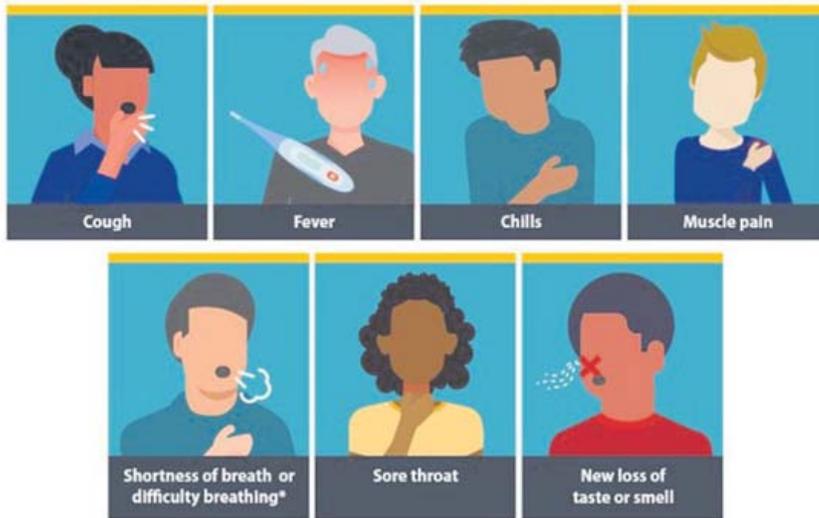
Out of the 86 proposed vaccines meant for prevention of the coronavirus's spread, so far four vaccines are shown to be quite successful approaches in controlling this disease. To be specific, these vaccines are those presented by Pfizer in collaboration with BioNTech, Oxford University in collaboration with AstraZeneca, Moderna Therapeutics in collaboration with the National Institutes of Health and lastly, The Gamaleya National Center of Epidemiology and Microbiology. A fair comparison of the above-mentioned vaccines can be seen as follows:

Pfizer in collaboration with BioNTech:

Who: Pfizer is one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies based in New York and has worked in collaboration with the German biotech company called BioNTech to develop the BNT162b2 vaccine.

Status: On December 8, 2020, the FDA declared that the first dosage (two doses of the vaccine are required) of the Pfizer vaccine is safe and provides strong protection against COVID-19 within 10 days. This information does not take into account the recipient's race, weight, or age. Further analysis established that the vaccine is 95 per cent effective in preventing mild cases of COVID-19 with no serious safety concerns. The vaccine is now being marketed to medical staff and patients at hospitals across the United Kingdom (UK). The vaccine has also been granted emergency approval in Canada and conditional approval in the European Union.

Know the symptoms of COVID-19, which can include the following:



Storage: The vaccines need to be stored in ultra-cold freezers set at minus 70 degrees Celsius (minus 94 degrees Fahrenheit).

Oxford University in collabora-



tion with AstraZeneca:

Who: The Oxford University in the UK has worked in collaboration with the biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca to develop the ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 vaccine. **Status:** On November 18, 2020, preliminary results from Oxford's phase 2 trials showed that the vaccine triggered strong immune responses throughout all age groups, including elder adults who are more susceptible to CO-

VID-19. Those who received the vaccine only experienced minor side effects such as fatigue and headache. A provisional analysis of Oxford's phase 3 trials, on December 8, 2020, showed the vaccine is safe and 62 per cent to 90 per cent effective in preventing COVID-19 after two standard doses. This vaccine is now approved for use in the UK, Argentina, and India.

Storage: This vaccine's storage requirements are relatively easily achievable, with only normal refrigeration being necessary.

Moderna Therapeutics in collaboration with the National Institutes of Health:

Who: Moderna Therapeutics is a Massachusetts-based biotech company that worked collaboratively with the National Institutes of Health to produce the mRNA-1273 vaccine.

Status: Preliminary findings from Moderna's phase 1 trials showed that healthy subjects, inclusive of older patients, produced a strong immune response. Meanwhile, an interim analysis of its phase 3 results on November 30, 2020, shows the vaccine is 94.5 per cent effective in preventing COVID-19, including severe cases of the disease. On January 8, the UK approved the use of Moderna's vaccine, making it the third vaccine available in the country. On December 18, 2020, the FDA granted emergency approval to Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine, a day after an advisory panel decided that the benefits of the vaccine outweigh the risks, such as the mild side effects reported in their clinical trial. The vaccine has been approved in the European Union, Canada and Israel.

Storage: This vaccine, like the one developed by Oxford University

and AstraZeneca, can be stored in normal refrigeration, however only for a limit of 30 days.

The Gamaleya National Center of Epidemiology and Microbiology:

Who: The Gamaleya National Center of Epidemiology and Microbiology is a Russian research institution that worked in partnership with the state-run Russian Direct Investment Fund to produce the Sputnik V vaccine.

Status: On November 11, 2020, Gamaleya reported that an interim analysis of its phase three trials found 92 per cent efficiency of the Sputnik V vaccine. However, the report was only based on a mediocre 20 cases which indicates the results of the trial weren't substantially convincing. This vaccine was cleared for usage in Russia in August 2020, prior to the vaccine's phase 3 trials. Despite this lack of sufficient evidence, such a move was still made, making people apprehensive of taking the vaccine. In late December 2020, Belarus and Argentina granted approval and began vaccination campaigns with the Sputnik V vaccine. Furthermore, Venezuela and Paraguay have also granted emergency authorisation, and Bolivia planned to kick off a vaccination program with Sputnik V in late January with an initial shipment of 2.6 million doses. Serbia has also received an initial 5,000 doses of the vaccine.

Storage: The Sputnik V vaccine can be stored at regular fridge temperature, in a dry form.

On a final note, while the success of the above-mentioned vaccines is progressively increasing as time goes by, the prevention of the virus's spread is in our hands. We as a community must work collaboratively to ensure our safety and that of those around us. We must adhere to all precautionary measures strictly. I hope that eventually, these long-awaited vaccines become accessible and advantageous to all.

