

The Gleaner

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 19, 2014

HospitalityJamaica

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM



LGBT TOURISM

MAKES REGIONAL SPLASH

**BAHAMAS, CUBA,
BARBADOS, PUERTO
RICO AMONG TOP
10 DESTINATIONS**



True professionals!

DI FOTO SHOPPE
PHOTO

The culinary team at the Montego Bay Convention Centre led by Executive Chef Randie Anderson (in blue shirt) being acknowledged after serving patrons at the recent Hospitality Jamaica 10th Anniversary Awards. The team served up a delectable meal with true professionalism and alacrity.



FILE

The Outameni Experience attraction, located at Cooper's Pen in Trelawny, sits in limbo amid the raging controversy over the National Housing Trust's decision to buy the attraction.

Why the dis-Harmony about Outameni?

Dear Sir/Madam:

WHY IS there no harmony at Outameni? It seems like a month of Sundays since a debate has been raging about the National Housing Trust's (NHT) purchase of the property that houses Outameni Experience and we are no closer to a resolution, leaving me to wonder what is the real reason for the cass-cass.

So NHT buys a 10-acre property valued at \$311 million for a discounted price of \$180 million, and with all the big chat, it seems like either World War III or an election is around the corner. Do these same people know that the same NHT has acquired thousands of acres of land just up the road from Outameni, only to have it in ruinate while it waits to become Harmony Cove? This was done through its subsidiary named Harmonisation Ltd.

For those who do not know, Harmony Cove is a planned luxury resort complex with five hotels, casinos, luxury villas, a marina, two spas and helicopter landing pad, just to name a few of the high-end features. Rest assured that no low-income persons will ever be able to venture on to Harmony Cove, let alone live there. Ask yourself what does NHT know about hotels, if not attractions?

So why is there no complaint from those who are saying that the NHT's mandate is to "bill 'ouse for poor people"? I am quite sure that the rich and famous who will visit or reside at Harmony Cove will not want poor "peeple" relaxing on their white sand beach or

rubbing shoulders in the casino. Rest assured that poor "peeple" will be on the other side of the north coast highway hawking bunches of guinep to get enough money to buy a ticket in the next Cash Pot draw.

When I became a pensioner and retired to my old family home just outside Duncans, I was tickled pink (sorry, wrong colour) when Outameni Experience opened to Jamaicans and visitors alike. Finally, there was something we could be proud of in Trelawny, other than Usain Bolt. When the scores of buses started coming to Outameni Experience from across Jamaica with students wanting to learn more about our motto and culture, I felt proud that Outameni was putting Falmouth on the map while we wait patiently for something, anything, to happen at the thousands of acres of bushland slated to become Harmony Cove, while NHT is still not building enough 'ouse for poor people.

So I am left to wonder, why are we heaping fire on the Outameni acquisition while just up the road the same NHT has thousands of acres in ruinate? Couldn't a little piece of Harmony Cove be used by NHT to "bill nuff 'ouse for di poor peeple" until the foreigners come on their luxury yachts and helicopters? I'm sure we all know the answer.

Jackass say dis worl no level, and that is why we continue to have 'dis-harmony' at Outameni Experience.

**I am,
PENSIONER
Carey Park, Trelawny
rchristine38@ymail.com**

LGBT tourism makes regional splash

Bahamas, Cuba, Barbados Puerto Rico among top destinations

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

THE BAHAMAS, Cancun, Cuba, Barbados, Puerto Rico, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro are named among the top 10 Caribbean and Latin American countries for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) vacationers in 2015.

Although Jamaica did not make it on the list, and will probably not make an entry within another 25 years, there is a significant number of properties here that have earned the 'gay-friendly' annotation. The hotels, guest houses and villas accepting LGBT visitors are based in all five resort areas and the capital city – Kingston.

The LGBT market is valued in excess of US\$200 billion in annual spending, says the leading global travel networking association, Out Now Business Class (ONBC).

Their subsidiary, Out Now Global (ONG) released its findings during the recent World Travel Market (WTM) trade show held at Excel in London, between November 3 and 6. According to ONG's chief executive officer, Ian Johnson, this new data delivers much actionable information to better inform the tourism industry for 2015.

"Global LGBT tourism is an increasingly competitive market. LGBT2020 research shows the market is now valued in excess of USD\$200 billion in annual spending and as well as needing to offer strong tourism product, delivered with genuine LGBT-welcoming service," said Johnson, adding that the new research reveals that this needs to be supported by ongoing campaign which focus meaningfully on consumers to grow market share.

ATTENTION TO MARKETING

He stated that one of the key points in the new data is to understand that the LGBT market pays close attention to marketing directed at them and especially takes notice of consistency – or lack of it – in destinations' marketing initiatives.

"The strongest improvement in the global LGBT2020 preferred destinations league table over the past four years has been achieved by the city of Berlin. Moving up a position or two in this table is competitive – so it is a highly significant accomplishment to move from number 20 most desired city back in 2011 to now be positioned at number 10 most desired destination for the 2015 travel plans of LGBT people."

Johnson also emphasised the importance of staff training to achieving strong welcoming outcomes for LGBT guests.

"The number one motivating factor for



FILE

Nicole Dennis-Benn (left) and Dr Emma Benn jump the broom during their re-enacted wedding ceremony at Silver Sands in Duncans Trelawny. Looking on are close friends and family of the couple.

consumers is needing to know before they go that they can relax and be comfortable being themselves on holidays," Johnson says. "Nobody wants to worry that the staff that

serve them in a location might be uncomfortable with their sexual orientation or gender identity. People would prefer to stay elsewhere. By incorporating ONBC staff

training as a component of their overall strategy, Berlin has not only promoted their products with effective communications – they have delivered on their promise to welcome their LGBT guests."

The top three global destinations are New York, Sydney and Amsterdam (which has also improved its position, but from a higher initial starting position than Berlin).

For countries results of where LGBT people plan to visit in 2015, the USA remains in first position, followed by France (no change from 2011) with Australia the biggest gainer, moving from position seven to three over the past four years. The biggest drops have been by Spain (falling five places since 2011) and Argentina, which has dropped out of the Top 10 countries entirely.

LGBT2020: Top 10 Africa/Latin America/Caribbean Destinations for LGBT Travel in 2015

Ranking CITY 2011 rank Change since 2011

- 1 Rio de Janeiro 1 -
- 2 Buenos Aires 2 -
- 3 Bahamas - New in 2012
- 4 Cape Town 6 +2
- 5 Mexico City 5 -
- 6 Sao Paulo 3 -3
- 7 Cancun 4 -3
- 8 Cuba - New in 2014
- 9 Puerto Rico - New in 2014
- 10 Barbados - New in 2012

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FILE

Taeko Bufford (left), and Diane Cervelli pose near Waikiki beach in Honolulu in 2011. The two Southern California women filed a lawsuit against a Hawaii bed and breakfast, saying the business denied them a room because they are gay.

AROUND JA WITH PAUL H

Enamel *nostalgia*



Enamel goblet, wash basin and chamber pot in the Bustamante Museum at Blenheim, Hanover.

MY MOTHER and father were born and bred in Hanover. I was born in St James.

Pondside, Hanover was where I spent some summer holidays. It was something to look forward to, always.

There were stringy mangoes, crayfish, river bathing, roasted yellow-heart breadfruit, sugar cane, spring water, juicy June plums, chocolate tea, grotto bread, etc. Not to mention the shaky rides on those Jamaica-made country buses.

With the onset of adulthood, my visits to Pondside became very infrequent, and now I have not been back for ages. I had the opportunity, however, to work in the parish twice as an assistant clerk of the courts and an educator, while living in St James.

On my journeys to and from Lucea and Kenilworth, I was fascinated by the historical sites and ruins along the way. The vistas of the coastline, too, would catch my eyes. Yet, I didn't get a chance to go into the interior. My memories of it though are still quite vivid.

And so recently when I visited the parish, I

was glad to be back. Much has not changed. Poverty is everywhere on two legs. When I travelled on an everlasting ridge through Middlesex, Dias, Cacoen en route to Blenheim, I got the feeling that's where poverty was born.

BUSTAMANTE'S BIRTHPLACE

National Hero Sir Alexander Bustamante certainly was born on Blenheim Estate, and that's where my journey ended, on the property where the replica of the house in which Busta was born is situated. And I thought about what life might have been like in Robert Constantine Clarke's (Busta's father's) house.

But my reflection started long before I reached Busta's birthplace. All along, there were board houses along the edges of the ridge. Some were relatively new, some not so flattering, some abandoned, others dilapidated. Still, there were some quaint ones. I kept thinking, it is 2014, and things are not looking so wonderful. Then, how was it for the peasants who lived in the region in



PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

A wash pan of yesteryear.



Enamel pail for inside and outside use.

1884, the year when Busta was born in a thatch-roof cottage.

Then, nostalgia broke loose when I passed a dilapidated board house with things strewn all over the veranda and yard. Something caught my eyes. It looked like an enamel vessel, something out of my childhood. And there was more. Like flaking enamel, the memories were flying through my brain. But onward towards Blenheim I went, with a promise to stop at this treasure trove of pleasant memories.

The flashbacks were to continue in Busta's reconstructed birth house. In a glass case, there were a big chamber pot, a wash basin and a goblet. All enamel. They seemingly were owned by Busta's family. Though chipped in many places, they seemed to be in good condition, and to be those that only the 'privileged' could afford.

My fascination with enamel vessels, however, had nothing to do with affordability and privilege. I used to

love the sound of flaking enamel. So, when I got hold of discarded enamel containers, I would drop them several times just to hear the enamel flaking from the metal.

But that flaking sound could also mean something else. And that was when the sound of flaking enamel would feel like pins sticking me in my head. Dropping and chipping one of Mama's enamel utensils, a beating surely I would get.

On the way back from Blenheim, I stopped at the yard strewn with rotting enamel utensils. Everything was near the road. Some of them have become flower pots. The entire place was in disarray. I was told by a neighbour that the owner of the yard had died a month ago, and nobody had come to put things right.

Among the enamel stuff was also an old 'wash pan'.

That, too, was a blast from the past. Haven't seen those in decades. So, my camera went clicking, recapturing the enamelled snippets of nostalgia.



Enameled polka-dot big mug.



Enamel goblet-cum flowerpot.



Floral enamel chamber pot.

PHOTOS BY PAUL WILLIAMS

THE BUSINESS OF TOURISM

Tourists and the taxi experience

David Jessop
Contributor

TAKING A taxi at any airport is always an interesting experience. This is because it often provides the first true impression of a country, its culture, how well it is organised and the way people are. More often than not, it also demonstrates the cartel like arrangements that taxi associations have established with the airport or cruise terminal

authorities, and how strong or weak the regulatory authorities are when it comes to managing quality, regulation and licensing. Over the years, I have become almost inured to the experience, reasoning that as long as I have a rough idea of the likely fare to where I am going in the country I am in, the experience is one to be observed, and either enjoyed or disliked.

Among my most memorable taxi journeys have been one in Barbados many years ago, well before the authorities there tightened up on who could drive visitors, when a rather vague old man who could scarcely see was driving a Rover car probably from the 1950s with the consequence we veered in the half light of morning from side to side of what thankfully was a narrow coastal road. Then there was a late-night taxi driver in Trinidad who jumped a queue of waiting colleagues, grabbed my bags and sped off with me in the back, only to hide down a side road as his angry colleagues chased us part of the way into port of Spain. There was also the driver at JFK in New York who couldn't find the airport Hilton and had to ask directions, and a wonderful driver who on a Sunday, brought his girlfriend, music and soft drinks for a fun and then very long ride from Kingston to Montego Bay in his battered minibus.

I note all of this as while an increasing number of visitors now have arrangements for their transfer to and from an airport included in their itinerary, the taxi experience can be an important part of any country's brand.

While, personally, I do not want the personalised running commentary

that has started to appear in some Caribbean nations, it is good to be able to get into a well-presented vehicle, with air conditioning that works, with a responsible driver.

Increasingly across the Caribbean for this reason, taxi driver training is being coordinated by the tourist boards, cruise companies, and organisations, including the Caribbean Tourism Organisation and the Caribbean Hotel and Tourist Organisation, and often followed by the trainee programmes.

This is all good news, but for those who have looked at what is happening in the wider world of North America, Europe, Latin America and elsewhere, something far more revolutionary is happening in the taxi world.

Despite objections from existing taxi associations across in these regions, apps for mobile phones are becoming commonplace. These enable you to, as it were, hail a taxi electronically from almost anywhere, reduce the cost of your ride, and allow sharing with strangers who may be nearby.

MIXED SUCCESS

The consequence is that companies like Uber, Hailo and Lyft have been vying with mixed success in many countries to take traditional models of business away from the established taxi services.

If you thought that such an approach has no place in the Caribbean, you may at present be right given the highly politicised and restrictive nature of taxi cooperatives.

However, the thin end of a very large wedge may now be appearing, albeit in a different type of Caribbean environment, in Puerto Rico. There, Uber appears likely to start a service soon. It is looking at possibilities on Colombia's Caribbean coast soon, and is making clear that it is prepared to fight the necessary legal battles to overcome legal objections.

This is a trend that may over time be unstoppable. It will require greater consideration, not least in relation to what government may or may not have committed themselves to in trade agreements in relation to opening their services market to others.



JESSOP



PHOTO BY CLAUDIA GARDNER

A view of the new Royal Club suites at the Royalton White Sands.

Royalton White Sands, MoBay receives Green Globe Certification

ROYALTON LUXURY Resorts is pleased to announce that Royalton White Sands, Montego Bay has been awarded Green Globe Certification. Green Globe is the only international programme to recognise companies within the travel industry that demonstrate a long-term commitment to incorporating sustainable practices within their overall day-to-day operations.

Established in 1993, the Green Globe organisation adheres to ISO 19011 guidelines and employs independent auditors to ensure their rigorous criteria comprising over 330 compliance indicators is met. Their guidelines are revised annually, and in order to maintain their Green Globe Certifications, hotels must undergo an annual inspection and demonstrate an improvement each time in their adherence to the recommendations set by Green Globe.

Green Globe CEO, Guido Bauer, said, "We congratulate Royalton White Sands, Montego Bay as the first Royalton Luxury Resorts property to be certified Green Globe. This luxury Jamaican resort scored 73 per cent compliance after being independently audited, which is quite an accomplishment for a first-time certification.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

One of their most notable achievements is their connection to the local community. Royalton is active in bringing on and training local staff as well as incorporating cultural practices as part of their service style. They are also keen to source local products, including cosmetics made from natural ingredients for their spa, through to purchasing seasonal produce for traditional Jamaican dishes in their restaurants.

"Green Globe is currently working to certify

other properties within the collection, and we commend them for their active and ongoing contribution to sustainable tourism," he added.

Armando Pizzuti, general manager for Royalton White Sands, Montego Bay, also welcomed the certification as recognition for his team's ongoing dedication to offer their guests a luxury holiday experience while respecting the local environment. "Throughout our day-to-day operations, we seek to educate our guests on the destination that they are visiting and how they can help keep it pristine. Information on our commitment to the local environment and how our guests can help us during their stay is displayed in each of our rooms.

"We also have incorporated a number of features within the property that help reduce our environmental impact such as the use of eco-friendly cleaning products, in-room motion sensors to avoid unnecessary lighting and use of air-conditioning and a comprehensive recycling programme. Our waste water flows directly into our own our treatment plant where it is irrigated, not into the drains. Moreover, we also regularly monitor the local wetlands close to our resort."

Royalton White Sands, as part of their commitment to their local environment, also extends to community support. Along with leading weekly clean-ups of the surrounding area, the resort has also been responsible for launching a local tree-planting project and programming a variety of different activities throughout the year to keep care of the local environment front of mind within the local community.

For more information on Royalton White Sands, Montego Bay and Royalton Luxury Resorts, visit www.royaltonresorts.com.

– Contributed

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LEFT: The Blue Mahoe Suite at Eden Gardens.

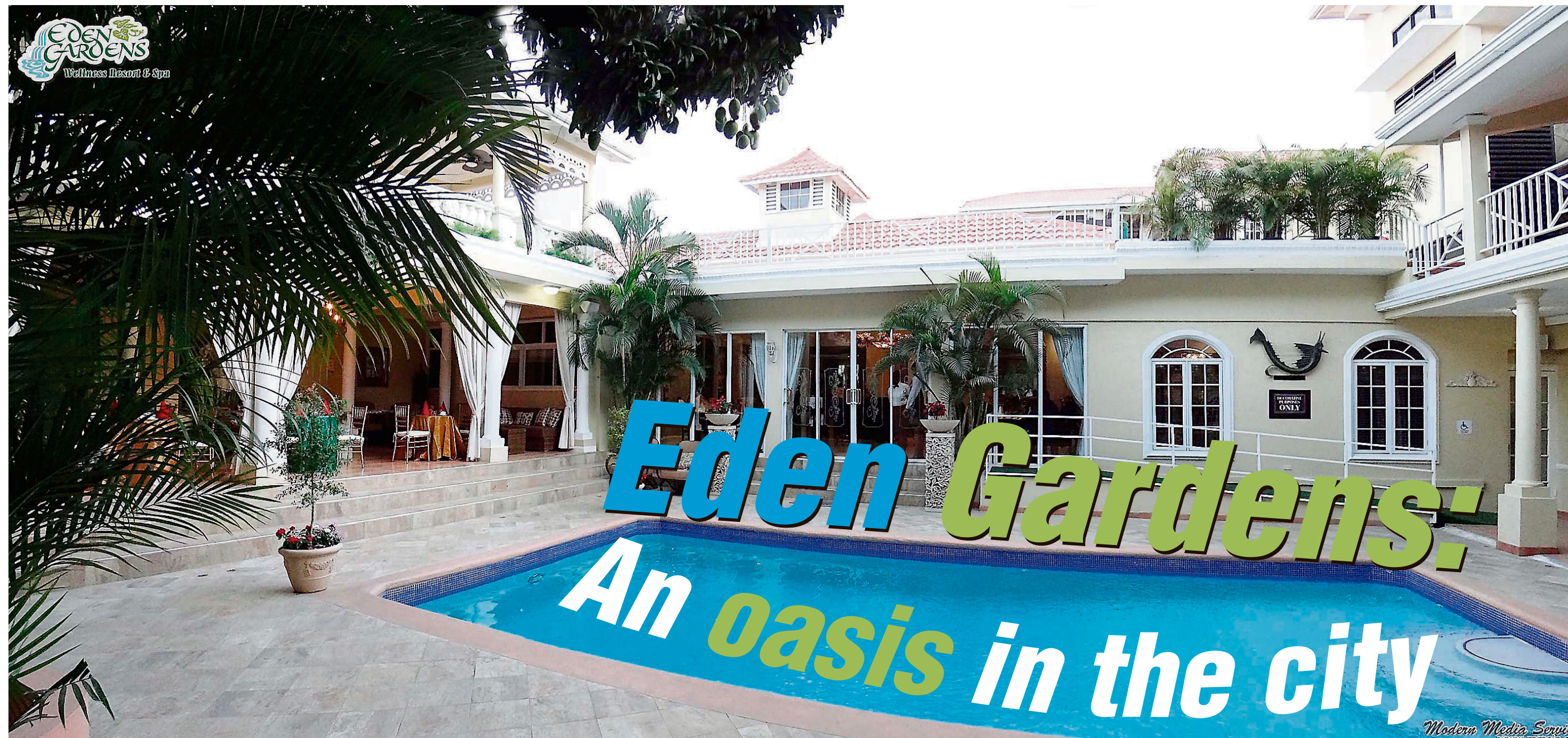


CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS
A view of the front of the hotel.



Waiting area in the spa at Eden Gardens.

RIGHT: A bedroom at Eden Gardens.



The swimming pool at Eden Gardens.

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

AN EXECUTIVE lounge plays host to a baby piano; the floors leading into the main entrance boast of being original and no other restaurant in Kingston looks or feels like their Tiffany's Tea House.

Her name is Eden, and she is more than 100 years old. Rebranded in March, she now stakes claim of having attained the top position as the grand dame of Lady Musgrave Road in Kingston.

Hospitality Jamaica recently slept, ate, sampled and savoured, the offerings at Eden Gardens Resort and Spa, nestled in the heart of the capital city. This peaceful oasis, rebranded in March 2014, could easily be missed because of how well hidden it is.

The difference – wellness is the

lifestyle. From the medicinal lemongrass and ball moss tea; the bissi (kola nut); guinea hen weed herbal tea fortified with vitamins and minerals to the array of New Age and traditional treatments within the confines of their state-of-the-art spa and the fitness programme equipped with an instructor, this resort literally invites its guests to revitalise their passion for life, while reliving their youth.

Tranquility surrounds the property, while luxurious Victorian pieces of furniture are a feast for the eyes. The most defining feature of the property, however, is the rich array of chandeliers that dresses the ceiling of each room.

There is nothing mundane or normal about this boutique resort, its uniqueness is evidenced in dining options at its three tantalising restaurants, namely, Tulips, which offers casual dining; Black Orchid,



Dining at Tiffany's

for those who wish to dress up for a fusion of Italian and international; or enjoy salads, gourmet sandwiches and soups at Tiffany's Tea House.

Tiffany's was a favourite with the **Hospitality Jamaica** team, as this fabulous restaurant, which serves breakfast, carries some of the most beautiful pieces of furniture, each with its own uniqueness.

Facing Tiffany's is a featured pool, built in the 1940s. For years this remained a decorative and conversation piece, until recently when the Dr Henry Lowe-led team decided to open it up to guests for swimming.

The area around the pool is also used for cocktail purposes, but the most eye-catching feature in this

location is the natural juice bar and the 'juicetender', Douglas Wright, who blends what he calls healthy alternatives.

"As long as it is natural and healthy, it can be blended," he told **Hospitality Jamaica**, adding that cucumber was quite popular at the juice bar because of its antioxidant properties.

"Because we are a health and wellness resort we tend to leave out sweeteners, but we are also very flexible, and tailor our juices to the needs of our customers," said Wright.

The juice bar opens at 9 a.m. and closes at 5 p.m. It is set within the trunk of an East Indian mango tree and in season, Wright picks mangoes from the trees to blend juice. The same, he said, is done with the Otahti apples, soursop, lime and coconut which are grown on the property.

Big on conservation and environmental preservation, Eden Gardens Resort and Spa is also home to another mango tree which is more than 100 years old. "Dr Lowe refused to cut it when he bought the property and instead constructed the buildings around it," sales coordinator, Shamar Clarke revealed.

Dr Lowe has owned the property since 2002 and he has since put in three restaurants, 11 indoor and outdoor banqueting facilities and two gift shops.

With the emphasis on wellness, Eden Gardens offers signature massages, LED treatments, clinical facials, body treatments, hair and nail care, facial and body waxing. A visit to the spa is not complete unless you experience the hydro room.

"Our spa is the only one of its kind in the Caribbean; our cyber

chair, with hands that walk on the body, takes you on an unforgettable journey. The beauty of this chair is the LED lights that focus on the face while it is being treated," boasted Clarke.

Eden Gardens guests are encouraged to get fit, have fun, get in shape, doing aerobics, Zumba, yoga, and sauna with the help of certified personal trainer, Rohan Gordon, who has been at it for 15 years.

Walk-in guests are also accepted. Although weddings weren't in the **Hospitality Jamaica** calendar during the visit, Eden Gardens stakes its claim as Jamaica's only full service convenient wedding centre.

"We boast exquisite venues for both ceremony and reception and catering to every aspect of your wedding," said the Kingston hotel.

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Jamaica voted top Caribbean destination for ninth straight year

Continuing its legacy, Jamaica and its travel partners brought home a remarkable 27 awards including Caribbean's Leading Cruise Destination, Caribbean's Leading Cruise Port (Ocho Rios), Caribbean's Leading Airport (Sangster International Airport), Caribbean's Leading Adventure Tour Operator (Island Routes), Caribbean's Leading Adventure Tourist Attraction (Dolphin Cove), Caribbean's Leading Airport Lounge (Club MoBay), Caribbean's Leading Meetings & Conference Centre (Montego Bay Convention Centre), Caribbean's Leading Hotel Brand (Sandals Resorts International), Caribbean's Leading Heritage Attraction (Port of Falmouth), Caribbean's Leading All Suite Hotel and Jamaica's Leading Hotel (Jamaica Inn), Caribbean's Leading Boutique Resort (Goldeneye), Caribbean's Leading Car Hire (Avis), Caribbean's Leading Travel Agency (Trafalgar Travel), Caribbean's Leading Resort (Sandals Grande Riviera Beach & Villa Golf Resort), Caribbean's Leading Villa Resort (Round Hill), Caribbean's Leading Villa (Ian Fleming Villa at GoldenEye), Caribbean's Leading Tour Operator (GO! Jamaica Travel), Jamaica's Leading Conference Hotel (Half Moon), Jamaica's Leading Resort (Sandals Whitehouse European Village &



Minister of Tourism and Entertainment Dr Wykeham McNeill (left) and director of tourism, Paul Pennicook (right), accept the Caribbean's Leading Destination award from World Travel Awards president, Graham Cooke, during the 2014 World Travel Market on November 4, 2014 in London. Jamaica was voted the leading Caribbean destination for the ninth consecutive year. Dr McNeill and Pennicook also accepted the coveted Caribbean's Leading Tourist Board award, which the Jamaica Tourist Board has won for the seventh consecutive year.

Spa), Caribbean's Leading Boutique Hotel and Jamaica's Leading Spa Resort (Rockhouse Hotel), Jamaica's Leading Boutique Hotel (Strawberry Hill), Jamaica's Leading Business Hotel

(Spanish Court), and Jamaica's Leading Car Hire (Island Car Rentals). For a full list of the awards, visit: <http://www.worldtravelawards.com/winners2014-6>.

JAMAICA
TOURIST BOARD

JTB focuses on bridal market in Canada

DESTINATION JAMAICA will be on show during Canada's upcoming 2015 season of wedding shows. The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) in Canada will participate in 10 consumer bridal shows, exposing nearly 100,000 brides and grooms to information about Jamaica as a choice wedding and honeymoon destination.

Thanks to the diversity of options and rich cultural experiences offered on the island, Jamaica continues to be ranked one of the top places for weddings and honeymoons, having been selected Favourite Honeymoon Destination by Canadian travel agents. The JTB also offers an online concierge service, 'Wendy' who helps couples when planning their dream destination wedding on the island.

"Jamaica's distinct flavours and island vibe ensure that couples have a memorable experience that will last a lifetime," said Paul Pennicook, Jamaica's director of tourism. "Our hotels offer unparalleled wedding planning services and experiences that continue to promote the island's reputation as one of the top places for weddings and honeymoons." He added, "Destination Jamaica ticks all the desired boxes for the discerning bride and groom. Add to that our year-round tropical weather and unmatched sceneries that offer the couples fantastic diversity as they embark on their new journey."

2015 CANADIAN BRIDAL SHOWS

1. Let's Get Married Bridal Show, January 3-4, Montreal, 10,000 consumers
2. Canada's Bridal Show, January 3-5, Toronto, 18,000 consumers
3. The Wedding Fair, January 11-12, Vancouver, 5,000 consumers
4. Bingeman Wedding Trends Bridal Show, January 11 to 12, Kitchener, 8,000 consumers
5. Total Wedding Show, January 16-18, Toronto, 12,000 consumers
6. National Bridal Show, January 23-25, Toronto, 12,000 consumers
7. National Bridal Show, January 24-25, Burlington, 3,000 consumers
8. Perfect Wedding Show, February 8, Mississauga, 1,500 consumers
9. Suhaag Wedding Show, TBC February, Toronto, 15,000 consumers
10. Romantic Planet Destination Wedding Show, March 6, Toronto, 400 consumers

In June 2014, Jamaica was voted Favourite Honeymoon Destination for the sixth consecutive year at the Agents' Choice Awards – presented by Canadian Travel Press and Travel Courier publications.

MoBay to remain home port for Thomson Dream

JAMAICA HAS successfully retained the contract to serve as home port for cruise ship *Thomson Dream* for a second year. Jamaica's minister of tourism, Dr Wykeham McNeill, and the island's director of tourism, Paul Pennicook, met with owners of Thomson Cruise TUI UK & Ireland, resulting in the announcement that cruise ship *Thomson Dream* will home-port in Montego Bay for a second time in 2015. Tickets will go on sale in December.

Year 2014 has been extremely successful for the partnership between Jamaica and TUI UK & Ireland. In Spring 2014, Thomson opened its first Sensatori Resort in the Caribbean outside Mexico, Sensatori Resort Jamaica, in Negril. TUI UK & Ireland also increased air service into the island from several UK regional airports, and the success of cruise sales throughout the last



From left: Paul Pennicook, director of tourism; Dr Wykeham McNeill, minister of tourism and entertainment; Antonia Bouka, general manager for Tourist Boards and Hotel Partnerships at TUI UK; Phil Iveson, head of purchasing Long Haul & Rest of World at TUI UK; Elizabeth Fox, regional director for the UK and N. Europe, Jamaica Tourist Board; and Garry Wilson, MD, product and purchasing at TUI UK, met to confirm Montego Bay as the home port for UK cruise ship *Thomson Dream* for a second year.

twelve months is a direct result of Thomson Dream making Montego Bay its home port beginning December 2014.

Pennicook said, "By working closely with TUI UK &

Ireland, we have secured Montego Bay as the home port for Thomson Dream for the second year in a row. With increased airlift such as Thomson Airways from new

regional UK airports into Montego Bay, it's never been easier for tourists in the UK to travel to Jamaica and experience our award-winning hospitality, whether they prefer to holiday on island or sea."

CUSTOMER DEMAND

Neil Duncan, Thomson Cruises' general manager for product, planning and marketing, added, "Given the number of bookings for *Thomson Dream* this year, we were keen to build on 2014's success and have therefore chosen Montego Bay, Jamaica, to be the home port for our cruise ship for a second year. There is real customer demand for both cruise and stay holidays from Jamaica, and we are keen to support and grow that demand."

For more information on Jamaica, visit www.VisitJamaica.com.



Ferncourt students and their teacher pose in front of the Seville Great House after their SJF-sponsored Heritage Month tour.

Spanish-Jamaican Foundation sponsors Seville tours for students

IN RECOGNITION of the fact that October is celebrated nationally as Heritage Month, The Spanish/Jamaican Foundation (SJF) staged its now annual sponsorship of visits by St Ann and Trelawny high-schoolers slated to sit CSEC history to the Seville Great House's acclaimed Jamaican history exhibit. The trips were coordinated by the Ministry of Education's community relations

education officer for that region, Karlene Segree.

SJF general manager, Dr Rebecca Tortello, explained that having collaborated with the Jamaica National Heritage Trust and the Tourism Enhancement Fund on the creation of this state-of-the art exhibit that explicates Seville's role as a pivotal site where many of the groups of people who came to Jamaica had their lives intersect,

"we want our students to enjoy a memorable learning experience and share what they found most exciting with their fellow students and families so that additional visits will be planned. Museum visits can simply spark curiosity and embed information in ways that traditional classroom teaching cannot".

She went on to express the Foundation's pleasure at facilitating

these annual visits, "The SJF is committed to supporting greater cultural and historical awareness, and we are confident that the students will feel the multifaceted power of our rich history because the exhibit is as informative as it is, captivating."

RICH HISTORY

Exposing students to elements of Jamaica's rich history and culture is

something The SJF has prioritised since its inception in 2006. It collaborated with the Jamaica National Heritage Trust and the Tourism Enhancement Fund on the state-of-the-art exhibit at Seville and has also created a physical and virtual heritage trail of key national historical sites. The trail and lesson plans to be found at www.spanishjamaicanfoundation.org.

The Seville Great House in St Ann's Bay is open between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. daily, except on Good Friday and Christmas Day. For more information, visit www.jnht.com, or call 972-2191, email tours@jnht.com.

Half Moon appoints new spa director

ARAM ZERUNIAN, general manager at Half Moon, A RockResort, has announced the appointment of Tanya Vassell as the new spa director.

Vassell will oversee the 68,000 sq ft spa and active fitness facility which includes a team of wellness professionals.

Having learned the beneficial effects of pressure point massage from her grandfather, Vassell shared this learned gift with previous co-workers and passengers on Air Jamaica, where she served as a flight attendant for seven years. She further enhanced her sense of touch through Swedish

and Japanese therapeutic massage and aesthetic studies pursued in Florida.

She was also instrumental in the development of Jamaica's Milk River Bath, a natural spa with healing waters rich in nutrients.

Vassell continues to promote the benefits of touch through the development of spa programmes and embraces opportunities which will bring visitors to the island to experience the richness of the Jamaican heritage, much of which is found in the legacy of use of herbs, waters and the warmth of the people.

"Fern Tree Spa at Half Moon

provides the ideal opportunity for Tanya to host individuals in an authentic Jamaican setting, expose them to the benefits of our produce, create life-changing and personally rejuvenating programmes," Zerunian said.

With over 20 years in the spa industry, her focus for Fern Tree will be to use her creativity and expertise to drive the personal growth of others, offer new spa menu options, including the introduction of a golfer's massage, the art of Equine massage, 'Dawn with the Dolphins' and the creation of a Chakra garden.

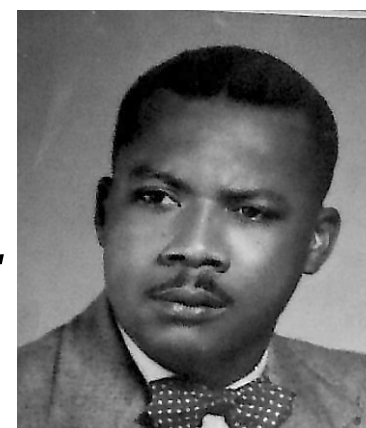
- Contributed



Tanya Vassell

Evon Blake:

breaking Ja's colour bar



Evon Blake

won resoundingly by Bustamante's Jamaica Labour Party over Norman Manley's People's National Party, my father put my sister and me in his car and set off to interview the winner. He hardly spent five minutes at Busta's Tucker Avenue home. "Too much noise, too many people," he said, setting off to Manley's Drumblair home where he consoled a sad and bitter man who had just lost his dream of being Jamaica's first independent prime minister. "Better story there," was his gruff comment as he drove home two sleepy girls.

SPOTLIGHT fell into economic trouble and it was Abe Issa who came to the financial rescue, but my father was not pleased when Issa appointed Vic Reid as editor, so he resigned from the newspaper and founded an identical, competing magazine, **NEWDAY**, which – with his energy, contacts and writing skills – soon outperformed **SPOTLIGHT** and led to its early demise. Retiring to Port Antonio as his health failed, he set about his major opus, **BEAUTIFUL JAMAICA**, a picture book tribute to his beloved home country that is still being published 25 years after his passing.

Evon Blake was not racist; in fact, he could be called a devout 'royalist' as the achievement he was most proud of was not the presentation of the Order of Distinction, but the presentation of a copy of **BEAUTIFUL JAMAICA** to Queen Elizabeth II on her 1975 visit to Jamaica. Married four times and father of six children, my only regret is that he left his children no lasting memento of his life works, including the collected volumes of Jamaican history in 20 years of **SPOTLIGHT** and **NEWDAY** magazines. His ashes were scattered off the shore at San San Beach, Port Antonio, and there is no marker to memorialise the life of this great Jamaican, my father, Evon Blake.

Barbara Blake-Hannah
Contributor

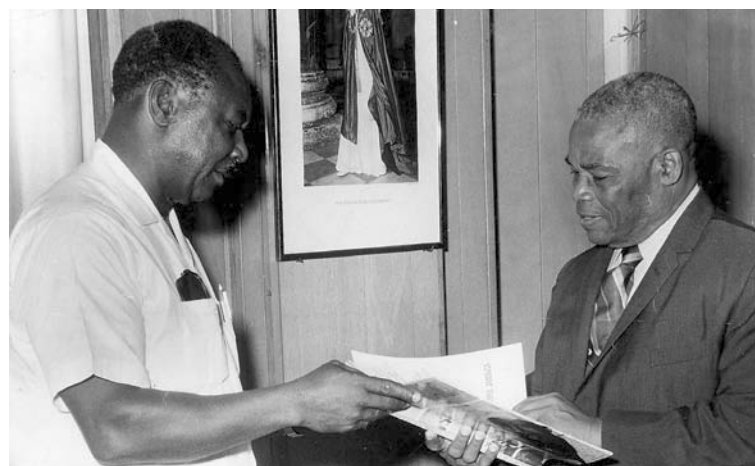
MY FATHER, Evon Blake, was a journalist, founder of the Press Association of Jamaica and editor of **SPOTLIGHT** – a successful monthly news magazine patterned after **TIME** that covered news in Jamaica and the Caribbean.

In his career, he wrote books for the fledgling JAMAL literacy campaign and published the first and still famous picture book, **BEAUTIFUL JAMAICA**. Yet, it is hardly for these achievements that he is nationally remembered, but rather for a landmark incident that challenged Jamaica's racist social norms inherited from 300 years of British slavery and colonialism, and led to the desegregation of the Jamaican tourist industry.

Proud of his colour and race, Evon Blake felt that his business success entitled him to the same social positions and benefits other similarly successful Jamaicans enjoyed, even though at that time in the nation's history, such benefits were usually attained by – and, therefore, restricted to – the white Jamaican and expatriate communities. So one sunny afternoon, he decided to challenge one of the leading bastions of white supremacy – the pool of Kingston's upper class Myrtle Bank hotel. The story is well-told by English author Matthew Parker in his biography **GOLDENEYE – Where Bond Was Born: Ian Fleming's Jamaica**:

"... Evon Blake had lived in Panama in the US Canal Zone, so knew all about racial segregation. In the summer of 1948, as tourists and local whites lounged by the side of Kingston's Myrtle Bank hotel pool, Blake suddenly burst on the scene, stripped to his swimming trunks and plunged into the pool. The white swimmers immediately clambered out. The staff quickly gathered at the edges, shouting threats at the intruder. From the middle of the pool, Blake defiantly challenged: "Call the police. Call the Army. Call the owner. Call

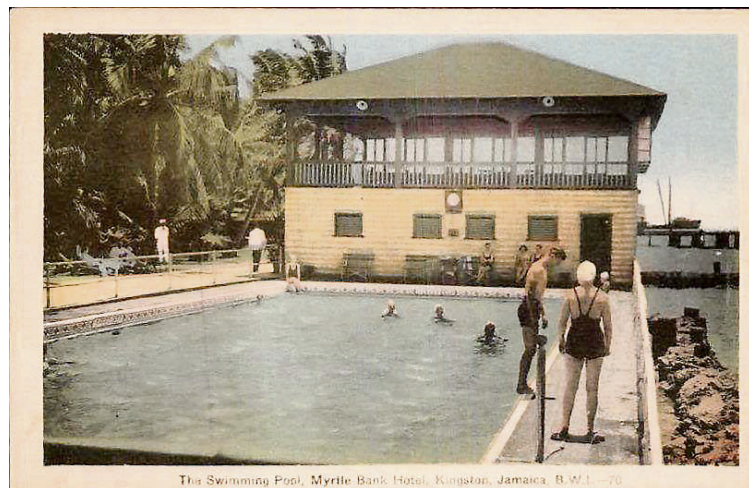
" The staff quickly gathered at the edges, shouting threats at the intruder. From the middle of the pool, Blake defiantly challenged: "Call the police. Call the Army. Call the owner. Call God. And let's have one helluva big story."



Edwin Allen (right), minister of education, accepts an autographed copy of 'Beautiful Jamaica' from author Evon Blake in this 1972 photo. Allen approved the book for the schools' library system.

God. And let's have one helluva big story." Although **The Gleaner** declined to report the incident, news of the protest quickly spread all over the island. The hotel's owner, Abe Issa, made loud noises about how everyone was welcome, but in photos of the hotel ... the only black faces are the staff. After Blake's plunge, the pool was drained and refilled ..."

I remember how for weeks after that my father would have our Nurse dress my sister and me and bring us from our home next to the wonderful, huge salt-water Bournemouth Pool, where we



The Myrtle Bank Pool that Blake jumped into, defying segregation in Jamaica.

Hotels were not the only focus of his racial equality campaign, as my father challenged Kingston banks to hire female tellers with black and brown faces, not just the white skin and pale hair they felt was the only appropriate look for people handling money. Choosing the top student from a Kingston secretarial school who happened to be coal black, dad made her take a test in typing and shorthand against the bank manager's secretary and felt satisfied he had made his point when the student outperformed the secretary.

KING'S HOUSE INVITATION

Dad prided himself on being the first black on the King's House invitation list, becoming friends with Governors John Huggins, Arthur Richards and Hugh Foote. But he never attended the events, dashing the thick parchment invitations embellished with gold insignias of the British government into a case for Christmas cards. A friend of all the region's political leaders, including Robert Bradshaw of Barbados, Guyana's Cheddi Jagan and Cuba's Fidel Castro (who invited him when Cuba first opened its doors to international journalists), he was a maverick who preferred to do what no one else was doing.

On the night of the referendum on whether Jamaica should join the West Indies Federation that was

swam daily, to change into swimsuits and take a dip in the Myrtle Bank pool. We hated the small pool with its nasty chlorine taste, as we were totally unaware of the statement my father was making. Some weeks later, he took my sister, me and Nurse to the newly opened Tower Isle Hotel in St Ann, demanded three rooms and, when told there were none available, told the manager that if the rooms were not found, he would have his friend Alexander (Busta) Bustamante close down the hotel the next day. Three rooms miraculously became available.

Choice Hotels International awards Caribbean stars

CHOICE HOTELS International, Inc (NYSE: CHH), one of the world's leading hotel companies, has recognised the Quality Inn El Portal, located in Puerto Rico's trendy Condado Beach area, as one of the company's top

Puerto Rico hotel tops the elite list

performing hotels of its Caribbean portfolio.

The hotel walked away with two of Choice Hotels' Caribbean Star Awards during a recent

presentation at the company's headquarters in Rockville, Maryland.

Based on its likelihood to recommend scores, an industry

benchmark, Quality Inn El Portal captured the Most Improved Hotel in the Caribbean with an increase of seven per cent over last year.

The hotel also scored the highest gains in RevPAR (revenue per available room) or the strongest gains in revenue versus the competition with an incredible gain of 17.2 per cent in the RevPAR Index through the end of July 2014.



Saga Sapphire to open Trinidad's cruise season

Saga Sapphire

THE ARRIVAL of the *Saga Sapphire*, which brought just over 600 passengers to the Port of Port of Spain on November 13, signalled the opening of the 2014/2015 Cruise season for Trinidad.

A small ship by cruise liner standards, the vessel has been described as elegant, timeless and relaxing with spacious cabins and a host of exciting amenities including an Aqua Spa and fully equipped gymnasium.

In light of the prevailing global health concerns, Saga Cruises, the parent company of the *Saga Sapphire*, has adopted a zero-tolerance approach to persons boarding the

ship and enforced all health regulations, as ascribed to by the World Health Organisation and the Cruise Lines International Association, with a view to safeguarding crew, passengers and locals at ports of disembarkation.

Officials of the Port Authority at the Port of Port of Spain worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Health, the Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC) and other key tourism stakeholders to ensure all protocols were in place for the arrival of the *Saga Sapphire*. Once the ship entered Trinidad and Tobago's waters, the

vessel had to meet pratique requirements, or pre-arrival clearance in compliance with international health regulations.

EXCITING CULTURAL DISPLAY

As is customary, disembarking passengers were serenaded by the melodies of steel pan music and treated to an exciting cultural display featuring traditional carnival characters and costumed dancers performing to the infectious sounds of calypso and soca music.

On the quayside, passengers had the opportunity to view and photograph the

work of local designer and carnival bandleader, Brian Mac Farlane, including depictions of local icons, sites and attractions among replicas of Trinidad's distinct gingerbread houses.

The TDC is also committed to ensuring visitors experience a high level of customer service, and as such, the Visitor Guides were out in full force to assist cruise passengers with maps and information on the destination. All citizens were also urged to extend a warm and hospitable Trinbago welcome to all cruise visitors as they traversed the city of Port of Spain.

Film Commission seeks scripts for 2015 festival

THE JAMAICAN Film Commission, housed at Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO), is seeking production-ready scripts for short films and/or documentaries by December 2 this year. Projects submitted for entry will be considered for entry in the festival, following a judging process after which the official announcement will be made.

The agency and its partners plan to host the film festival on July 7-11 next year with the aim of marketing Jamaican written, directed and produced Jamaican films to a wide regional and international audience.

JAMPRO is inviting aspiring, emerging or established filmmakers to participate. The Film Commission intends to seek part funding for the productions that are chosen the film festival. As another form of support, JAMPRO will facilitate workshops up to May 2015 to provide technical support to writers, producers and directors.

JAMPRO has been increasing its efforts to promote the creative industries for trade and investment through an improved direct strategy. The recently held Creative Industries Open Day, launch of the Creative

Professionals database, and the Jamaica Film Festival are three projects that are targeted to invigorate the industry.

PROMOTION NOT ENOUGH

JAMPRO president, Diane Edwards said, "Our goal is to promote the Jamaican film and creative industries. However, promotion is not enough. We must actively develop our local industry through initiatives that will allow us to export content and assist our professionals to work on locally produced films." Edwards also spoke of the importance

of the planned film festival to promote Jamaican stories, "Film festivals internationally have led to films being picked up for worldwide distribution. We would like to replicate that success in Jamaica and see Jamaica's culture on global display," she said.

The Jamaica Film Commission looks forward to developing more initiatives that will preserve Jamaica's culture and creative spirit through filmmaking. For more information on the submission of projects, visit www.filmjamaica.com or email jamaicafilmfestival@jamprocorp.com.



Half Moon, A RockResort is country's Best Golf Hotel

One of Half Moon's signature holes on the multi award-winning golf course.

THOUSANDS OF discerning golf professionals and golf consumers worldwide cast their ballots declaring Half Moon Jamaica's Best Golf Hotel at the World Golf Awards.

Held in Quinta do Lago, Portugal on Saturday, November 15, the World Golf Awards celebrates excellence in golf tourism and rewards countries and hotels that are committed to elevating the sport while offering world-class golf amenities and facilities.

No stranger to golf awards, the 60-year-old resort has been named Jamaica's Best Golf Resort at the World Travel Awards, of which the

World Golf Awards is a part, for seven years in a row and also challenged 2000 other golf resorts in 2008 to earn the coveted Golf Resort of the Year award by the International Association of Golf Tour Operators.

NOTHING BUT THE BEST

General manager of Half Moon, Aram Zerunian, said, "It is good to know that our work to elevate our guests' experience is not going unnoticed. Year after year, we invest heavily in our golf course, ensuring that we deliver nothing but the best to our gofers. We have

been leading the charge for golf in Jamaica for over fifty years. Recognitions such as this only motivate us to aim higher."

The 18-hole Half Moon Golf Course forms part of the 400-acre resort. Designed by noted architect Robert Trent Jones Sr in 1964 and renovated by his protégé, Roger Rulewich, in 2005, the Half Moon Golf Course has played host to various international golf tournaments such as the Jamaica Open, Celebrity Players Tour Jamaica Classic, European PGA Seniors Tournament and many others.

Ananse Soundsplash set for Saturday

THE SECOND staging of the Ananse Soundsplash at the Montego Bay Community College Lecture Theatre on November 22 is going to be a refreshing experience. Storytellers from all over the world will transform Montego Bay into a Mecca of culture and art as we pass on our history to the generations.

The festival's theme is Remember, Retell, Renew, which aims to rekindle the love of Jamaican culture in the hearts and minds of especially the young. The festival has eight legs and will begin on November 19 at Portmore Community College.

Montego Bay will host the sixth and seventh leg in the form of a conference where various writers will present papers on the theme. This will begin at 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. The conference will be moderated by psychologist, Dr Freddie Hickling and among the presenters are Amina Blackwood Meeks, Mary Nelson from the USA, Helen Williams from Montego Bay, Barry and Jeri Marshall from the USA, Denise Valentine from the USA and Nomsa from South Africa.

GI LAUGH FI PEAS SOUP

In the evening at the concert titled, Gi Laugh Fi Peas Soup, the energy of Jamaican culture through music, dance, poetry and storytelling will take centre stage. As the name suggests, patrons will sit and sip their soup as Roy 'Tenny' Miller, film and stage actor as well as communication consultant from Florida will be the master of ceremonies. New and upcoming singing sensation Bunny



BUNNY ROSE



MWANGOLA

Rose, with a baritone voice to die for, will be closing off the show.

The day will prove to be an international intermingling of cultures as storyteller Mshai Mwangola from Kenya will be the main guest storyteller, along with performances from the Montego Bay Community College Performing Arts Club and Choir.

Amina Blackwood Meeks, founder of Ntukuma, the storytelling foundation, decided to collaborate with the community colleges in Jamaica two years ago to produce this rich and much-needed festival to help preserve our culture.



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St Lucia is leading Caribbean honeymoon destination again

THE SUN-DRENCHED island of Saint Lucia will again have the envious opportunity of being able to use the internationally recognised 'Winner Shield' insignia of the World Travel Awards after capturing the coveted prize of Leading Caribbean Honeymoon Destination for 2014.

Saint Lucia was adjudged

winner in a category that included long-time competitors, Barbados, Antigua and Jamaica, to name a few. In selecting Saint Lucia as the winner, officials of the World Travel Awards say the accolades exist to recognise, acknowledge and celebrate excellence in travel, tourism and hospitality, which was why Saint Lucia was chosen by fellow professionals across the

globe for a World Travel Award.

TRAVEL EXCELLENCE

"This hallmark of travel excellence will demonstrate to both consumers and fellow professionals that you are recognised by the industry as the very best in your region," the august body noted in a congratulatory note.

St Lucia tourism officials have expressed delight in winning the prestigious award for yet another year. "This is testament to not only our hard work across the entire industry but critically our robust efforts and innovative initiatives like the highly successful wedding symposium and the multiple hosting of the Bachelor series that have allowed us, as a destination,

to not only keep our pulse on the weddings and honeymoon markets but to stay ahead of the game," said an elated tourism director, Louis Lewis.

Saint Lucia, he says, intends to use the World Travel Award Winner Shield on all its marketing, advertising and promotional communications.

– Contributed

Ebola task force against travel bans

The following is a statement from the Travel and Transport Task Force on the Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa.

LEADING INTERNATIONAL organisations and associations from the transport, trade and tourism sector stand firmly with the World Health Organisation (WHO) against general bans on travel and trade, as well as restrictions that include general quarantine of travellers from Ebola-affected countries.

The Travel and Transport Task Force, established in August 2014, calls for international cooperation of governments and the transport sector in following the recommendations of the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee on Ebola, convened by WHO.

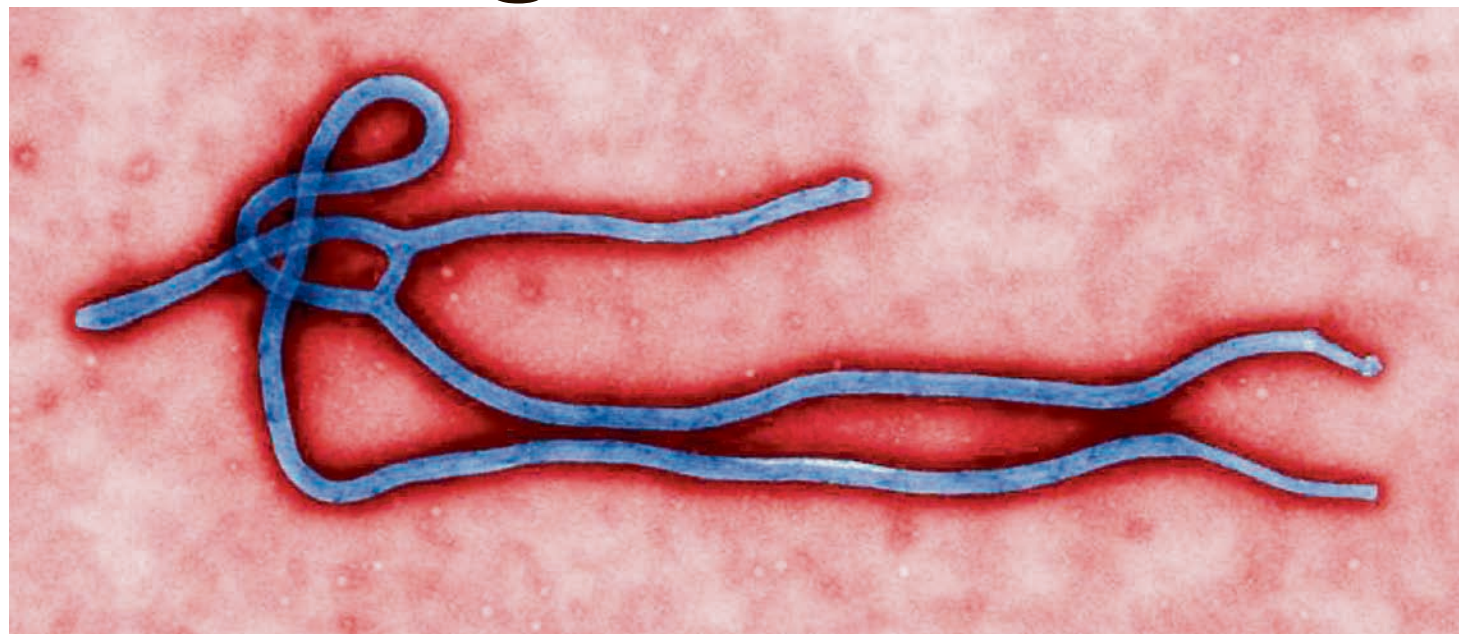
WHO does not recommend general bans on travel or trade, or general quarantine of travellers arriving from Ebola-affected countries, as measures to contain the outbreak.

Such measures can create a false impression of control and may have a detrimental impact on the number of health-care workers volunteering to assist Ebola control or prevention efforts in the affected countries. Such measures may also adversely reduce essential trade, including supplies of food, fuel and medical equipment to the affected countries, contributing to their humanitarian and economic hardship.

EXIT SCREENING FOR EBOLA

Current exit screening of all persons departing affected countries through international airports, seaports and major land crossings is recommended by WHO and can reduce the numbers of people with symptoms from travelling from the countries with high levels of Ebola transmission.

While screening upon entry into non-affected countries may provide an opportunity to further increase public awareness about Ebola, such screening also can require significant resources including staff, facilities and systems to care for ill travellers who might be suspected of having Ebola.



This photo provided by the US Centers for Disease Control shows an Ebola virus under the microscope.

PREPAREDNESS FOR NON-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

The best protective measures for non-affected countries are adequate levels of preparedness, including heightened surveillance to detect and diagnose cases early and well prepared staff and operational planning to ensure that suspect cases of Ebola are managed safely and in ways to minimise further spread.

Communication campaigns should be conducted to inform travellers, airlines, shipping crews, staff working at points of entry, and health workers everywhere about the symptoms of Ebola and what to do if a person has symptoms. Data on the efficiency of exit screening should be made available.

ADVICE TO TRAVELLERS

People who have travelled to one of the three West African countries currently affected by Ebola (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) should take the following precautions for 21 days after returning:

- Stay within reach of a good quality health-care facility

- Be aware of the symptoms of infection (sudden fever, intense weakness, muscle pain, headache, vomiting, diarrhoea, rash, and sometimes bleeding)
- Immediately report a fever of 38°C or higher to their local medical emergency service (ideally by phone) and mention their travel history.

Note:

- Early treatment improves the chance of recovery.
- To catch Ebola requires direct contact with the body fluid of an Ebola-infected person.
- Asymptomatic individuals are not infectious, even if they are incubating the disease.

ATTENDING INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS

The International Health Regulations Emergency Committee agreed that there should not be a general ban on participation of people from countries with transmission of Ebola from attending international meetings and events. The decision of participation must be made on a case-by-

case basis by the host country. This country may request additional health monitoring of participants.

The Travel and Transport Task Force, which includes WHO, is working together to:

- develop guidance on exit-screening recommendations for affected countries
- provide a set of considerations and steps for planning entry screening at point of entry for countries that wish to introduce this as part of their preparedness plan
- inform the aviation and maritime sectors on procedures for caring safely for travellers who are suspected of being infected with Ebola on board an aircraft or ship, or at arrival points
- provide information on Ebola to travellers arriving at or leaving airports, ports or other transit points
- develop protocols for the passenger shipping sector
- collect data and work with authorities to reduce restrictions to port arrivals and ship and aeroplane movements.

– Contributed