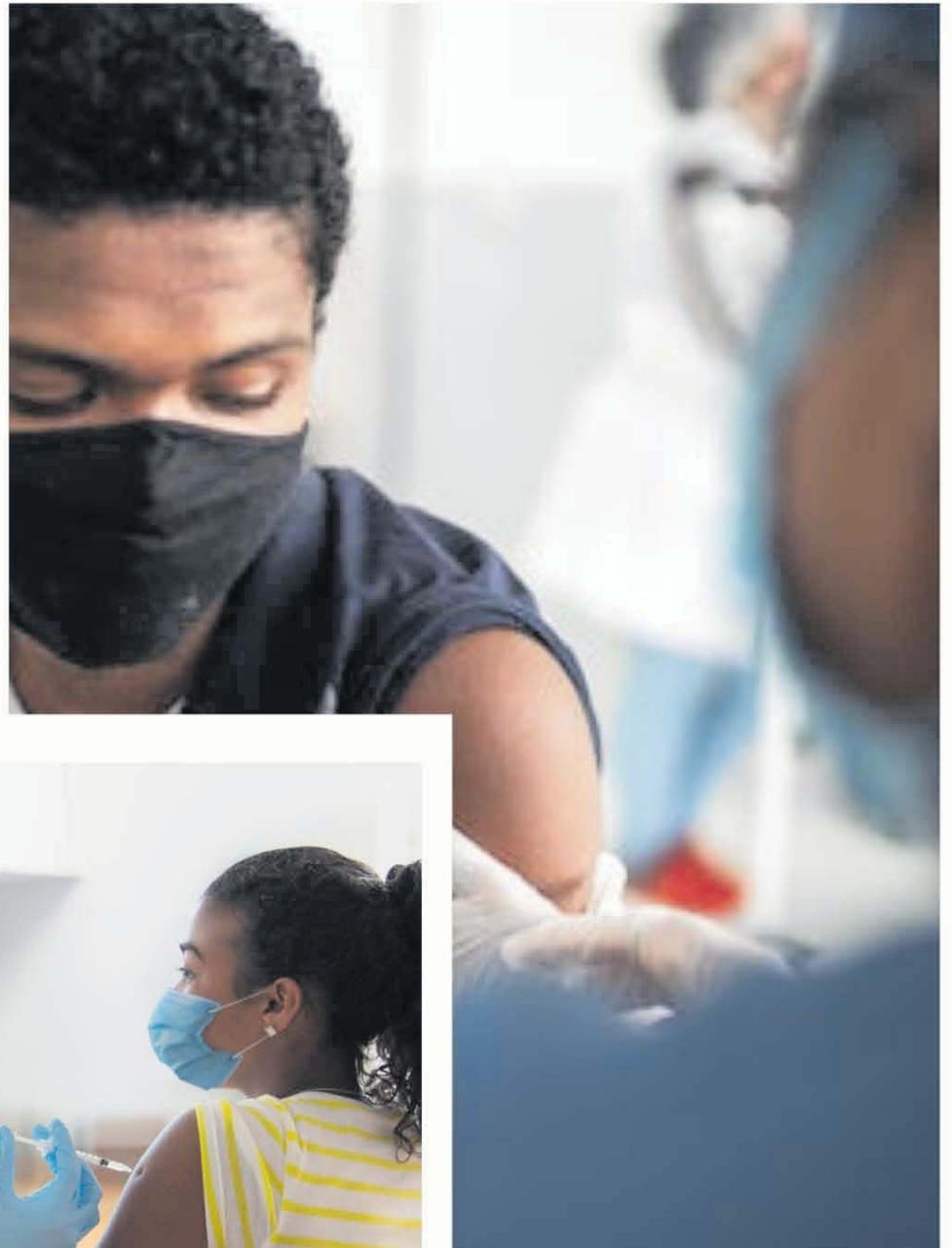


# TEEN TIMES

FOR THE YOUTH, BY THE YOUTH!

## TEENS AND THE VACCINE!



# EmpowerU launches first academic scholarship

As part of its mission to support Caribbean students with college and career resources, EmpowerU has launched the 2021 EmpowerU Scholars Fund as its first-ever academic scholarship for Caribbean students. Winners will be awarded a US \$1000 scholarship as part of tuition assistance at any college or university of their choosing. The application will remain open until August 1.

Parents and students can learn more about application details, documents required, other free services, college resources, and more via EmpowerU's website: [www.empoweru.online/scholarships](http://www.empoweru.online/scholarships). If you have any questions or are interested in working with EmpowerU, feel free to contact them at [connect.empoweru@gmail.com](mailto:connect.empoweru@gmail.com)

EmpowerU Founder Harsha Parchani said: "Because of our generous donors, we at EmpowerU are able to support the multitude of dreams of our young people by offering scholarship programs to Caribbean-, first generation-, and minority-students. Our scholarships cater towards financing tuition and other academic fees, but we also offer assistance to those that demonstrate deeper financial need."

"With limited to no financial opportunities available to Caribbean students, we at EmpowerU hope to bridge this financial gap. In fact, our survey determined that only 38% of Caribbean students felt they had adequate financial opportunities to assist in paying for tertiary education. For many, the large cost of a college education demotivates many young people from continuing their education. We hope that through our scholarship program, we can reduce the barrier to entry for many minority groups and help empower the next generation of leaders, innovators, and disrupters," she said.

Born and raised on St. Maarten, Harsha is a graduate of Learning Unlimited. She also graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in Electrical Engineering and is

currently an engineer with Microsoft Cooperation. Harsha is also a former member of Teen Times.

EmpowerU's first ever academic scholarship is aimed at supporting young Caribbean students pursuing tertiary education (Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral degrees). This scholarship is aimed at supporting eligible students with tuition and book fee assistance. The number of winners awarded is based on available funds.

## APPLY TODAY EMPOWERU SCHOLARS FUND

**EmpowerU**

EMPOWERU.ONLINE



HARSHA PARCHANI

**TEENTIMES**  
FOR THE YOUTH, BY THE YOUTH!

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## need money for college?

## EMPOWERU SCHOLARS FUND

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# HISTORY INFORMS NATIONAL IDENTITY

~ Teen Times submits request for St. Maarten history curriculum ~

The members of the youth publication, *Teen Times*, have requested the Party for Progress (PPF) faction in Parliament to take whatever steps it deems necessary to facilitate and realize the implementation of comprehensive St. Maarten history in secondary school curriculum. The group presented PFP leader MP Melissa Gumbs with its official request on Saturday, June 5, during one of its weekly team meetings.

The group is aware that there is an Education Committee of Parliament, but chose to present its request to PFP, considering its young core and forward-thinking approaches. The intent is for PFP to channel the request using the correct procedure and take whatever steps the faction deems necessary to first determine what such an effort would require.

“Once the faction is clear on a way forward, *Teen Times* would like to see serious effort put towards such an initiative, even if it means involving the Ministry and Minister of Education, using the expertise available at the Ministry with the involvement of necessary third parties and experts,” *Teen Times* said in its request. It added that the group does not believe in sitting back and waiting on government to identify priority areas for young people. As such, *Teen Times* believes that history informs national identity, and adding the country’s history to curriculum is a priority for young people.



The group said that “for far too long, we have sat back and watched our young people inundated with this history of Europe and – in some schools – the United States. While we believe this is also necessary and do not want to diminish the importance of global history, only in very limited instances on the elementary school level is anything about St. Maarten’s history actually taught. Our students therefore lack valuable knowledge of their history as compared to their peers in the wider Caribbean; in particular, on the secondary school level. *Teen Times* believes it is time to take steps towards implementing comprehensive St. Maarten History in the curriculum in our secondary schools.”

Once a framework of how St. Maarten History will be taught, whether by course, in parts over a single school year, or a continuous running-course over the years in secondary school from grade to grade, *Teen Times* suggests that a Curriculum Writing Team should be put in place to complete the process.

“We are aware of how programs and electives are

chosen in the schools, so we are under no illusion that the inclusion of a new subject course on the high school level will be done immediately. But such a start could also be in the form of a pilot project at one secondary school where the curriculum implementation can be assessed,” *Teen Times* said, adding that teachers will obviously play a key role and a change in the education law will also probably be required.

The group believes that the steps of such an initiative should include the following:

- Planning – Scale, scope, stakeholders, timelines
- Vision – Purpose, intended learning outcomes
- Assess – Review literature, SWOT analysis, surveys
- Training – Training of teachers
- Structure – Program structure, course progression, educational experiences
- Monitor & Adapt – Perhaps implementing a pilot project prior to full implementation.

“We believe that before a young person can optimally elevate our country in various fields, said young person must know their

history and appreciate their past to fully embrace their future. This education of their history, the country’s history, should start within the schools. More specifically, with curriculum or courses that focus on St. Maarten’s history and development. We do not expect this project to be completed overnight, but we must make it a national project and after years of talk, we must make a start for the sake of our children, future generations and for the love of St. Maarten,” the group said.

Nation-building refers to the process of engaging

their education is put to the right use.

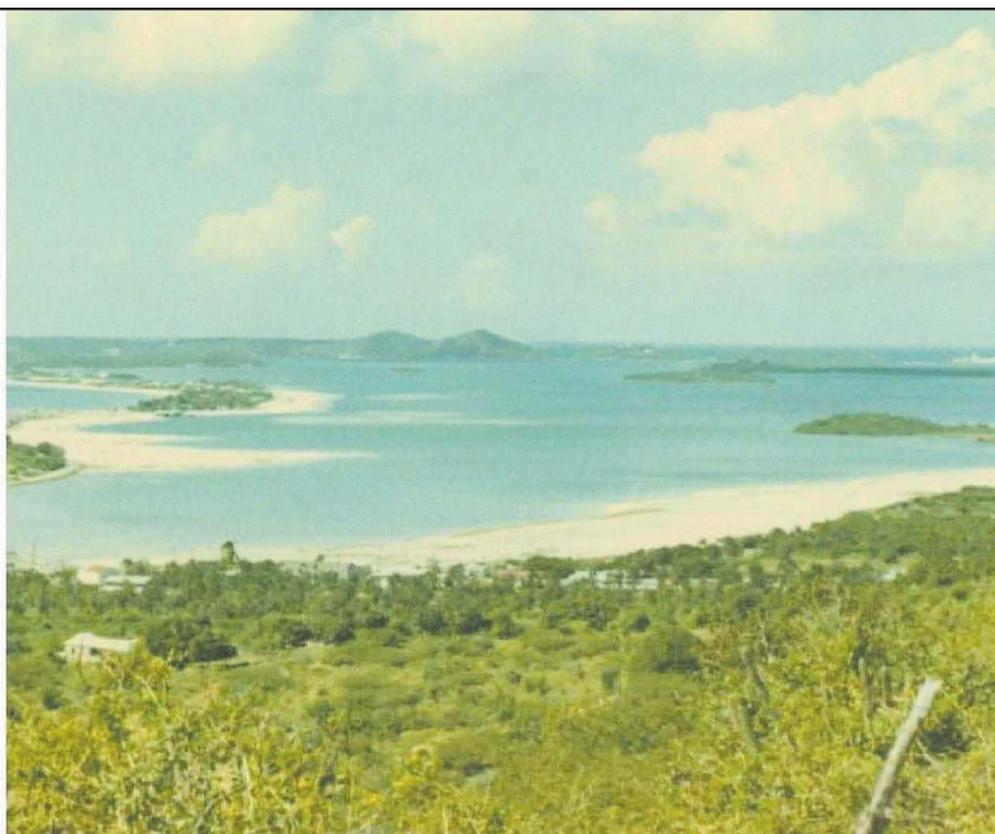
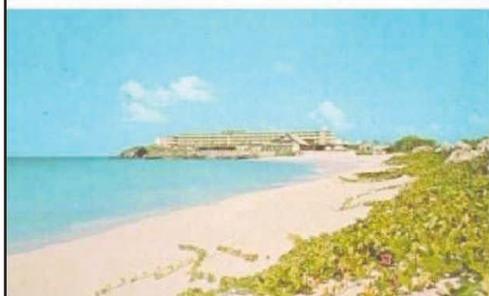
More specifically, with curriculum or courses that focus on St. Maarten’s history and development. Curriculum development can be defined as the step-by-step process used to create positive improvements in courses offered by schools. As a result, an institution must have a plan in place for acknowledging these shifts – and then be able to implement them in the curriculum. Once such a plan is developed, a country must also be ready to amend existing education laws to accommodate new curriculum in the schools.



all the citizens in the development of the nation. The future, as well as the present of our country, is in the hands of its youth. Youth play an important role in the progress and development of our nation as they constitute a large portion of the total population of the country. Young people are the building blocks in the economic and social development of a nation. A nation develops at a steady pace when the youth of the country is educated and

*Teen Times* believes it is time to stop talking and take steps towards implementing St. Maarten History in the curriculum in our schools.

James Baldwin said “History is not merely something to be read. We carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all we do. History informs national identity.”



Feature

# Joanne Devries, frontline nurse, appreciated hero

*Joanne Devries is a nurse at the St. Maarten Medical Center and one of many heroes on the frontline in the fight against COVID 19. Teen Times wanted to get her perspective on having to deal with the pandemic in her profession.*

**Why did you choose the nursing profession?**

I remember as a child, I always told my parents that I wanted to become a midwife. I loved being around babies and helping moms take care of their babies. As I got older, my plans shifted, and I decided to study nursing. I remember doing my first-year internship at SMMC and thought, "I want to do this. I can do this!" At that time, I was interning in the medical/surgical ward. In 2015, I completed my nursing studies at IFE in Curaçao, where I obtained my RN diploma.

**Did you ever think in your entire life you would have to deal with a pandemic?**

We experience the hurricane season annually – I'm praying we will be spared from any hurricanes this year – so preparing for a hurricane seems quite natural to me. But a pandemic? For sure, I was not someone to think of dealing with a pandemic.

**Do you think your training prepared you well enough for COVID?**

We received training from our Hygiene Department at SMMC, and I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to said department. Through the Hygiene Department, we learned how to use our Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as stated by the protocol. When we went into patients' rooms, we felt confident enough in what we learned about donning and doffing over time. While we were taught well per protocol, how could a nurse feel prepared for a pandemic, which he/she never experienced?

**As a nurse, did a sense of duty automatically kick in to help people?**

Before admitting any patient with COVID-19 to the hospital, we received information sessions and more about the disease. I thought to myself, "I do not think I can do this because so many are dying, including nurses." Many thoughts filled my mind. The day arrived. Our first COVID patient was admitted. I remember that day like it was yesterday. I was scared, but I had to put my



emotions aside. My colleagues and I took care of the patient. Regardless of the situation, we remembered that the patient is someone's family member, and we must do our best at providing care. We motivated each other, and I overcame my

fear at that time.

**Were you ever scared during the height of the pandemic?**

Oh yes, in the beginning, I was scared because we did not know what to expect; what we would face when we entered

a patient's room. At a point in time, we were getting admissions one behind the other. I became scared during that time also. St. Maarten is a small place where everyone knows everyone. Imagine taking care of someone you know from a child, and even though, at that time, the person was very ill, he/she remembered you. Imagine everything was done to save that patient, but deep within you know that person may not survive. You cannot tell the family anything. How would you feel? It is heart breaking. Imagine how the patient's family feels. It could have been my family. A lot went through my mind at that time.

**How has your job changed as a result of COVID-19?**

-There are stricter precautions in place. For example, wearing a mask during all shifts, washing and sanitizing your hands frequently.

-Working on the COVID unit is a bit different compared to working on the ward. We wear PPE whenever caring for a COVID patient.

-Visiting hours have been suspended until further notice.

-An entry questionnaire is completed at the entrance before going to your appointment with the specialist.

-Waiting outdoors by Emergency Room containers when someone has flu-like symptoms.

-Social distancing – sitting six feet apart.

-Numerous sanitizer points in every department.

-COVID swabs are being done when patients are being admitted.

**Has the way you interact with patients changed?**

No, why should it change? At first, I was scared. I have now placed my emotions aside and care for the patients. The patients are human beings and should not feel any difference in care than those in the regular ward. I enjoyed working in the COVID ward because it was a different experience.

**How did patients handle being admitted to the hospital during this time?**

Patients would quicker put others at risk than say that they contracted the virus. When COVID just started, and patients started getting admitted, I realized some felt ashamed. Some refused





to confess that they had the virus and would later admit they knew they contracted the virus a few days ago.

**Were they visibly scared?**

Yes, they were. Some questions people would ask were: “Will I survive?”, “Will I die?” or “Can you pray for

me?” After watching the news, who wouldn’t be scared? I felt at the beginning (March/April 2020) that people were not reading about the virus. Everyone was listening to what others were saying instead of researching for themselves. At this stage, people are a lot more informed about the virus and

less scared.

**What are you most worried about as an essential worker?**

In the beginning, I was afraid of contracting the virus and passing it to my family and friends.

**What are you doing to look**

**after your mental health outside of work?**

Go to the beach, chill with my mom, dad, and friends. Speak to my brother who is abroad.

**Is being a frontline worker taking away time with family?**

When COVID-19 just started in St. Maarten, it was work and no play. Now the numbers have decreased, I have enough time to spend with my family.

**What are you looking forward to when this is all over?**

I look forward to traveling, which is my hobby.

**What do you want the public to know right now?**

Be safe, wear your mask, protect yourself, wash your hands, and sanitize to keep the bacteria away. Also, I would advise the public to vaccinate and those that are doubtful, do your research.

**What does a win look like for you right now?**

(1) When a patient leaves with a smile, walking out of the hospital and is in stable condition. As a nurse, I feel incredibly grateful to experience that. The feeling I get is a feeling I cannot explain. (2) Spending time with my loved ones and talking to my brother. (3) Enjoying and thanking God for life.

**At this stage, do you still like being a nurse?**

Of course, I love it. I would never change it for the world.

**What would you say to a young person who’s considering becoming a nurse?**

Go for it!!! It is a rewarding occupation.



# Feature

# My SXM Doet Experience

By Diya Sachdev

Have you ever wanted to give back to your community, but couldn't find a project that fitted into your schedule, or in a location that was easily accessible to you perhaps? Well, SXM Doet is just the right platform to get you in touch with several community-serving organizations, making it very likely for you to find yourself a doable project!

Thanks to the SXM Doet website's extensive listing of service events on the island, it comes as no surprise that I too was able to find a suitable project to undertake. Being someone who is artistically inclined and enjoys the company of others, I volunteered to put in a collaborative effort with fellow volunteers, to paint and beautify the parking lot of the National Institute of Arts (NIA) on May 29.

After our arrival, we were given nametags and the necessary supplies, such as brushes and paint. Without much delay, tasks were delegated and we immediately got to work. Each of us painted a different section of the wall a prescribed colour – all according to the design plan. However, our tasks weren't limited to just that; we were also instructed by our supervisor to make a "No Parking" sign on a certain portion of the wall. Although I have always drawn on smaller canvases or paper, I



volunteered to draw the sign on the wall.

Despite feeling slightly nervous at first about drawing on a much larger scale than that which I am accustomed to, I still put my abilities to the test. Fortunately, the outcome was just as I had desired, and I was pleased to have gotten the opportunity to experiment with, and gain more confidence in, drawing on new surfaces. Adding to the fun of the experience was the fact that my company wasn't limited to the friends I had attended the event with, so I got the opportunity

to work and interact with many others.

Naturally, everything has its own share of ups and downs, and challenges are encountered in almost all endeavours. It was the same with this experience. After hours of working in the hot sun, our diligence and effort went down the drain – I mean this quite literally. It began raining and some of our freshly done painting was washed off the wall. It would be discouraging for anyone to see their accomplishment being ruined, especially in a situation which

is out of their control, but we still kept a positive attitude; and after the rain passed, we restored the paintings on the walls.

All in all, I can say that this experience was worth signing up for. It had quite some benefits and I for one will not hesitate to volunteer for a SXM Doet project in the future. I hope this account of my experience inspires you to assist in the community, to make a difference however, whenever and wherever possible.



Feature

# BORED AT HOME?

By Juliana Gueriña

*Bored at home? Many students are currently busy with school, either physically or online. However, there are also students, who, because of the pandemic, got held back from going abroad to further their studies – I'm one amongst many of them. From being a busy student to suddenly having nothing to do at home, we find ourselves wondering: "What should I do now?"*

Since I've been at home all day for almost a year now, the following are some activities I have personally done to keep myself entertained.

## • Glass-painting

Having gained much popularity recently through TikTok, glass painting is a fun and easy project to do. You can give it away as a gift or keep it as room decor. Simply trace an inverted picture of your favorite Anime character with a sharpie, for example. Finish by filling in the gaps with acrylic paint then flipping over to reveal your masterpiece. More detailed tutorials can be seen on YouTube or TikTok.

## • CD painting

CD painting is done by making a CD clear by placing packing tape on the CD foil, ripping it and then painting any design you want with acrylic paint. This is something I took a while to discover and now it has slowly become an obsession. The glass painting technique of tracing



can also be used for these. More detailed tutorials can be seen on TikTok.

## • Keychains

These are simple DIYs that only require a keyring, string, beads and charms. Key tags can also be used with a picture of your choice to add a bit of spice to your keychain. These are so much fun and a great time killer, as many variations can be created with different types of beads.

## • Cleaning

I know it may seem strange, but

this is the perfect time to organize and declutter your room, closet or desk. Deep clean those junk drawers and shelves and get rid of random things that have been lying in your room. You may also probably come across that pile of clothes you abandoned or that don't fit you anymore, so you can choose to sell or donate them.

## • Game night with family/friends

Hosting a game night can actually help you lose track of time. Prepare snacks, activities, and board games for you to enjoy with your friends/family. Throw in some popcorn to turn this evening into a cozy movie night.

## • Time outside

Sitting at home can become suffocating, so it is important to go outside and catch some fresh air. While you are at it, you can exercise by going for a walk, riding your bike, skating, walking your dog or anything that helps you enjoy the breeze.

*Being stuck at home all day can be mentally exhausting and you might not feel your best at all times. Just remember that you are not the only one going through this and that this too shall pass. Take advantage of this time by bettering yourself and discovering new skills and hobbies. Most of all, stay positive, because better days are on their way!*



# ATLANTIS: THE REBIRTH

By Rohan Goswami

*Imagine that you lived in a perfect world: What would that be like? What would be the rules? Who would be the people? What would be present in a world that was perfect for you and you only? Well, the definitions for the term "perfect" are highly subjective and really depend on what everyone's idea of utopia is.*

This idea of a perfect world was what gave local artist and teacher, Jonathan van Arneman, the inspiration to put his blood, sweat, and tears in what can be known as the best, 100 percent locally produced film by far. Recently in collaboration with the National Institute of Arts (NIA) and other sponsors, local artist Jonathan van Arneman launched the film "Atlantis: The Rebirth," which made its debut the weekend of June 18-19, at 8:00 PM at NIA, in the John Larmonie Center on Pondfill.

The film comprises multiple scenes that are each a representation of a different struggle of the various members of the diaspora, with scenes that include those of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), the history of the Garifuna people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Curaçaoenean revolution under Tula, the Marigot massacre of 1830, among others. The show lasted for about one hour, after which the crowd was introduced to the cast and allowed to ask any questions that they had and share any feedback and comments. Later on, Mr. Jonathan announced that orders could be placed for "Atlantis" T-shirts with art on them, which was also done completely locally.

In order for me to write this article, it was necessary for me to go and watch the show first-hand. As I give my review and thoughts on the show, it is not even necessary that I say, that putting up one hour of content is no easy task, especially in a time like this where the world is going through so much, making limitations and setbacks endless. I would like to commend the creator, Mr. Jonathan, and the entire cast for putting in such a great effort to bring about such a beautiful show.

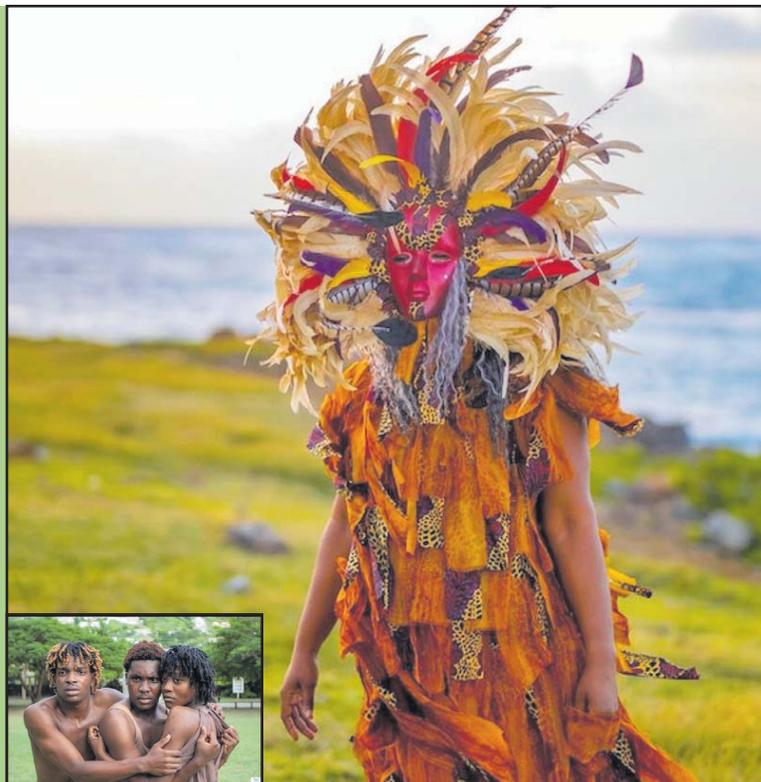
In the beginning, the film introduced a concept called "the door or no return," which captured the last point of land

before you were to leave the continent, and as an enslaved individual, you would never see your homeland again. This concept was one of my personal favourites out of the show. The great use of props, backgrounds, outfits and musical diversity really added to the impact that the show intended to make.

I also think it is necessary to address the difficulty of using the struggles, agony, and pain of our past ancestors and display it in such a positive manner. Oftentimes when concepts such as slavery are discussed, people tend to blame the colonizers, and the focus remains on the rules rather than the enslaved. In reality, the ingenuity of the enslaved people is the very reason that they are free today and that, in my opinion, is a significantly greater feat and hence should be given much more attention – and the show did exactly that.

Some other parts necessary to mention are the back story behind the creation of such a work of art, and the process behind it. When Mr. Jonathan van Arneman lived abroad, he made another production, which can be thought of as the mother production of "Atlantis Rebirth". That first production, named "Atlantis13", was the definition of utopia. Originally, Mr. Jonathan's plan was to come down to St. Maarten and essentially just bring the same show here, but then he realized that everyone's definition of utopia is significantly different. In order to make this show interesting, he decided to use stories from the diaspora that are not taught about in schools or really discussed at all.

The preparation began early before the pandemic, but unfortunately, two weeks prior to the first show, which was supposed to be performed live, the pandemic hit and the project that was supposed to be for six months, extended into two years. After a lot of trial and error and just "going with the flow", Mr. Jonathan decided that it would be better for the show to be a film. Therefore, after a long while of scouting locations, outfits, music, etc., the rigorous shooting process began. In the end, the show was a huge success and was sold out for the nights that it played. This film is intended to be



broadcasted internationally to teach the history of the Caribbean diaspora.

I am so glad that I had the absolute privilege to witness Atlantis rebirth. From the stories, to the amazing choreography, to the costumes, music and cinematography, everything was just perfect. And the great news is that if you missed the film premiere – or even if you saw it but want to see it again – you will have an opportunity to see it on Emancipation Day and the days following, at Caribbean Cinemas Megaplex 7 in Cole Bay.

So mark your calendars and don't miss out on this awesome experience! Showtime is as follows:

- \* Thursday, July 1, at 4:00 PM
- \* Friday, July 2, at 4:00 PM
- \* Saturday, July 3, at 1:00 PM
- \* Sunday, July 4, at 1:00 PM

Once again, huge congratulations to the entire cast, the sponsors, and most importantly, the great mind behind it all – Mr. Jonathan van Arneman. I would like to end with a simple statement and a question: This was our Atlantis. What's yours?



# GROWING UP GAY NOT EASY — BUT IT'S STILL GROWING UP

By *Kenzira Hall*

*We wanted to get some insight into growing up as a gay teen on SXM, so we conducted a short interview with 18-year old Jeroen Valkenburg, who was born and raised in St. Maarten, but moved to the Netherlands in 2020 to further his studies.*

**When and how did you decide to come out of the closet?**

I decided to come out to my friends as I grew close to them during the end of my first year in high school. I felt that they shouldn't have to make assumptions or refrain from speaking about "girlish" topics around me. I decided to come out to my parents, because I really wanted to paint my nails and have a girl-and-boy mix sleepover for my 16th birthday. I also felt like it was time to just tell my parents and get over it, since I had few doubts that they would ostracize me. Since I usually am surrounded by girls and generally good people, I got a large number of positive and supportive responses. When I came out to my parents, they said that they had known for a long time and were also weird out by my crying.

**How did you feel about that realization, seeing that many people around you were homophobic?**

Knowing that SXM is an unwelcoming place for people in the LGBTQ, especially gay men, I've always had my guard up. I didn't act or dress the way I wanted so that I wouldn't attract negative attention. I did this for most of my early high school life and later I started being less self-conscious about it, but I still didn't completely feel myself or fully confident.

**Have you ever been bullied/scrutinized for your sexuality? Give examples.**

On many occasions during high school, I was bullied in and outside of school. From being called slurs to being literally hated. Especially when I wasn't open and proud, I was being bullied the most. "Are you a girl or a boy?" I would be asked many times, just to make fun of me. The worst experience I had was while I was in gym class, and some boys went into my changing room and dipped my shoes in the toilet. For the rest of that day, I borrowed a friend's shoes and had my dirty, wet shoes in my bag until the time came to go home. To go home, I called my mother to pick me up. When she arrived in front of the gates, I had to give back my friend's shoes. This meant I had to walk out of school barefoot with people laughing at me until I got into my mom's car and drove away. In another instance, a girl was recording me and laughing while I was walking by minding

my business. These were two of the instances which I experienced bullying because of my feminine look/sexuality.

**How did you deal with the bullying/scrutiny?**

I never really learned to deal with bullying. Over time, hearing the same words or insults many times, you become used to them. I also started embracing the things I

was made fun of, for example, my femininity. I've had to learn that my femininity was a part of me and I should embrace it instead of trying to defy it.

**How would you describe the experience of being a teen of the LGBTQ+ community on the island?**

My LGBTQ+ experience as a teen on the island has not been good nor horrible. I've learnt to enjoy it by surrounding myself with loving and supportive friends and by developing a thick skin to sexuality-related bullying. It's made it

so that I hardly trust new people I encounter, but the ones that stuck around turned into an actual family. Your chosen family is crucial when it comes to members of the LGBTQ community, they are going to shape you and make you into the person you are in the future. I also have met plenty of other queer people from the island – maybe it's because I project queer energy that they gather around me but it's just great not being the only one. The dating scene on the island is bleak, but it seems to be getting better as more people feel comfortable coming out. Even though we are surrounded by the ocean, there isn't much fish we can catch.



Feature

# How are students coping with exams during summer?

As the coronavirus continues to spread, many things have been delayed – one being end of year exams for different schools. Exams can be a challenging part of a student's life, especially when faced with different obstacles. Summer is the only time students get a long break with time to enjoy themselves. However, this is not the case for some students, due to the fact that exams will be taking place during the summer and students will need to study, instead of having that fun break they had expected.

That being said, I interviewed a few students, whose exams are taking place during the summer, and here is their feedback.

**How are you coping with the thought of exams during the summer?**

"It sucks to do exams during summer because everyone else has vacation while we're busy studying and stressing out over exams. The extra study time is helpful, but I would prefer to do exams earlier and get it over with. I'm just trying to stay focused

and hopefully it passes by really quick so I can still enjoy a bit of summer."

"In all honesty, I am stressed out, because around this time of the year, I am so used to taking a long break and going out with my friends, but that is not possible this year. I am not coping with it well, but I am trying my hardest to accept it and do great on my exams. I am very grateful for the extra time, but I would still prefer to have it earlier and not during summer."

"I am actually happy we have exams during the summer, because it gives me extra time to study and I need that time. I want to do well on my exams, and all this extra

time that is provided is actually really good for me because I am using all of it. I am just excited to get it over with, and I will try to enjoy summer with whatever time I have left at the end."

"I am not happy about it, but I have realized that I can't change it, so I am coping with it pretty well. I am just using this time to study and not waste all this time we were given. It sucks that we don't have a summer, but I guess next year we will have one and it will be great."

"Since we have no summer this year, I am kind of demotivated. Summer is usually the time for us students to be able to recharge and become fresh for the new school year; but we



are spending it instead, doing the most dreaded thing in a student's life – exams. I really wish there would be another alternative to this, but given the situation in St. Maarten and the rest of the Caribbean, it is only natural that we will have to adjust something or the other in our lives. Hope I still do well in my

exams nevertheless."

**What were your plans before you found out you had exams during the summer?**

"I was planning to go abroad to visit my family, but now I can't due to exams."

"Nothing special besides hanging out with my friends and family, and taking a break from our long year of school."

"I was planning to throw a huge birthday party that is Covid-safe, but since my exams are on my birthday, I can't."

"I was planning to take a mental break, but I have to study instead, which is dreadful, but I hope I pass my exams."

"Before my exams, I had plans to go out with my family and friends. Since the situation with the coronavirus is not getting much better, my family decided that we would spend summer on the island, and we were figuring out places to go and things to do, but all of that went down the drain because of exams."

**Does having exams during the summer affect your university applications?**

"It did affect my university application because the university I wanted to go to required my CXC grades, which I won't get until September; so now my plans have changed and I am doing CAPE."

"Not really, because I am doing the IB program after my exams are

done."

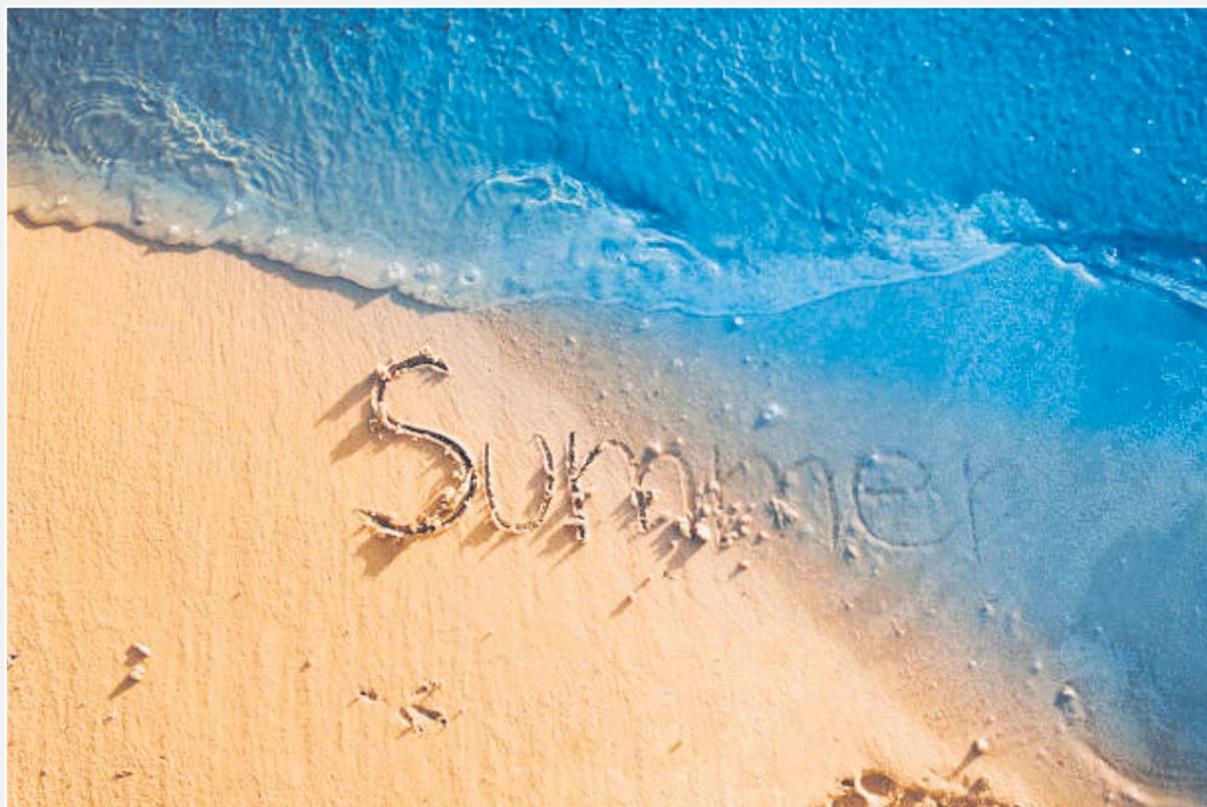
"No; because after exams, I plan to do CAPE. So it did not affect my university applications."

"Yes, it did. My university requires my results for CXC, which I don't get until later on, so I will leave the next year for university."

"This actually did have a heavy effect on furthering my studies, because colleges are asking for students to give in their exam results before September, which will be impossible for me because of the delay in exams. The later we start exams, the later we get the results back."

**Conclusion:** Many students do not like the fact that exams are taking place during summer, but some students like the extra study time that they are receiving. The only thing that the students can do now is to make use of all the time they have to study, and ace their exams. Personally, I had to do my exams during summer last year, which I had a hard time coping with, because I started school a week after I was done with my exams. The only thing I could have done was to deal with it and make the best of it.

To the students having exams during the summer, all of us at Teen Times wish you good luck!



# Mandate to vaccinate or not

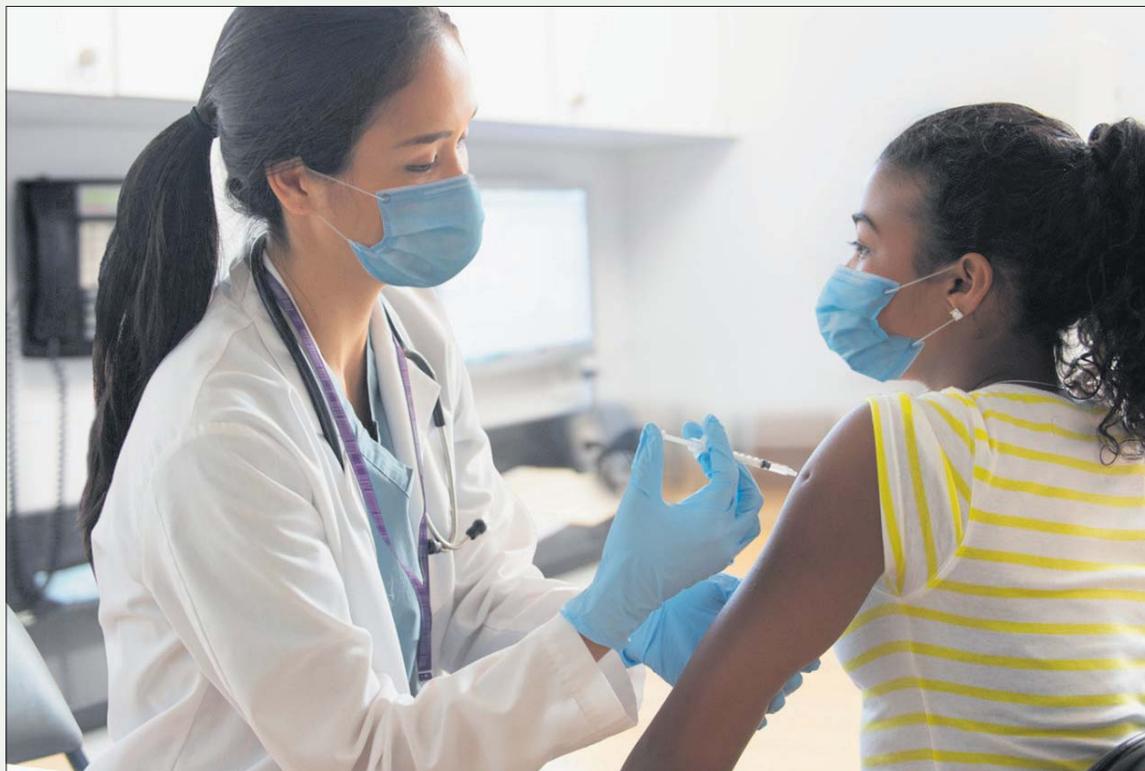
By Rohan Goswami

*Do you remember the last time we went out of our house without a mask and felt completely safe? I can't either. In order to completely get rid of the fear, we need to cooperate with the government and comply and take the vaccine to boost our immunity to the deadly disease. Although this disease doesn't affect the youth very much, there are new strands that are continuously being discovered that do indeed affect the youth.*

One very compelling reason we have to end the pandemic and mandate vaccination relates to the wellbeing of children/teens. We must protect children from the mental and physical effects of lockdown and other restrictions, or effects of insufficient restrictions, such as school closures due to infection spread.

Restrictions and the effects of spreading infection lead to decreased opportunities for the pursuit of wellbeing. Impacts on education alone are considerable, especially amongst the least well off. But most important of all, we want children to thrive. Children's wellbeing may have different elements than that of adults. For example, adults may be focused on values like authentic happiness and rational desires; this may not be true of children (especially the very young).

While happiness and the satisfaction of desires matter to children's wellbeing, these might not be all that matters. Other so-called "objective goods" may play a significant role in children's



wellbeing. These include loving and supportive relationships, various forms of play, learning and intellectual development.

Ending the pandemic is essential to enabling children to enjoy the so-called "goods of childhood", including valuable relationships with friends and extended family (especially older adults), various forms of unstructured play, exploration and intellectual development, and to pursue them in a carefree way in the absence of unavoidable worries about risk.

Childhood is a relatively short period in an individual's life. It is important for preparing children to meet the challenges of adulthood. But it is also a time to

savour particular kinds of goods in a unique way. An effective way to secure this for all children is to mandate their vaccination.

In order to find out the youths' opinions on this very topic, I asked some who have taken the vaccine, and some who have not taken the vaccine, to see what the answers would be like. Here is the feedback.

**Q1. Have you taken your vaccine as yet?**

- A1. "Yes, it has been a while since I have taken it."
- A2. "Yes, I have taken the vaccine."
- A3. "No, I have not taken the vaccine as yet."

**Q2. If given a chance, would you**

**take the vaccine?** \*to those who haven't already

- A1. "Yes I will definitely want to take the vaccine."
- A2. "Most definitely, I would like to."
- A3. "Yes."

**Q3. Do you believe that the vaccine is readily available on the island?**

- A1. "I think it is, there are a lot of vaccine centres on the island."
- A2. "I believe that it is a lot better than I originally thought it would be."
- A3. "Yeah, it is."

**Q4. Are you happy about the**

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12





## Mandate CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

### *age limit on the vaccine?*

A1. "The age limit doesn't really matter to me. I am a bit indifferent about it since I was able to get it. I do wish they'd conduct more trials so that all age groups who can get an extra layer of protection could be protected. It would really help in reopening schools normally since the restriction is mostly on younger people. Even though I am 17 in two months, I had to provide evidence that I need the vaccine since I am going to university. Whereas, other people who are younger than me were able to readily get the vaccine. Not very relevant, but I think it's inconsistent when it comes to the different places and their vaccine administering."

A2. "I am not really happy about it since I wasn't able to get the vaccine as yet, and I really want to get it before the Pfizer doses finish, as there is a rumour that the island will no longer be administering the Pfizer vaccines after July."

A3. "Honestly, I am indifferent towards it, because I was able to get it."

### *Q5. Do you think you are sufficiently informed about the vaccine itself?*

A1: "I definitely think I am. I wasn't sceptical about taking the vaccine because I trust science and many of my family members in America got the vaccine way before my immediate family (parents and siblings) did. They were able to provide their experiences, and this was helpful to me when informing others about the vaccine. I think social media has done both a good and horrible job of informing about the vaccine, and I hope that people realize the vaccine is going to be something that will only benefit them in the long run."

*In conclusion, it is clear that people are aware of the vaccine, and think that they should take*

*it. This overwhelmingly positive response makes me so happy to be writing about it. It is amazing to see that the youth are sufficiently informed and know that this vaccine is something positive and will only be a beneficial thing. The administering of the Pfizer vaccines is available on both sides of the island and should be taken ASAP. On behalf of the entire Teen Times crew, we urge you to take the vaccine as soon as possible. With that being said, we would also like to make one thing clear. The vaccine is not a ticket to go to highly crowded places and forget the social distancing rules that are still in place. Keep social distancing and take your vaccine!*



# IS SLAVERY MAKING A COMEBACK?

By Rohan Goswami

*Picture this: It's the end of 1865 and people everywhere are celebrating the termination of their ongoing sufferings. The people have been promised their rights back and slavery abolition has come into play. The 13th amendment to the constitution is finally made and documents are signed on December 18. Slavery is no longer an existing practice, or so we thought.*



Even back then, the identity and political position of black individuals, who were slaves prior to the amendment, was questionable – and remained so for quite some years or throughout the period known as the “reconstruction period”. Despite having escaped that period, the identity of black individuals and other people of colour is still questionable due to the same reason as before, slavery.

Although the perimeters of slavery have evolved to be slightly more humane, the fact that this practice takes place hasn't changed and is a serious issue. Slavery in the 21st century is known as “modern slavery”, “neo slavery”, or “institutional slavery”.

In order to efficiently determine what is considered as modern

slavery, it would be important to first understand what a slave is. According to the Cambridge English dictionary, a slave is “a person who is legally owned by someone else and has no personal freedom”. The act of owning somebody may be illegal in the literal sense; but otherwise, you can own somebody by suppressing their rights to be able to be who they are.

Not only is this practice extremely common, but it's institutionalized and systemic just like racism. In simpler terms, slavery is built into the institutions and systems of society and is pre-set rather than created. Just to draw your attention, here are some practices quite common today that are considered to be modern slavery: child marriage, child prostitution, sex- and human-trafficking,

illegal organ selling, forced- and child-labour, domestic slavery, descent-based slavery, and the list continues.

All of these practices are illegal per say, but still take place in extremely high numbers throughout the world. Communist countries, such as North Korea, tend to have the highest statistics in this area, with developed nations following closely behind. Why are developed nations included you may wonder? This is because these nations are the prime consumers of cheap labour that comes from the developing countries.

To make this a bit clearer, the developed countries have high rates of slavery with the slaves coming from the developing countries. A worldwide study in 2017 showed that around 40.3 million slaves worldwide, or one in every 800 people are living in modern slavery, which is seven times higher than previously predicted. In the UK alone, the estimates go up to 136,000 slaves, which is a whopping 12 times as much as prior results.

The same political entity that conducted the research on the worldwide slave numbers created an umbrella definition for this unruly and inhumane practice known as “situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse because of threats, violence, coercion, abuse of power, or deception.” This assists the government of the various countries in the world to be able to

identify slavery so that they can do their part to eradicate it.

Although this is not as bad as it was at the time of the slave trade in the 1800's, it is still important to eradicate it. The index also provides us with the trends in slavery in developed countries. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in slavery rates because of the economic recession which has led to the basic economic trend of the rich getting richer, and the poor getting poorer on the basis of cheap labour of course. As an activist, you should be able to tell when someone is being enslaved.

**Here are some signs that someone is under enslavement:**

- appearing to be under the control of someone else and reluctant to interact with others.
- not having personal identification on them.
- having few personal belongings, wearing the same clothes every day or wearing unsuitable clothes for work.
- not being able to move around freely.
- being reluctant to talk to strangers or the authorities.
- appearing frightened, withdrawn, or showing signs of physical or psychological abuse.
- always being dropped off and collected from/for work in the same way, especially at unusual times, i.e. very early or late at night.

**Here are some things that can be done if you suspect that someone is enslaved:**

- Call the Modern Slavery Helpline at 08000 121 700 or fill out an online form.
- Contact the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority to report concerns about the mistreatment of workers on 0800 432 0804, or by email [intelligence@glaa.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:intelligence@glaa.gsi.gov.uk)
- Contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.
- Contact the Police.
- Contact Anti-Slavery International or other specialist anti-slavery organizations.

I would like to reiterate that despite slavery having been abolished in 1865, it is still ever present and is a current issue that seems to be worsening. Neo slavery is when people take away another person's rights and therefore “own” that person. One in every 800 people are slaves in the entire world, which is an unfathomably large number – significantly larger than expected. This problem, like many others, is institutionalized and systemic. The abolition campaigns for this problem are at work around the world, and it is time we do our part to keep our eyes and ears open for signs of enslaved persons in our surroundings and to go to far lengths to help them get out of the hell they are living in!



# INDIA'S COVID CRISIS

By Sarbani Bag



*Although the pandemic started back in March 2020, countries across the globe are still battling this virus and working towards protecting their citizens. However, the situation is more devastating in some countries than in others. The cases in India are rising through the roof, causing the deaths of thousands. India, the home of 1.3 billion individuals, is now the second country in the entire world to have the most Covid-19 cases right after the United States of America. For this reason, it begs the question: Why exactly are the cases surging in India?*

India's COVID-19 crisis is the product of many issues combined. A particular source of this crisis is the new COVID variants that developed in India. One of the variants is known as B.1.617, which was initially identified in the Maharashtra State in India. Scientific research also shows that this variant has been more transmissible than other existing variants. This variant was known to have an "edge" over other variants and therefore, it spread widely across India becoming a variant of concern.

The other variant developed in India is known as B.1.618 and was found in West Bengal. However, in comparison to B.1.617, this variant was less powerful. Nevertheless, India's situation grew worse as it fought with the variants developed in the country along with variants originating from other countries, such as the variant detected in UK and Brazil. As a result, there has been a massive shortage of medical oxygen, hospital beds and antiviral drugs to assist in the treatment of these patients, consequently pushing India into a cycle of receiving more COVID-19 cases and a higher death count.

However, as previously mentioned, India's current situation is indeed due to several other issues, such as the country's vaccination shortage. Although India is an important supplier of vaccines, less than five percent of India's population is fully vaccinated. Due to India's miscalculations in planning,

the supply of vaccines to be administered has become limited. Additionally, as the officials in India did not predict its second wave, the plan faltered and they were not prepared for the number of new cases. As a result, the country's vaccination shortages will continue through July, causing this crisis to continue.

Moreover, the existence of vaccine nationalism also contributes to India's crisis. Vaccine nationalism is when a country attempts to secure doses of vaccines for its own residents and prioritises its own domestic markets before they are made available to other countries. The issue with this is that it pushes countries with lesser resources and bargaining power to be at an advantage. In other words, it puts low and middle income countries also known as "developing" countries in a position where they will experience a large number of cases.

As India is classified as a developing country, it then falls under these countries that face the drawbacks of "Vaccine Nationalism". Moreover, in an interview that took place in April, Bill Gates mentioned how he does not want to share COVID-19 vaccine tech with developing countries worldwide until the developed nations are fully vaccinated. This thought is seen as harmful as it displays a lack of willingness to help and support countries that do not hold the same amount of economic power as a "developed" country. Moreover, Bill Gates mentioned that it is also expensive to share the vaccine tech with developing nations and this seems concerning as it alludes to the idea that wealthy nations and individuals value profits over the thousands of lives that are at stake due to this pandemic.

Aside from the variants detected and the vaccination shortage, the careless neglect from the government and the general public of India was a major factor in this COVID crisis. According to scientists, the politicians currently in power ignored their warnings regarding the possible surge of COVID cases. Due to their

ignorance of the signs given, the second wave actually occurred in India resulting in its current COVID crisis. Additionally, the politicians have also appealed to keep the Kumbh Mela that attracts thousands of devotees every year. Consequently, nearly 2,000 devotees tested positive for COVID-19 in a week.

Although this festival has religious importance, it put thousands of individuals at risk displaying the disregard concerning the severity of the situation. However, the indifference regarding the pandemic does not end here. These politicians demonstrated that they valued their respective political positions more than the many lives suffering due to the COVID situation. They've encouraged a month-long election in West Bengal State and campaigned unmasked at massive rallies. Moreover, they hosted a rally in Asansol, West Bengal, on April 17, when India reported 261,394 cases that day.

Furthermore, as of April 26, the total number of cases in just Bengal reached 94,949 with 11,009 deaths. The central government's carelessness regarding the pandemic influenced their followers and the general public. As a consequence, individuals began to neglect the masks and the regular COVID-19 protocols. People began taking part in many gatherings and walked around with no masks, following the many government officials who also disregarded the COVID-19 protocols.

However, has India's situation improved since then? The answer is yes. As of June 18, reports out of India state that active cases have declined below 800,000 after 73 days. Although the number of cases is still very high, there has been a large improvement. We can only hope that more vaccination doses can be administered and the COVID-19 protocols can be again reinforced properly. Besides hoping, we can also do a few things to help the COVID-19 crisis in India still.

Through India's time of crisis, we can reach out and support organizations that are providing help to the country through this situation:

- Association for India's Development
- CARE India
- Indian Red Cross Society

You can also visit [mutualaidindia.com](http://mutualaidindia.com) to find multiple ways to help India during these difficult times. Overall, as India is experiencing this COVID crisis, we should try our best to reach out and assist them. Individuals are suffering and dying due to several issues merged, causing a disaster. The weak and poor are also being targeted because of the carelessness of government officials and the public, too. We must get together and assist them in these times, even if it's by utilizing your voice and platform to spread awareness. India needs our help.



# STEPHANIE ALLEN AND HER OPPORTUNITY AT GRANT THORNTON

*Grant Thornton, a network of independent assurance, tax and advisory firms, is – for the first time – accommodating an intern from the University Of St. Martin (USM). The intern, Stephanie Allen, did such a good job that the firm hired her as an Associate as per May 1. Kudos to Grant Thornton for giving a St. Maarten student the opportunity to plant roots and grow in their company!*



after Hurricane Irma, I re-enrolled at USM.

We thought it would be cool to chat with Stephanie about this latest chapter in her life.

**1. Tell us about your education journey from high school to now.**

My journey began when I attended St. Maarten Academy PSVE at the age of 12. There I obtained the necessary business administrative skills that prepared me for the best work experiences in corporate and other administrative-fields. Soon after completing high school in 2008, I went on to complete my G.E.D. within that same year.

Then in 2009, at 18 years of age, I developed a greater interest in business, which led me to attend the University of St. Martin. I was able to complete two semesters, but struggled financially to make payments, so I discontinued my enrolment.

After I left USM, I continued working full time and tried saving up to attend college overseas, but failed, due to many other setbacks. Then in 2017, I decided that I wanted to go back to school to finish what I started. So in January of 2018, just a couple of months

**2. What made you choose this field for study?**

I chose this field because I love being creative and I love demonstrating my critical thinking skills in ways that develop new ideas. This to me is what business is all about.

**3. What has been your greatest challenge while attending USM?**

Before receiving scholarship support, the challenges I mostly dealt with were financial. Paying each semester on my own led me to wonder many times if I would be able to continue this journey.

**4. How did you stay motivated?**

What allowed me to stay motivated was my self-encouragement through listening to online motivational speeches and surrounding myself with like-minded individuals who have been where I was. Many times, I wanted to throw in the towel, but I was determined to finish what I started even if it got hard.

**5. When the time came to apply for internship how did that go?**

My USM advisor assisted with the process by sending out emails of available companies. All I needed to do was get in contact with the company, either in person or via email/telephone and ask them what requirements were needed: a cover letter, curriculum vitae/resume, application form, etc. The process was exactly like looking for a real job, where an interview would take place and an offer is made based on the company's criteria.

**6. Why did you choose Grant Thornton?**

Once I saw the name Grant Thornton, I did some research on the company and found that it would be a great place to gain further experience that would assist me throughout my current and future endeavours in the accounting or corporate sector.

**7. Tell us about what your role and duties as an intern.**

My role as an "Associate Intern" in the audit department was to assist the audit department in audit engagements and preparations for external clients.

**8. Were you nervous when starting your internship? What helped you to get into the groove?**

I was not nervous; however, what got me into the groove was the environment and how welcomed I felt on the first day and throughout my internship hours.

**9. Tell us about how management**

*was instrumental in teaching you, not just having you work for them.*

Management was determined to make sure I learnt everything I needed to learn and more. They were not giving me tasks that were irrelevant to my role or information that would not assist me in achieving the learning outcomes of the course.

**10. What would you say are three personality traits that contribute to your success?**

The first personality trait that contributes to my success is my humbleness, how you react in certain situations can sometimes take you far in life or take you 10 steps backwards. My second trait is my optimism, having this trait allows for me to see great opportunities that are worth going after and taking that leap of faith with the knowing that opportunities do come once in a lifetime. My last trait would be my intuitive ability to sense when it is time for change or a new direction in life and how to plan accordingly to achieve it.

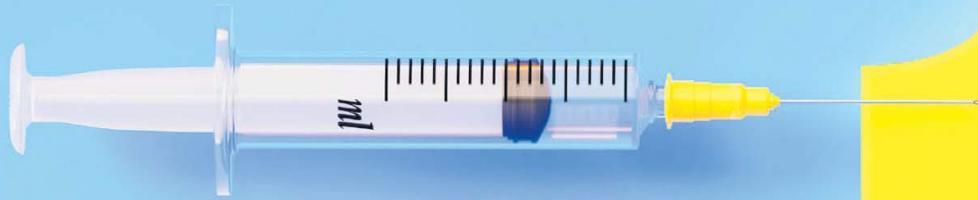
**11. What positive advice would you have for students currently in high school or in college/university?**

I would tell them to not let the discouragement of others block them from pursuing the things that truly make them happy in life. Create a plan, write it down and remain focused on achieving that plan, despite the challenges, setbacks or obstacles life hands them!



Future

# WHY SHOULD YOU GET VACCINATED?



- It's safe, simple, and free of charge.
- It could keep you from getting COVID-19. If you still get COVID-19, it could keep you from becoming seriously ill.
- It will help you do your part to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of your family, your friends and your community.
- It's an mRNA vaccine. These types of vaccines have been studied for more than two decades to evaluate their safety and effectiveness.
- It's the first step toward life returning to normal.