

Finally!! BSCFA and BSI sign agreement



(l-r) Elvis Reyes, Chairman, BSCFA; Prime Minister John Briceño; Shawn Chavarria, Director of Finance, BSI hold up signed addendum to Commercial Agreement

ORANGE WALK, Mon. Jan. 8, 2024
It didn't happen as smoothly as anticipated from last week, when *Amandala's* headline reported that "Sugar is sweet again!" Words of

caution from BSCFA Vice Chairman Alfredo Ortega proved prophetic and prepared their members to stay focused

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Belize receives grant funding for climate resilience



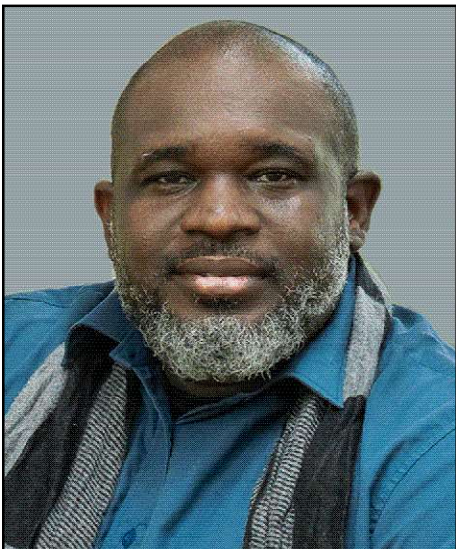
Dr. Osmond Martinez, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development, and Investment

by Kristen Ku

BELIZE CITY, Fri. Jan. 5, 2024
The Ministry of Economic Development (MED) has received total funding of BZ\$3,157,028 from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Caribbean

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Former church leader, Mervin Budram, back in court for disclosure



Mervin Budram, accused

by Kristen Ku

BELMOPAN, Mon. Jan. 8, 2024
Mervin Budram, formerly a prominent youth leader and worship leader with Jubilee Ministries in Belmopan, received

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Jamaican national shot on Mayflower St.

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 8, 2024
30-year-old Theodore Dwyer, also known as "Uptown", a Jamaican national, was shot on Mayflower Street in Belize City on Monday night, January 8.

Reports to *Amandala* suggest that around 7:30 p.m. Dwyer was out

sitting on a chair at the nearby basketball court through an unnamed alley off Mayflower Street when he was approached by three men who walked out and crept up from down the alley and began firing gunshots at him.

Dwyer was hit multiple times and was transported to the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital. Contrary to reports made by several media outlets that labeled him as dead, as of print

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Belize records its first murder of 2024!

Two brothers charged with murdering a Belizean-American in Bella Vista Village, Toledo District



Christon Logan, deceased (above) Cornelio (top right) and Ernesto Martinez (bottom right) were arrested and jointly charged with murder



by Charles Gladden

BELLA VISTA, Toledo District, Mon. Jan. 8, 2024

A US national was killed in the early hours of Sunday, January 7, in Toledo — becoming the first murder victim of

the new year.
The victim was identified as Belizean-American Christon Logan, 34, a resident of the US, and a pair of brothers have been charged with his death.

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KHMH Workers Union holds elections

by Kristen Ku

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 8, 2024

The Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital Authority Workers Union (KHMHAU) held elections following its general meeting on January 5, 2024.

With the re-election of Andrew Baird as President and the appointment of new officers, the union is poised to address long-standing challenges at the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH).

The election resulted in a mix of continuity and fresh perspectives within the KHMHAU leadership. Alongside President Andrew Baird, the union welcomed Dr. Alain Gonzalez as Vice President, Caleb Gillett as Secretary, Johnathan Sosa as Assistant Secretary, Kereen Birch as Treasurer, Roy Briceno as Assistant Treasurer, and Councilors Melanie Usher, Tyrone Wright, and Evan Dawson.

The union expressed gratitude towards its members for their active participation in the democratic process, noting the importance of collective decision-making in shaping the future of healthcare services.

In a statement following his election as Vice President, Dr. Alain Gonzalez, a 16-year veteran at the KMH, emphasized his commitment to improving resources and staff-management relations.



He acknowledged the daily risks and challenges faced by healthcare workers and outlined his objectives:

“I know the needs our staff has and will work closely with the President on issues such as completing our CBA (Collective Bargaining Agreement); obtaining a pension for over 200 workers that have been working since 2001 to 2017 and were not on the pension scheme; and working with the KMH to provide much-needed resources and better working environment,” he said.

The union’s leadership faces a daunting task. The demand for better resources in healthcare, coupled with the need for improved staff conditions, remains a high priority.

The ongoing challenges of healthcare funding, staff shortages, and the need for stronger worker protection are also at the forefront of the union’s agenda. There is hope that the new union leadership will promote a more collaborative atmosphere between staff and management, leading to better healthcare outcomes for patients.

Ministry of Home Affairs announces the new Firearms and Ammunition Control Board

by Kristen Ku

BELIZE CITY, Fri. Jan. 5, 2024

The Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries, led by Hon. Kareem Musa, today announced the formation of the Firearms and Ammunition Control Board.

This development follows the enactment of the Firearms (Amendment) Act, No. 43 of 2023, which amends the existing Firearms Act, Chapter 143 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020 and transfers the authority for issuing licenses from the Police Department, and the Commissioner of Police, to the newly established board.

The shift in policy comes after reports surfaced of a possible black market for gun licenses in Belize, with accusations that licenses were accessible to criminal and gang-related figures through under-the-table transactions with certain members of the Police Department.

Members of the newly formed board include Chief Executive Officer, Sharole Carr-Saldivar from the Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries; Magistrate, Mannon Dennison; and Sr. Superintendent of Police, Clement Cacho.

The board’s primary functions will include the receipt, screening, and processing of firearm applications; the appointment of approved Firearm Safety Instructors; and the investigation of complaints and breaches related to firearm authorizations.

Following the Cabinet’s approval on July 6, 2023, the government proceeded to enact legislation for the establishment of the Board. Subsequently, on November 1, 2023, this legislative change was formalized, with Governor General Dame Froyla Tzalam signing the amendment to the Firearms Act.



Chester Williams, Commissioner of Police

Commissioner Williams, while acknowledging the necessity for change, had expressed concerns about the effectiveness of such boards, citing examples from other countries where similar approaches have not entirely ended these illicit activities.

Today, in a press briefing, we asked him whether his views on the newly formed board had changed.

“No matter how tight you put something, people are always going to find a way to infiltrate it, and so we’re dealing human element here. The board is going to be guided by vetting. The vetting is done by a special branch. The special branch are humans. There may be a person who might get a good vetting, and the person might not be as good as the vetting speaks of him or her. And that is just human nature. And if it is that the board were to issue a license to a person whose vetting is impeccable, and it turns out that that person is not as impeccable as the vetting state, then you can’t fault the board for that. So, there is always going to be that margin of error where there are going to be persons who will get who don’t deserve,” he remarked.

The inaugural meeting of the Board took place on January 4.

Belizean bus driver kidnapped in Chetumal

by Kristen Ku

CHETUMAL, Mexico, Mon. Jan. 8, 2024

A Belizean bus driver’s routine trip turned into a nightmare after a minor traffic accident in Chetumal, Mexico, led to his abduction and a brutal captivity.

Thirty-five-year-old José Quintero, in an emotional interview, recounted his terrifying experience following his unexpected disappearance on January 3, 2024.

Quintero’s ordeal began when his bus suffered a brake failure near the ‘Tren Maya’ construction site, resulting in a collision with a Nissan March.

An attempt to resolve the issue privately was derailed when the other driver refused Belizean currency, which was all Quintero had. Under pressure, he offered the driver his possessions, including money, silver chains, a cell phone, and promises of complete payment the next day at a local hotel.

The situation only escalated the following day when Quintero, thinking he was settling the debt, was unexpectedly abducted by the driver and an accomplice.

“The next day at around 8:00 a.m. the man showed up with another vehicle, a red Corolla. So I gave him the 5,000 pesos I promised him, and he gave me back my items. That’s when he asked me, ‘Where are you headed?’ And I told him the market. He told me he would give me a lift, and I accepted. So, when we were coming up to the market, I told the man, ‘this is my stop’. That is when the guy next to me threw his arm around me and held me down,” he explained.



José Quintero, victim

He described being physically assaulted, blindfolded, and taken to an unknown location where he was repeatedly beaten and robbed.

After enduring hours of torment, Quintero was forcibly ejected from a moving vehicle on January 4, 2024. Stunned and injured, he sought help from local police in Chetumal who were passing by and were stunned to discover he was a person who had been reported missing from Belize.

The police provided him with immediate shelter and medical care, and facilitated contact with his family. “The Mexican police were so kind,” he said.

The Mexican police are currently reviewing citywide surveillance footage in hopes of identifying the perpetrators, specifically their vehicle’s license plate.

“I never expected something like this would happen, considering I had paid what I owed. I trusted the man to give me a ride to the market, but that’s to show you that you can’t trust everyone,” he said in tears.

Truck busted with “shuga”!

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 8, 2024

A Post Office van containing several sacks of sugar from Guatemala was busted in western Belize last week, despite the ongoing chaos in the north between the cane farmers and BSI, and the alleged sugar shortage in the country.

Before the Post Office van was caught at the checkpoint, another much bigger truck was seen departing the Corozal District with an estimated 200 sacks of sugar loaded inside, which was highlighted in *Amandala*’s Friday edition. That truck was caught within San Jose Village, Orange Walk District by cane farmers who were at the climax of their all-week protest.

It was later revealed that the 200 sacks of sugar were purchased from BSI/ASR and it was suspected to be going across the border to Guatemala. Nonetheless, the truck carrying the sugar bore license plates from the Toledo District and was insured within Belize. However, when the media questioned Commissioner of Police, Chester

Williams, he noted that it would be hard to prove that the sugar was destined for the border, and no charges would be brought against the driver.

Nevertheless, this incident prompted authorities to keep an eye out for any persons attempting to smuggle sugar, which brings us to last Thursday, January 4, when the authorities halted the Post Office van in the Cayo District on the George Price Highway, and they detained someone who brought the sugar illegally from Guatemala.

“The van was searched and it yielded three sacks of white sugar from Guatemala along with other contraband items. The van and its driver were taken into police custody and Customs have been called in and they will be handed over to Customs,” the Police Commissioner said.

Amandala made attempts to contact Lawrence Thompson, Deputy Comptroller, Enforcement & Compliance of Belize Customs Department, for comment on the situation, but our request went unanswered as of print time.



NOTICE

Our advertisers and readers are advised that due to the holiday on Monday, January 15 there will be no online Tuesday issue for Tuesday, January 16, 2024. The **Friday printed issue** will hit the streets as normal on Friday morning, **January 19, 2024.**

THE RIGHT HONORABLE

GEORGE CADLE PRICE

January 15, 1919-
September 19, 2011



Man chopped in Caye Caulker

by Charles Gladden

CAYE CAULKER. Belize District, Mon. Jan. 8, 2024

A man is recovering in the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital after he was ambushed by a group of men on Sunday, January 7.

According to initial reports, the victim, 37-year-old Tito Rosado of Estrella Street, Caye Caulker Village, was in the Black Neighborhood area in the vicinity of his home, and was heading toward the back beach, when a group of men pounced on him and a struggle began.

Rosado received multiple chop wounds on the left side of his head and his right arm. When police were

conducting patrols in the area after 11:30 p.m. that Sunday they discovered a badly injured Rosado sitting on the side of the street bleeding.

He was transported to the Caye Caulker Health Center and then transferred to the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital, where he is recovering.

None of Rosado’s attackers have yet been identified. ACP Hilberto Romero, Regional Commander of the Belize Police Department’s Eastern Division, told reporters that the matter is still under investigation, and they are yet to identify the suspects or determine a motive for this incident.

Also, they are gathering witnesses as investigations continue.

MIDH repairs collapsed bridge in San Pedro Colombia

by Kristen Ku

SAN PEDRO COLOMBIA, Toledo District, Mon. Jan. 8, 2024

The Ministry of Infrastructure Development (MIDH) swiftly addressed an infrastructure failure over the weekend, following the collapse of a small wooden bridge near San Pedro Colombia Village.

The bridge on the Crique Chano Farm Road gave way under the weight of a heavy cargo truck on Saturday, January 6, disrupting an important transportation route for the local community, in which half of the approximately 3,500 residents rely on the bridge daily.

The MIDH was promptly informed of the incident, and within hours, their team had secured temporary culverts and began preparation for installation.

In an interview, Basilicas Choco, chairman for San Pedro Colombia, informed us that a local farmer’s request for construction materials led to the bridge’s collapse under the weight of the delivery truck.

“People usually pass on the road where he lives, so nothing came to mind that the bridge would have collapsed. So, the truck went to deliver his material, but before he reached the person’s area, the truck broke down with the load of materials,” Choco said.

Recognizing the bridge’s importance, Choco immediately contacted the Ministry of Works. Within two hours, work began on constructing a new

culvert, restoring access by evening.

“They replaced the bridge with a culvert, double culvert, and by evening time it was passable again for many of our families and other people that utilize the road, because there are hundreds of people that use that road every day,” he said.

However, the newly installed double culvert is a temporary solution. Choco expressed concerns about its durability, especially during floods with strong creek currents.

“When it floods here, a lot of the water in the creek is strong; it has strong currents, so they said that it is just temporary, and they want to see how they can address it in the later run,” he detailed.

Victor Espat, CEO at the MIDH, noted that the original small wooden bridges were not designed for heavy cargo trucks, but for lighter vehicles.

Plans for a more permanent and stronger bridge structure are anticipated.



Murders gaan down!

85 murders for 2023

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Fri. Jan. 5, 2024

At the time that this article was written (Friday, January 5, 2024), an entire week had passed since our last edition, and there had been no bloodshed in the streets since December 30—a promising sign, since the murder count at the end of the year was a comparatively low 85.

Throughout December, the eyes of members of the Police Department, the media, and the public were on the murder tally, since there were indications that it could be one of the lowest of the decade, after several years in which the final count was in the triple-digit range.

The month saw 29-year-old Albert Valentine of Punta Gorda Town executed in Belize City on the 12th. Then police re-classified the death of 82-year-old William Watson as a murder after it had initially been thought that he likely died as a result of a fire that damaged his home

MAJOR CRIMES COMPARATIVE JANUARY – SEPTEMBER (2022 – 2023)																				
ITEM	January		February		March		April		May		June		July		August		September		Total	
CRIMES	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Murder	12	4	8	8	6	7	12	11	8	6	13	8	11	11	3	10	13	3	86	68

on the 5th. Then there were three murders within a weekend before Christmas—19-year-old Leslie Young, Jr. of Belize City, and 45-year-old Hugo Rodriguez of Carmelita Village, Orange Walk District were fatally shot and 22-year-old Irvin Martinez of San Pedro Town, was stabbed.

During the Christmas weekend, two men were killed: 30-year-old Darnell Puerto of Belize City and 30-year-old Kaleem Chun of Punta Gorda. Then after the holidays, there was the discovery of the body of 19-year-old Christian Ramos of Belize City, who authorities believe was murdered and placed in a shipping barrel, where his body remained for days. Finally, to end the year, two murder victims in the city, 38-year-old Jorge Caceres and 28-year-old Trevor Brown of Belize City, were murdered hours apart in separate incidents.

When local reporters questioned Commissioner of Police, Chester Williams, he expressed satisfaction with the numbers.

“Well, certainly hard work does pay off. I can say that I have had five, [or] six years of sleepless nights. [I am always] trying to figure out what I can do along with the Police Department and our partner agencies to reduce the murder count; that’s the main one for us. And while many times we came close to achieving that, we have not been able to, until this time around; and it just goes to show that if you believe in what you’re doing,” he said.

“We are not going to, as I said, begin to beat our chest, but rather look at all the good things we did in 2023 and see how we can replicate and even do better in 2024 to make sure that we maintain the numbers as low as possible ... I know it is not going to be easy. It’s going to be difficult, but I have every faith and every confidence that with the hard work of the Police Department and the support of our partner agents, we can replicate and maybe even do better,” continued ComPol Williams.

Amandala would like to note that before 2023 concluded with a murder count of 85, the years in the preceding decade which were the most peaceful were 2013 with 99, 2020 with 102, and last year with 113. On the other hand, the deadliest years were 2017 with 142, 2018 with 143, and 2012 with 145 murders.

Letters to the editor

About “Fireworks, ‘danimite’ and pistols ...” article

Editor, AMANDALA
Sun. Jan. 7, 2024

Good day,

I am writing this email as a reply or support of the article published by Mr. Colin Hyde, in which he is mentioning about the use of “fireworks” and dynamite here in Belize, which is becoming more frequent in the past two years.

I am a Salvadoran born. I have been living here in Belize for over 20 years, and I strongly believe that the Belizean authorities MUST put a stop to this malpractice. As a legal immigrant, this peculiar annoying noise of cohetes and the disgusting smell of gunpowder, bring just bad memories.

There is nothing to enjoy with this fireworks business. I am married to a Belizean gentleman now, and he has been telling me since when this practice has become a part of this culture.

What I can testify with this practice in El Salvador, is that there were so many accidents in the factories, parks, and surrounding communities where these facilities are located, where many times these cohetes just catch fire either for the cohetes rubbing each other due to transportation or handling, and caused so many injuries, amputations, eye blindness, and many more tragedies, mainly in kids!!!

I recall (was telling my husband) that, the community I grew up in, people go wild every December; and one of the

“silvadores” (whistles but the dangerous form) got inside our bedrooms and landed on the bed mattress, so the sheets began to light up! and our little house was about to catch fire. Thank God we were home and that didn’t happen!

Besides that, many children end up in the hospital for acute respiratory problems aka ASTHMA, and I was one of those children.

I think I can write pages and pages of these tragedies, until I can go no more; but I believe that as media houses, we should as well bring this to the respective authorities; and we as citizens should pressure the authorities to put an end to this malpractice once and for all.

There is no fun in this practice. It is annoying, and also, coming from a very conflictive country (El Salvador), I find this to be A CRIMINAL ACT!

THE USE OF FIREWORKS ETC. SHOULD BE REGULATED AND enforced by authorities!,

“THE RIGHT OF RESPECT OF OTHERS IS PEACE” By Benito Juarez!

Respectfully,
Bilha Marquina Williams

(AMANDALA Ed. Note: Colin Hyde’s article “Fireworks, danimite, and pistols/semi-automatic rifles” appeared on page 11 of *Amandala* for Friday, January 5, 2024. The “cohetes” refers to the rocket type fireworks that are powered by gunpowder.)

Belize records its first murder of 2024!

Continued from Page 1

According to official police reports, the fatal shooting occurred around 3:00 a.m. on Sunday. Logan had been walking alongside his girlfriend toward their vehicle after leaving a bar/club, when he got into a verbal dispute with Cornelio Martinez, 39, a Belizean broker of Independence Village, Stann Creek District.

During the heated conversation between the men, Martinez pulled out a licensed pistol and firing a single gunshot at Logan. Then Martinez’s brother, 33-year-old Ernesto Martinez, who is also a broker from Independence Village, came and proceeded to kick Logan; after which Cornelio Martinez fired more shots at Logan. A total of 9 shots were reportedly fired. They then fled in a nearby vehicle.

ACP Hilberto Romero, Regional Commander of the Belize Police Department’s Eastern Division, confirmed reports to the local media that

the deadly shooting stemmed from a dispute earlier in the night between Logan and Ernesto Martinez.

When police arrived at the scene, they saw the motionless body of Logan on the ground with what appeared to be multiple gunshot injuries. He was transported to the Southern Regional Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

ACP Romero also mentioned that, while investigators were at the scene, a 9mm pistol, which police believe was the murder weapon, was found.

Ernesto and Cornelio Martinez were arrested and jointly charged with murder and were jointly arraigned at the Independence Magistrate Court; they were then remanded to the Belize Central Prison until March 27, 2024.

Logan had arrived in the country on Friday to inspect the construction of his home in Mango Creek and was expected to leave sometime in the following week.

Plagiarism — The bogeyman in American academia

by Marie-Therese Belisle Nweke

Friday, January 5, 2024

This is my take:

Neri Oxman, the wife of Bill Ackman, the billionaire fund manager, who until 2021 was a tenured professor at MIT, has been accused recently of being a plagiarist, just like Claudine Gay, the now disgraced former president of Harvard University. Oxman’s husband is one of the chief architects of Professor Gay’s fall from grace, who poses as a freedom fighter against plagiarism, as well as anti-Zionism, which he equates with anti-Semitism.

Oxman is Jewish like Ackman, while Gay is Black, of Haitian ancestry. Gay is married to a systems analyst in health at Stanford University, Christopher Afendulis,

who is white.

Looking beyond the lens of America’s gendered racism, of which Gay was a victim, there is the indisputable fact that for some time now there has been a general dumbing down of US education and educational standards right across the board; and now manifesting even in the highest echelons of America’s educational powerhouses. This was not the case five or so decades ago. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that plagiarism is a growing phenomenon, though not openly observed and denounced until now, within the ranks of a number of both white and Black American scholars—though this is rather rare in other educational systems such as those in Europe, Britain, Canada, Australia and the Caribbean.

Former church leader, Mervin Budram, back in court...

Continued from Page 1

disclosure in court today, Monday, January 8, as part of a sexual assault case against him that has been ongoing for almost five months.

Budram stands accused of using his influential position to gain access to female minors, whom he sexually assaulted. The acts of sexual assault that he is accused of committing span about a decade – from 2004 to 2014.

The exposure of Budram’s alleged misconduct started in August 2023 when Rebecca Stirn Lennan, the daughter of Budram’s pastor at Jubilee Ministries, publicly accused Budram of assaulting her 19 years prior, when she was just 11 years old.

Lennan’s disclosure on social media sparked a wave of similar allegations by numerous other women who accused Budram of assault when they were minors. This prompted an investigation that led to Budram’s arraignment on November 6, 2023, for 13 counts of aggravated assault of an indecent nature.

Despite the severity of the charges, Budram maintained his innocence, pleading not guilty and securing release on a \$6,000 bail with two sureties of the same amount.

Today Budram was represented by attorney Arthur Saldivar, who spoke with reporters outside of the courtroom. “The prosecution was able to produce disclosure, which we now have, and a trial date has been set,” he explained.

Despite his concerns about the absence of a magistrate in Belmopan, which complicates the legal process, Saldivar stressed his client’s innocence and the need for the allegations to be thoroughly examined in court.

“It could be 13 [counts of assault], it

could be 100. If there is no truth to it, there is no issue. My client maintains his innocence, and we look forward to having these matters ventilated in court to clear up whatever misconceptions may exist. It is not my place to invalidate or seek to invalidate how any person may feel; but the court is not a court of feelings, it’s a court of law,” he said.

Saldivar, while commenting on how it was possible for 13 counts of assault to be levied against his client based on what is said to be a single police report, suggested that initial sensationalism often overshadows the judicial process.

He said that he therefore plans to scrutinize the disclosure closely, so that he can address any unsubstantiated charges.

Saldivar went on to say that the public scrutiny has taken a toll on Budram and his family.

“It’s been an ordeal for them. His business has suffered. But when it comes to certain accusations being levied ... it carries with it a stigma that mars a family. And in this particular instance, you’re talking about a man who’s married with children. He has not had any of these kinds of accusations brought against him before. But like anybody else, anybody can be accused. That doesn’t mean a person does anything,” he said.

Saldivar also lamented the presumption of guilt that often accompanies such accusations, particularly against figures in the church.

A trial date has been set for March 18 and Saldivar confirmed that the accusers would be required to testify in court, where their statements would be subject to cross-examination.

This stage, he believes, will be crucial in determining the validity of the accusations.



“Atrocities” and “Abominations”

Sunday, January 7, 2024

There is a saying that sometimes “out of evil comes good”. It is also said that “hurt people hurt people”, meaning that there is a tendency for people who have suffered great pain and abuse as children to grow up with an inner anger and unhappiness that manifests itself later on with a continuation of the cycle of abuse against others. In that light, there may be some historical explanation for Israeli atrocities being committed due to the painful memories of their holocaust; but what excuse for inhumanity does the USA have? How could the international bastion of democracy, the USA, allow itself to be dragged into a blood-curdling cauldron of hate?

Recently, it has been heartening to note that U.S. Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken expressed concern about the ongoing atrocity in Gaza. On his current trip to the Middle East, to try and quell any possible “metastasizing” of the situation following the Israelis’ assassination of “top Hamas official... Saleh al-Arouri on Tuesday, along with six others” (BBC, January 7, 2024), he reportedly conceded that “far too many innocent Palestinian men, women and children have died in the war.” Some would say, not really a war, but more accurately a retaliatory onslaught in a totally one-sided affair.

There is a tendency in our communities, whenever a young man becomes a spectacle in the news for some major crime, that others will ask, who are his parents? What did his parents not do in “bringing him up” that caused him to go in that direction? In every society, there will always be a few individuals who, perhaps due to circumstances not understood, despite

the apparent efforts of parents, become subject to bad influences and forces, and decide to take the route of crime. Even in the most primitive societies, unspoiled by all the temptations and distractions of modern “civilization”, there have been cases of individuals who went astray and had to be punished by the other members of the social group. We have read of cases in certain Indigenous cultures where a murderer would be banished from the tribe or clan and his name never mentioned again, perhaps a penalty that some would consider worse than death. But, where there is life, there is hope; and it has been a fundamental principle among so-called “primitive” peoples that life itself is precious, a gift from the Creator, to be cherished. Yet, even in such cultures, there have been incidents of conflict with other groups, and there has been ample evidence of inter-tribal violence. Conflict, it seems, is something that is inevitable within human civilization, just as in the animal kingdom, where the “survival of the fittest” law reigns supreme. But, being the “highest” form of the Creator’s work, many of us humans expect more of ourselves as human beings; unfortunately, there are many who still cling to the mantra of the jungle in 2024 while enjoying the physical comforts and the pleasures to be enjoyed from

all the advancements in modern “Western Civilization”.

In our little Jewel, with only a small Defence Force, the way of peace is the only way for us as a nation, in the midst of a raging war on drugs in our region. Our leaders have demonstrated a commitment to maintain our parliamentary democracy; and it is our aspiration to continue trying to make our society peaceful and loving, and to somehow at the personal, community, national and international level, always try to solve differences the “civilized” way, by negotiation, arbitration or litigation, using the battle of ideas on the scales of justice and righteousness, rather than bombs and bullets and other advanced weapons of war that keep our so-called modern world trapped in its most primitive survival state – might over right.

Thankfully, in our region sober heads have intervened against the intimidating strategy of the bigger party in the recent South American territorial controversy. War solves nothing, but means “destruction and loss of lives. War means tears out of some mothers’ eyes, because their sons are gonna fight and lose their lives.” (From “War” by John Jones of Tomorrow’s Children) Where reason and justice prevail, people on both sides can find a way to live in peace, with benefits accruing to both sides in the dispute. It may be an example to the world.

Nevertheless, wherever there is gross injustice being perpetrated upon a people, there will be resistance; the story never changes.

The cane farmers in northern Belize have been convinced for years that they were not receiving fair treatment from ASR/BSI in their sugar dealings; and thus they put up a strong but peaceful resistance. Negotiation has allowed an avoidance of a real explosion, but there are still serious issues to be ironed out. As Peter Tosh sang, if there is no justice, there will be no peace.

What has been happening across the ocean, and making news headlines consistently (except in the U.S.) is a glaring human atrocity, declared by the United Nations Secretary General as a clear case of genocide. The occupying nation, Israel, and its supporters keep pointing to the atrocity of October 7 committed by Hamas “terrorists”; but no mention of the abomination that the Israeli government has been perpetrating upon the Palestinian people for the previous decades. The very unjust inception of the Israeli state in 1948, and the ensuing Israeli apartheid domination of the Palestinian people had to breed resistance; the October 7 explosion was exactly that – resistance with the same brutal tactics of their oppressor. So, it seems, the Israeli solution is to wipe the oppressed Palestinian people off the face of the earth if they don’t want to run across the borders as refugees to other adjacent Arab states. And the world watches.

In little Belize, we ponder the outcome of this situation. Is the 21st century to be marked by brutality over justice and common sense? Will the abomination of apartheid practiced by Israel be allowed to continue and prosper with USA support in 2024, while the struggling Palestine people are decimated by bombs and starvation and disease epidemics (cholera, dysentery, etc.) as their sanitation and health infrastructure are systematically destroyed by Israeli airplane bombings? Will the ICJ rule on this ongoing atrocity being committed by Israeli forces against unarmed civilians, including elders, women and children in Gaza? And what will come of their ruling?

Aside from the USA, one of the staunchest allies of Israel for decades has been the country that claims us, Guatemala. We are both now at the ICJ. Guatemala is presently undergoing its own internal struggle against institutional corruption. And their long-time ally, the USA, wary of the ongoing illegal immigration crisis at its own southern border, is very concerned about the escalating situation that could result if the agitation of the Guatemalan masses for democracy is not respected and their popularly elected leader is not allowed to assume office.

As Belize waits and watches, having declared our total rejection of the Israeli genocide against the Palestinian people, we pray that democracy may prevail and the agents of institutional corruption be put in check in neighboring Guatemala; that things turn out well at the ICJ; and that the new Guatemalan president will see his country’s relationship with Belize as one that involves forging a path of enhanced respect, cooperation and friendliness between our two closely related peoples.



(estb. 1969)

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BNTU calls on GOB to honour its commitment to our caneros

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 8, 2024

The Belize National Teachers' Union (BNTU) wishes to register its continuous support to the sugar cane farmers of the North, who have been requesting a formalized document that outlines palatable terms of agreement with ASR/BSI for this and future crop seasons.

We therefore wish to register our discontent on the manner in which the Government has dealt with the situation. In no way do we support the use of a million dollars of our tax payers' dollars as bargaining power for a band-aid fix to the issue of the Fair-Trade dispute between BSI/ASR and BSCFA. We

call on the Government of Belize to ensure that they fulfil their signed commitment to BSCFA and to establish a proper Commission of Inquiry before considering the inclusion of the throughput fees and terminal handling charges in the extension or renewal of the commercial agreement. The BNTU remains ready to lend support in whatever way we can to resolve this matter at the negotiations table.

We insist that our cane farmers, who contribute so much to our economic stability, deserve nothing less than immediate, fair and just resolutions to this ongoing matter.

-press release -

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The U.S. Embassy Belmopan is seeking eligible and qualified applicants for the following position:

Position Name: Gardener
Vacancy number: Belmopan-2022-13
Closing date: June 8, 2022

Interested applicants must submit their application via the Electronic Recruitment Application (ERA) system, a web-based system. To view and apply for this vacancy, visit the ERA site at: <https://erajobs.state.gov/dos-era/blz/vacancysearch/searchVacancies.htm>

Please visit the Embassy's website for instructions on how to apply via the ERA system: <https://bz.usembassy.gov/embassy/jobs/>

Note 1: Resumes will not be considered. Candidates must note all work experience when completing the ERA application. Insufficient or incomplete information will result in an ineligible application.

Note 2: Candidates must submit applicable required documentation by the closing date of this announcement. Failure to provide the required documentation will result in an ineligible application.



VACANCY

The Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission invites applications from suitably qualified applicants for the following positions at the Caribbean Court of Justice:

1. Chief Public Education & Protocol Officer (On Contract)
2. Human Resources Officer- Manpower and Development

Job Description and Application form are available on the website below: <https://ccj.org/vacancies/ccj-vacancies/>

Applications may be completed online or delivered to:

Organizational Development/ Human Resources Advisor
Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission
#134 Henry Street, Port of Spain
Trinidad and Tobago, 101010

no later than **Friday 19th January 2024** by **4:00 p.m.** Atlantic Standard Time.

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

The Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission:
Constituted under the Agreement establishing the Caribbean Court of Justice



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Maybe TD Jakes' only worthwhile quote

by Colin Hyde

I am yet to give TD Jakes any ear time, and maybe I should have after I saw a quote — I think from a post by the very interesting Sharon Marin Lewis on her fb page — that resonated deeply. Call me biased, but I don't too care to listen to pastors who keep some of their riches. But thinking the man, maybe, might be a well, I Googled his famous quotes looking for more pearls. That I didn't find any could be all the fault of the character who did the collection. Hmm, maybe that one who did the compilation is a paperweight. Jakes' famous quotes weren't that bad, or boring, but none came close to measuring up to the one in the post I had read.

Bah, the gem wasn't in the list. So then, remembering the substance of the quote, I went to the Google, and there I found it in a space called *Moodscope*, put in there by a guy or gal named Lex.

A girl named Oprah Winfrey now enters this story because Lex drew the quote from an interview she had with the very rich and popular Jakes. This Miss Winfrey, she's mighty rich too, richer than Jakes. That riches thing came about because of her even more gigantic following.

I am guilty of not giving that Winfrey girl any ear time either. I say, whoever declared me a misogynist was dead in the water between first and second base, but I will admit that the first time I scrolled channels and landed on Oprah and saw her audience, all women, I was overwhelmed. Oh, I know that women being people too, she deserved my ear, but I wasn't man enough to hang around. Hey, there really are things we and they have in common, and for sure some wisdom shared in an exclusive women's space has spillover.

Zeroing in on the quote, the credit for this one might actually belong as much to the woman as the man. But let me curb the gender issues and get on with it.

Writing about parent/child love in a 2018 story titled, “Do You Have a 10-Gallon Capacity for Love?”, Lex said they’re certain that “few parents know how to love us as we’d like to be loved.”

Lex said their mom loves but “struggles to show it”, and their dad “shows it in the very British ways he knows best.” Lex said they’re hug-type persons, and their parents are not.

Lex said the conversation between Winfrey and Jakes was so “rich in insights” that they thought it best “to try and share as much of it word for word.” It isn’t that long – who said wisdom only resides in an 800-page book? – so we’ll take it from the page as Lex put it down. Thanks, Lex. And thanks, Sharon, for shining the light on that Jakes bohga and this pearl.

Okay, the following is ALL from Lex. Here goes: *“Firstly, Oprah says, ‘You’ve got to meet people where they are, and love them at the level that they can receive it.’ I’ve got to agree with that. I am way too much for some people – so I’ve had to learn to curb my enthusiasm, and yes, my ‘love’. Bishop T.D. Jakes explains that our parents were ‘broken’ when we received them – just as we are. Broken people can’t do all that we might want them to do... they don’t have the capability. This means that our ‘ideal’ is often at odds with ‘reality’.*

“His suggestion is that some of us have a 10-gallon capacity for love, and that some of us with this capacity are born into families who only have a single-pint capacity for love. When you are a 10-gallon person, you naturally want love on a 10-gallon level. However, when we are around with one-pint-people, they could be giving us ALL they’ve got!”

And now for me, all I'll say to that is,
WOW! You go, Jakes! You go, Winfrey!

Wa, Harvard prez
accused of plagiarism
for this?

It's not a good thing, stealing the words of another, failing to give them credit for their thoughts. That's called plagiarism, and it is the charge that forced a black woman, Ms. Claudine Gay, from the president's seat at Harvard. The charge came after she had promoted or tolerated what the Jewish establishment categorized as anti-

Semitism. We'll ignore the anti-Semitism charges, and the counter charges of racism and gender bias after Ms. Gay resigned.

I think the charges against the lady were iffy. Bah, there's just too much falsehood about. And you know all falsehood always leads to a bad ending. Haha, I bet some of you remember the story, "cry wolf", the one with the boy who took it for sport to holler that a wolf was after his flock, and after a time his neighbors got tired of being duped. Unbeknownst to the lad - my, my, children know so little - yap, unbeknownst to the lad a wolf was watching his little game all along. And that wolf noticed that the boy's neighbors were absolutely exhausted of running to his aid, only to find out that he was using them for his kicks. Aieeee, you remember what happened next!

I think the first thing to check before making any suggestion of plagiarism is the originality of the thought. Was it really from the person who is said to have been plagiarized, or is it some generic thing that the person used and it came to be attributed to them?

I can't believe the plagiarism charge that was used to bring down that Harvard president. In her story, "Harvard Finds More Instances of 'Duplicative Language' in President's Work", in *The New York Times*, Jennifer Schuessler said examples that her accusers gave of the Harvard president's perfidy "range from brief snippets of technical definitions to paragraphs summing up other scholars' research that are only lightly paraphrased, and in some cases lack any direct citation of the other scholars."

Schuessler wrote: "In one example that has drawn particular attention and online ridicule, the acknowledgments of Gay's dissertation appear to take two sentences from the 1996 book acknowledgments of another scholar, Jennifer L. Hochschild. Hochschild wrote of a mentor who 'showed me the importance of getting the data right and of following where they lead without fear or favor,' and 'drove me much harder than I sometimes wanted to be driven.'

“In Gay’s dissertation

acknowledgments the next year, she thanked her family, who ‘drove me harder than I sometimes wanted to be driven.’ And she thanked her thesis adviser, Gary King, who ‘reminded me of the importance of getting the data right and following where they lead without fear or favor.’”

Now, Braa, you will tell me that Ms. Hochschild “owns” something as generic as, wa, “drove me much harder than I sometimes wanted to be driven”? The *Amandala* really should allow expletives. Haven’t you heard words like that a thousand times in a thousand different places? I bet such words have been spoken by sages in every language on the globe.

I remember how some sections of the American press went after Melania Trump, accused her of plagiarizing Michelle Obama's work. Sometimes, these Americans astound me. I Googled the story and it came up on BBC News, under the title: "US election: Melania Trump 'plagiarised' Michelle Obama". Here is an example of the criminality of Mrs. Trump according to the US press, as reported in BBC News.

“In a section, Mrs. Trump said: ‘My parents impressed on me the values that you work hard for what you want in life; that your word is your bond and you do what you say and keep your promise; that you treat people with respect.’

“Mrs. Obama’s speech in 2008
carried the lines: ‘And Barack and I
were raised with so many of the same
values: that you work hard for what you
want in life; that your word is your bond
and you do what you say you’re going
to do; that you treat people with dignity
and respect, even if you don’t know
them, and even if you don’t agree with
them.’”

I guess in politics everything goes. I would love to think that if they weren't in the heat of an election, Mrs. Obama would have said, 'no, no, those thoughts are common, Mrs. Trump can use them anytime, and I'm so glad our values are the same because just like me, when people go low, she'll go high'.

Oh no, no, no, we can't give an inch to plagiarism. But we cannot endorse the silliness.

ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES DEPARTMENT
VILLAGE COUNCIL BY-ELECTION HELD ON 7TH JANUARY 2024
OFFICIAL RESULT

COROZAL DISTRICT

COROZAL DISTRICT											
Election Date	Village	Candidate Name	Position	No. of Votes Received	Remarks	# of Registered Electors	Total Votes Polled	% of Votes Polled	% of Voter Turnout	Spoilt Votes	Rejected Votes
7/1/2024	Concepcion	Member									
		Garcia, Ricardo Karel	Member	Uncontested	Elected						



“Atrocidades” y “abominaciones”

Domingo, 7 de enero de 2024

Hay un dicho que dice que a veces “del mal sale el bien”. También se dice que “las personas lastimadas lastiman a las personas”, lo que significa que existe una tendencia entre las personas que han sufrido mucho dolor y abuso cuando eran niños a crecer con una ira interior y una infelicidad que se manifiesta más adelante con una continuación del ciclo de abuso contra otros. Desde ese punto de vista, puede haber alguna explicación histórica para las atrocidades cometidas por Israel debido a los dolorosos recuerdos de su holocausto; ¿Pero qué excusa tiene Estados Unidos para la inhumanidad? ¿Cómo pudo el bastión internacional de la democracia, Estados Unidos, dejarse arrastrar a un espeluznante caldero de odio?

Recientemente, ha sido alentador observar que el Secretario de Estado de Estados Unidos, Anthony Blinken, expresó su preocupación por la atrocidad en curso en Gaza. En su actual viaje a Oriente Medio, para tratar de sofocar cualquier posible “metástasis” de la situación tras el asesinato por parte de los israelíes del “alto funcionario de Hamas... Saleh al-Aroui el martes, junto con otras seis personas” (BBC, 7 de enero de 2024), supuestamente admitió que “demasiados hombres, mujeres y niños palestinos inocentes han muerto en la guerra”. Algunos dirían que no es realmente una guerra, sino más bien un ataque de represalia en un asunto totalmente unilateral.

Hay una tendencia en nuestras comunidades, cada vez que un joven se convierte en un espectáculo en las noticias por algún crimen mayor, a que otros pregunten: ¿quiénes son sus padres? ¿Qué no hicieron sus padres al “criarlo” que lo impulsó a tomar esa dirección? En toda sociedad siempre habrá unos pocos individuos que, quizás por circunstancias no comprendidas, a pesar de los aparentes esfuerzos de los padres, quedan sujetos a malas influencias y fuerzas y deciden tomar la ruta del crimen. Incluso en las sociedades más primitivas, libres de todas las tentaciones y distracciones de la “civilización” moderna, ha habido casos de individuos que se extraviaron y tuvieron que ser castigados por los demás miembros del grupo social. Hemos leído casos en ciertas culturas indígenas en los que un asesino sería desterrado de la tribu o clan y su nombre nunca volvería a mencionarse, tal vez una pena que algunos considerarían peor que la muerte. Pero donde hay vida, hay esperanza; y ha sido un principio fundamental entre los pueblos llamados “primitivos” que la vida misma es preciosa, un regalo del Creador que debe ser apreciada. Sin embargo, incluso en esas culturas ha habido incidentes de conflicto con otros grupos y ha habido amplia evidencia de violencia intertribal. El conflicto, al parecer, es algo inevitable dentro de la civilización humana, al igual que en el reino animal, donde reina la ley de “supervivencia del más fuerte”. Pero, al ser la forma “más elevada” de la obra del Creador, muchos de nosotros, los humanos, esperamos más de nosotros mismos como seres humanos; Desafortunadamente, hay muchos que todavía se aferran al mantra de la jungla en 2024 mientras disfrutan de las comodidades físicas y los placeres que se pueden disfrutar gracias a todos los avances de la moderna “civilización occidental”.

En nuestra pequeña Joya, con sólo una pequeña Fuerza de Defensa, el camino hacia la paz es el único camino para nosotros como nación, en medio de una guerra furiosa contra las drogas en nuestra región. Nuestros líderes han demostrado un compromiso para mantener nuestra democracia parlamentaria; y es nuestra aspiración seguir intentando que nuestra sociedad sea pacífica y amorosa, y de alguna manera a nivel personal, comunitario, nacional e internacional, tratar siempre de resolver las diferencias de manera “civilizada”, mediante la negociación, el arbitraje o el litigio, utilizando la batalla de ideas en la balanza de la justicia y la rectitud, en lugar de bombas, balas y otras armas avanzadas de guerra que mantienen a nuestro llamado mundo moderno atrapado en su estado de supervivencia más primitivo: el poder por encima del derecho.

Afortunadamente, en nuestra región personas sensatas han intervenido contra la estrategia intimidatoria del partido más grande en la reciente controversia territorial sudamericana. La guerra no resuelve nada, sino que significa “destrucción y pérdida de vidas. La guerra significa lágrimas que brotan de los ojos de algunas madres, porque sus hijos van a luchar y perderán la vida”. (De “War” de John Jones de Tomorrow’s Children) Cuando prevalecen la razón y la justicia, las personas de ambos lados pueden encontrar una manera de vivir en paz, con beneficios para ambas partes en la disputa. Puede ser un ejemplo para el mundo.

Sin embargo, dondequiera que se cometa una grave injusticia contra un pueblo, habrá resistencia; la historia nunca cambia.

Los productores de caña del norte de Belize han estado convencidos durante años de que no estaban recibiendo un trato justo por parte de ASR/BSI en sus transacciones azucareras; y así montaron una resistencia fuerte pero pacífica. La negociación ha permitido evitar una verdadera explosión, pero aún quedan cuestiones graves por resolver. Como cantó Peter Tosh, si no hay justicia, no habrá paz.

Lo que ha estado sucediendo al otro lado del océano, y que aparece constantemente en los titulares de las noticias (excepto en Estados Unidos), es una flagrante atrocidad humana, declarada por el Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas como un caso claro de genocidio. La nación ocupante, Israel, y sus partidarios siguen señalando la atrocidad del 7 de octubre cometida por los “terroristas” de Hamás; pero ninguna mención se hace de la abominación que el gobierno israelí ha estado perpetrando contra el pueblo palestino durante las décadas anteriores. La muy injusta creación del Estado de Israel en 1948 y la consiguiente dominación del apartheid israelí sobre el pueblo palestino tuvieron que generar resistencia; la explosión del 7 de octubre fue exactamente eso: resistencia con las mismas tácticas brutales de su opresor. Así pues, parece que la solución israelí es borrar de la faz de la tierra al oprimido pueblo palestino si no quiere cruzar las fronteras como refugiados hacia otros Estados árabes adyacentes. Y el mundo observa.

En el pequeño Belize reflexionamos sobre el resultado de esta situación. ¿El siglo XXI estará marcado por la brutalidad por encima de la justicia y el sentido común? ¿Se permitirá que la abominación del apartheid practicado por Israel continúe y prospere con el apoyo de Estados Unidos en 2024, mientras el pueblo palestino en dificultades es diezmado por las bombas, el hambre y las epidemias de enfermedades (cólera, disentería, etc.) mientras su infraestructura de saneamiento y salud es sistemáticamente destruida por los bombardeos aéreos israelíes? ¿Se pronunciará la CIJ sobre esta atrocidad que las fuerzas israelíes están cometiendo contra civiles desarmados, incluidos ancianos, mujeres y niños en Gaza? ¿Y qué resultará de su fallo?

Aparte de Estados Unidos, uno de los aliados más firmes de Israel durante décadas ha sido el país que nos reclama, Guatemala. Ambos estamos ahora en la CIJ. Guatemala está actualmente atravesando su propia lucha interna contra la corrupción institucional. Y su viejo aliado, Estados Unidos, temeroso de la actual crisis de inmigración ilegal en su propia frontera sur, está muy preocupado por la escalada de la situación que podría resultar si no se respeta la agitación de las masas guatemaltecas por la democracia y no se permite que su líder elegido popularmente asuma el cargo.

Mientras Belize espera y observa, habiendo declarado nuestro total rechazo al genocidio israelí contra el pueblo palestino, oramos para que prevalezca la democracia y se pongan en jaque a los agentes de corrupción institucional en la vecina Guatemala; que las cosas salgan bien en la CIJ; y que el nuevo presidente guatemalteco verá la relación de su país con Belize como una relación que implica forjar un camino de mayor respeto, cooperación y amistad entre nuestros dos pueblos estrechamente relacionados.

REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

Senegal celebrates pioneer of African history Cheikh Anta Diop

This 29 December marks the 100th birthday of one of the most influential African scholars of the 20th century: Cheikh Anta Diop, who pioneered a new understanding of the continent's place in history and left an enduring legacy in his native Senegal and beyond.



Mural representing Senegalese thinker Cheikh Anta Diop at the University of Dakar, photographed in June 2022. © Véronique Gaymard/RFI

by Melissa Chemam with RFI
www.rfi.fr, 29/12/2023

A specialist in nuclear physics as well as a passionate linguist, anthropologist and historian, the Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop laid the foundation for a rewriting of African history, beyond colonial prejudices.

As an Egyptologist, he studied the African roots of ancient Egypt, defending and proving Africa's fundamental place in the history of humanity, and its contribution to other great civilisations.

"Egypt is to the rest of black Africa what Greece and Rome are to the western world," he notably wrote.

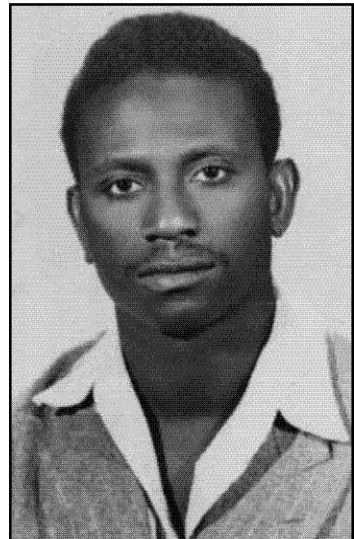
A politician in later life, he was a fervent advocate of Pan-Africanism and a decided opponent of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal's first president after independence and another influential cultural theorist.

Diop's works have influenced generations, and continue to inspire the development of African-centred scholarship and the Pan-African movement.

A polymath pioneer

Born in 1923 in the village of Thiéytou, about a hundred kilometres east of Dakar, Diop came from a Wolof family of aristocratic origin.

From 1946, Diop went to study in Paris. He first chose physics and chemistry before turning to philosophy and history.



Cheikh Anta Diop as a university student in Paris in the late 1940s. © Public domain via Wikimedia Commons

read the canon of European thinkers extensively, yet his thesis addressed "precolonial black Africa" and the "cultural unity of black Africa".

From that point on he worked to unskew European-centric views and cultivate Afrocentrism.

He opened the first radiocarbon dating laboratory in Africa to study historical documents from Ancient Egypt, and gathered evidence that the Pharaonic civilisation was black African.

When Senegal became one of the first countries to declare independence from the French Empire in 1960, Diop returned home and dedicated the following decades to teaching, research and politics.

Politically, he became a nationalist and an advocate for African federalism.

African history reimagined

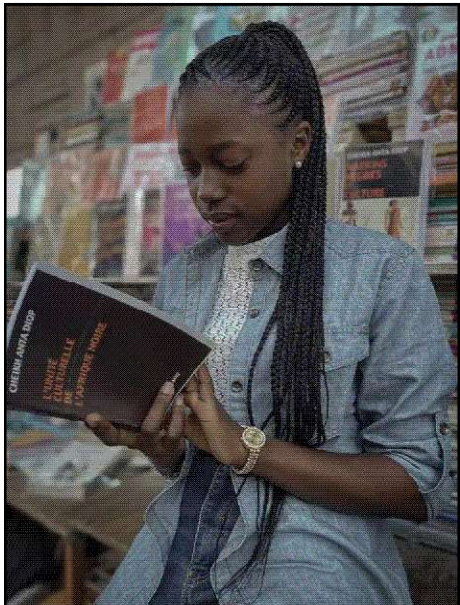
A prolific writer, Diop authored many works on the past – and future – of Africa, including his influential *Negro Nations and Culture* (published in 1954) and *The African Origin of Civilisation: Myth or Reality* (1974).

He notably worked on the writing of a "General History of Africa" for Unesco.

But if his work was well received right away in Africa, in Europe, some scholars accused his multidisciplinary approach of veering into chaos and political activism.

Later research has added weight to many of his theories, while academics continue to debate others.

Yet most agree that Diop played a foundational role in revolutionising the study of African civilisations and exposing cultural bias in much of the scholarship previously accepted as



A woman reading a copy of "The Cultural Unity of Black Africa" by Cheikh Anta Diop. © JN PICTURE - CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Guatemalan electoral court says Arevalo's election 'formalized and unchangeable'

Guatemala's electoral court insisted Friday the results of elections won by anti-graft candidate Bernardo Arevalo were "unchangeable", after the prosecutor's office sought to annul them amid accusations of an "attempted coup."

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www.france24.com,



Guatemalan president-elect Bernardo Arevalo has denounced a "coup d'etat" against him. © Johan Ordonez, AFP

By:NEWS WIRES

Political outsider Arevalo, who is slated to assume office on January 14, has faced an onslaught of legal challenges since his surprise second-round election victory in August, including attempts to suspend his political party and stop him from taking power.

The 65-year-old's triumph and his pledge to fight graft are widely seen in Guatemala as alarming to the establishment political elite.

On Friday, prosecutor Leonor Morales said investigations have concluded that the election of Arevalo, his vice-president and parliamentarians was "null and void" due to counting "anomalies" in the first round in June.

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) responded by saying "the results are validated, formalized and unchangeable."

TSE president Blanca Alfaro told reporters the elected officials must assume office in January as planned or else there would be "a breach of the constitutional order."

In Washington, the Organization of American States secretariat in a statement said it "condemns the attempted coup d'etat by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Guatemala."

"The attempt to annul this year's general elections constitutes the worst form of democratic breakdown and the consolidation of a political fraud against the will of the people," the statement added.

The OAS urged outgoing president

Alejandro Giammattei, the constitutional and supreme courts and Congress "to defend the institutions and constitutional

order of the country by taking action against the perpetrators of this attack in order to preserve democracy in Guatemala."

'Ongoing coup'

Arevalo, speaking at a news conference, called the actions of the prosecutor's office an "absurd, ridiculous and perverse coup d'etat."

He called on Guatemalans to "energetically defend" the

country from efforts by Attorney General Consuelo Porras and senior prosecutor Rafael Curruchiche to impede his taking power.

"The coup perpetrators are trying to destroy the democratic regime and put an end to the basic right of Guatemalans to live in freedom," he said.

Porras, Curruchiche and Judge Fredy Orellana — who had ordered the suspension of Arevalo's Semilla (Seed) party — are all on a US list of "corrupt actors."

Curruchiche was present at Friday's press conference, saying "the information that was recorded in the closing and counting act at all polling stations should be annulled."

This "criminal information" would be submitted to the TSE, he said, for a final decision.

The tribunal has already certified Arevalo's election, but last month it suspended his party for a second time over alleged irregularities with its registration. That investigation is led by Curruchiche.

On Friday, Judge Alfaro said the prosecutor's office had no authority to make the TSE annul an election.

This could only be done through an order from the Constitutional Court.

"Our president is... Bernardo Arevalo and our vice president Karin Herrera," said Alfaro.

The moves against Arevalo and his party

Please turn to Page 11

scientific truth.

Celebrations

After his death in Dakar in 1986, Senegal's main university took his name.

The Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar is celebrating its namesake's centenary from 21 to 30 December 2023, around the theme of "rebuilding bold thought for Africa".

Speaking to RFI on the 30th anniversary of Diop's passing in 2016, writer and historian Iba Der Thiam, a

former minister of education and vice-president of Senegal's lower house of parliament, remembered him as "one of the most illustrious Africans who has undoubtedly marked future generations and the intellectual elite as a fighter".

Thanks to Diop's work, he said, African elites and populations gained "the awareness of their identity", and above all "the pride of belonging to a continent whose role, in the evolution of the world, has been irreplaceable".

Finally!! BSCFA and BSI sign agreement

After much gamesmanship and some intimidation from BSI/ASR, stalled negotiations, and frustrated cañeros resorting once more to road blocks to stop cane trucks from delivering to BSI.

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and engaged until the agreement was actually signed. Verbal agreement was one thing, but the legal strategists of BSI/ASR were up to their game with a new proposed TOR (Terms of Reference) that BSCFA firmly rejected; and when Friday, Saturday and Sunday passed without a signed agreement, it was back to agitation on Monday to press BSI/ASR to sign an acceptable draft agreement with BSCFA that had no visible booby traps attached for cane farmers. It was a long, hard negotiation battle, with PM Briceño as mediator, and when the situation looked bleak again, the unity and resolve of BSCFA members once more was in evidence, until finally the two sides acknowledged the wisdom of ending the dispute with pen on paper for a signed agreement.

Thursday, January 4

When we went to press on Thursday, January 4, members of the Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association (BSCFA) had passed a motion at the SIRD compound in Buena Vista Village to accept the proposed addendum to the commercial agreement with Belize Sugar Industries (BSI)/American Sugar Refining (ASR), which had been brokered by the Prime Minister at the Yo Creek Agricultural Station. At the end of their victory laps, amid the euphoria that evening, Alfredo Ortega, Vice Chairman of the BSCFA, cautioned that they needed to remain vigilant until they had a signed agreement in hand. He called on those cane farmers who could remain camped out into Friday to stay back. He himself has been conducting night vigils since after Christmas when the Prime Minister re-joined the talks between the largest cañero Association, which represents about 60% of cane farmers, and the American multinational.

Friday & Saturday, January 5-6

Ortega turned out to be right on the money, as ensuing developments would see cane farmers in numbers back on the ground today protesting a delay in the signing of the addendum. It all began on Friday, January 5, when BSI/ASR sent a draft document that contained terms of reference (TOR) for the assessment to be conducted by Hugh O'Brien of throughput fees and terminal charges at the Big Creek Port. At the time of the agreement between



Alfredo Ortega, Vice Chairman, BSCFA

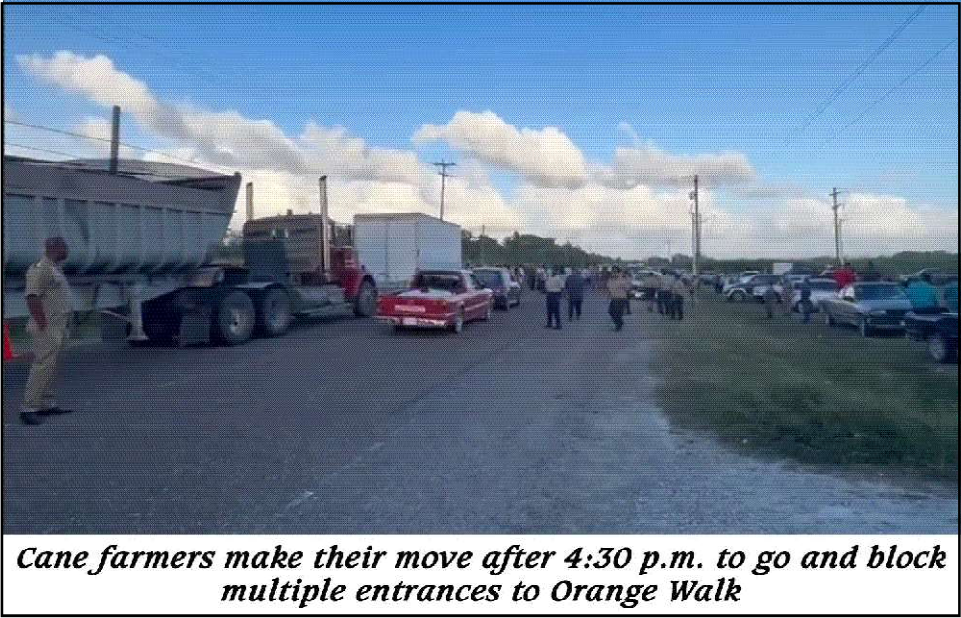
the leadership of the BSCFA and BSI/ASR on Thursday, January 4, there was no talk about such TOR. BSI reportedly immediately sent a letter saying the TOR would be removed, agreeing that it should not have been in the draft addendum. Discussions continued into Saturday when Ortega told the media that during the day, the BSCFA along with O'Brien had cleaned up the agreement which was being sent to the PM for subsequent referral to BSI/ASR for their approval. The hope of BSCFA was for the agreement to be signed by the end of the day Saturday, but that did not happen. There was no advancement either on Sunday, and so, the BSCFA urged its membership to refrain from burning cane.

Sunday, January 7

On Sunday evening, the BSCFA shared in a Facebook post, "It has been three days since January 4 when the agreement was reached with the PM which ASR/BSI had also accepted. We hope this is the last night. If not?!!!! Let us stand firm and be patient." The BSCFA also wrote Prime Minister John Briceño calling on him to issue a directive for the suspension of the 2023/2024 sugar crop season until an interim agreement has been signed.

Monday, January 8

This morning, Ortega called on the membership of the BSCFA to come out in full force at the SIRD compound, and they gave the Prime Minister a 2:00 p.m. deadline to receive a favourable response about signing. When 2:00 p.m. came, the leadership reported on some progress, but asked members to wait another hour until 3:00 p.m. as their attorney needed to review another draft.



Cane farmers make their move after 4:30 p.m. to go and block multiple entrances to Orange Walk

At the same time, they reported that the Prime Minister was headed back to Orange Walk to resume mediation.

When 3:00 p.m. came, Javier Keme, the Chairman of the BSCFA's Committee of Finance, reported that moments after Vice Chairman Ortega exited their meeting room, they got back another draft sent from BSI/ASR proposing that the TOR be left out of the interim agreement, but it would stipulate that the TOR would be placed in a separate document to be worked out within 14 days. According to Keme, the Prime Minister asked for patience until 4:30 p.m., as they considered this would be the final correspondence exchange between the two parties.

On the mention of that extension to 4:30 p.m., the cane farmers raucously voiced their objection; so, when Vice Chairman Ortega came behind and told the cañeros, "First we said two, and then we said three. So, they can continue negotiating; so, let's go!" the cane farmers headed for the Philip Goldson Highway with the intention of making their way to the entrance of BSI at Tower Hill. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Dr. Richard Rosado appeared to get through to the membership when he indicated that a 4:30 p.m. deadline had been agreed by the parties. He told the crowd that if nothing had happened by then, they would be okay with cane farmers moving. That first blockade today lasted only a few minutes; but by 4:30 p.m., with no response, the deeply frustrated and antsy crowd moved to block the highway again, this time only blocking the passage of cane trucks. Another

crowd moved to the San Luis Junction in Orange Walk where they also blocked passage of cane trucks. By 6:00 p.m., cane farmers were blocking the entrance to BSI and the San Estevan Bypass.

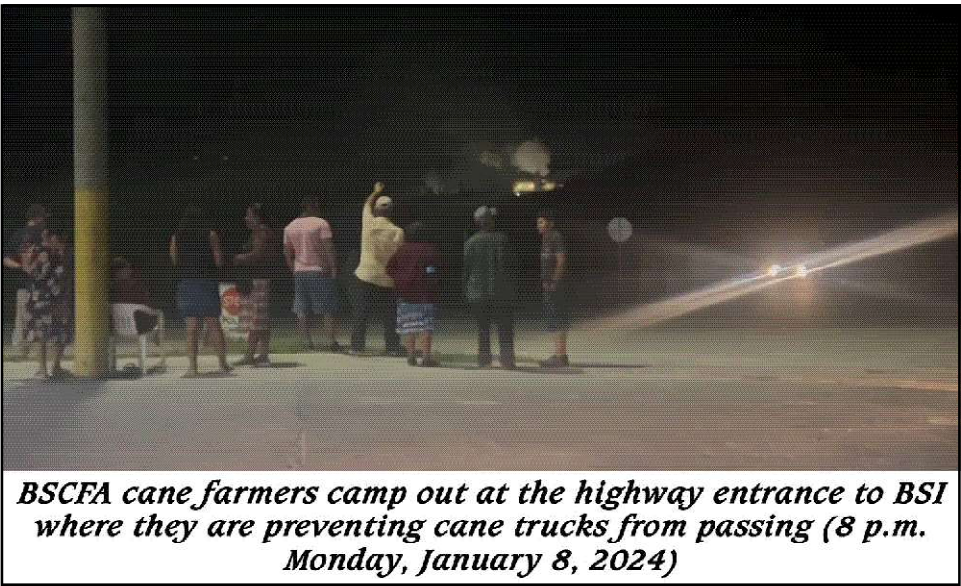
On a related note, last week Thursday, BSI's lawyer wrote a letter threatening a lawsuit against the BSCFA. The company made the point that BSCFA's "unlawful" blockade prevented cane farmers and sugar associations from delivering sugar cane to the mill. Senior Counsel Godfrey Smith told BSCFA Chairman Elvis Reyes that the blockade was contrary to Section 42 (1) of the Public Roads Act regarding the willful prevention of vehicles or persons from passing along any public road. Vice Chairman Ortega over the weekend called the letter one of intimidation.

This afternoon, the Belize National Teachers' Union (BNTU) issued a second press release expressing support for the BSCFA. The Union insists that cane farmers, "who contribute so much to our economic stability deserve nothing less than immediate, fair and just resolutions to this ongoing matter." It therefore called on the Government to ensure it fulfils its signed commitment to the BSCFA. At the same time, the BNTU expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which the Government dealt with the situation. It stated, "in no way do we support the use of a million dollars of tax payers' dollars as bargaining power for a band aid fix to the issue of the

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Cane farmers block passage of cane trucks at San Luis Junction in Orange Walk



BSCFA cane farmers camp out at the highway entrance to BSI where they are preventing cane trucks from passing (8 p.m. Monday, January 8, 2024)



Poor & Famous Children Christmas program



by Larry Sutherland – Program Coordinator

BELIZE CITY, Tues. Dec. 26, 2023

Shout-out to the Poor and Famous Youth Culture Club for hosting its 2nd Annual Christmas Dinner. The South Side neighborhood youths received donated items of 80 footballs, 20 toys, 10 children’s bikes, 80 plates of food and refreshments.

The youths were excited to know that they were cared for and thought of during the Christmas holiday. This is part of the “Sharing and Caring” initiative to

keep young people off the streets and engaged in sports.

Larry Sutherland, Program Coordinator, was determined to give the youths a special treat for Christmas. This is the kind of love and support we want to have in our communities. Let’s continue to make a change and support the cause!

(AMANDALA Ed. Note: Larry provided a collage of some 70 pictures to show the youths in different groups receiving their gift items. Respect, Poor & Famous Culture Club!)

Finally!! BSCFA and BSI sign agreement



Prime Minister John Briceño witnesses late evening signing of addendum to the Commercial Agreement of BSCFA and BSI

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fair-trade dispute between BSI/ASR and BSCFA.”

Tonight, as the PM remained at Yo Creek, the BSCFA was making a presentation to members of the National Trade Union Congress of Belize to provide a status report. By 7:30 p.m. cane farmers had blocked all entrances to Orange Walk and another blockade had been erected in San Pablo. At BSI, the report was that they were only blocking cane trucks but allowing private vehicles to pass.

Finally! Cañeros sign agreement with BSI

Finally, after 10:00 p.m. tonight, with representatives and attorneys of the BSCFA and BSI in the same room with the Prime Minister, the signatures were appended to the document and everyone can breathe a collective sigh of relief. Signing on behalf of the BSCFA was Chairman, Elvis Reyes and on behalf of BSI, Director of Finance, Shawn Chavarria. The signing was witnessed by Prime Minister John Briceño.

Belize receives grant funding for climate resilience

Continued from Page 1

Development Bank (CDB). Of that amount, BZ\$627,236 is a readiness grant from the GCF that is to be used to strengthen the Economic Development Ministry’s capacity, in line with its accreditation as a Direct Access Entity.

In addition to the GCF grant, the MED has secured a technical assistance grant of BZ\$2,529,792 from the CDB for the National Meteorological Service of Belize that will be used to develop tools for impact-based forecasting and early warning systems for natural hazards in the Belize River Watershed.

In a recent interview with Dr. Osmond Martinez, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development, and Investment, he explained that the MED has been the National Designated Authority since 2015 but has never before managed readiness funds from the GCF.

This milestone is the culmination of 16 months of intensive work, during which policies and manuals were put in place for the accreditation process. “This is a historical moment, but to achieve that there is a lot of work that needed to be

done,” he said.

The readiness grant will aid in developing a comprehensive project management manual and implementing procurement and auditing policies.

Dr. Martinez elaborated on the three main components of the grant funding:

1. Capacity Building for the Met Office: This includes training for Met personnel in data analysis, instrument maintenance, and opportunities for advanced studies.
2. Purchasing of Equipment: Critical technological upgrades for the Met and NEMO offices, including new computers.
3. Development of a Multi-Hazard Early Warning System: This system will transition to impact-based forecasting, crucial for public assessment and awareness, particularly in hazard-prone areas.

Dr. Martinez also emphasized the importance of the Met Office, which is often underestimated despite its crucial role during natural disasters.

“A lot of times we underestimate and we have been underestimating the work that the Met Office does, but any time a hurricane comes, they are the ones who we put even our lives on, because they are the ones who will guide us,” he noted.

Guatemalan electoral court says Arevalo’s election ‘formalized and unchangeable’



Thousands took part in a 'March for Democracy' in Guatemala. © Carlos Alonzo, AFP

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have ignited mass protests by Guatemalans demanding the resignation of the three officials.

Arevalo pulled off a major upset by advancing to the runoff after a first round marked by apathy among voters.

Poverty, violence and corruption push thousands of Guatemalans abroad every year in search of a better life, many to the United States.

The United States, European Union, UN and Organization of American States have all expressed concern over the events in Guatemala.

The top US diplomat for Latin America, Brian Nichols, said on social media that Friday’s actions by prosecutors were “another blatant, unacceptable attempt to defy the will of Guatemalans.”

“Such actions jeopardize Guatemala’s market-friendly reputation & will be met

with a strong US response.”

Rights groups have increasingly expressed concern over what they say are efforts to crack down on prosecutors and journalists in an apparent bid by the government to protect a corrupt system benefiting those in power.

(AFP)

Jamaican national shot on Mayflower St.

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time at 10:30 tonight, *Amandala* has confirmed that Dwyer is alive and in critical condition at the hospital.

Authorities have yet to disclose the motive as the investigation continues.

We will bring more in Friday’s edition of *Amandala*.



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