

"We are coming to you, Government!"

Mayas commit to step up their actions "to defend our land, because this is our survival!"



SANTA ELENA VILLAGE, Toledo District, Sat. Jan. 27, 2024

The Government's effort to negotiate an acceptable and workable agreement with the Maya communities of Toledo suffered a big setback on

Saturday when, in effect, the Government representatives "stood up" the Maya villagers who had requested and expected to meet them face to face

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"Impact" by Adriana Smith

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Fri. Jan. 26, 2024

The Imagination Factri is hosting an interactive art show entitled "Impact" which will feature the artwork of 28-year-old Adriana Smith, an artist who graduated from St. John's Junior College with a degree in Fine Arts.

Smith began her painting career while in high school, under the tutelage of Kirkland Smith. She told

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Adriana Smith



MoHW investigates death of baby choked by pill

by Kristen Ku

CAMALOTE VILLAGE, Cayo District, Mon. Jan. 29, 2024

The life of 1-year-old toddler, Shawn Armstrong, Jr., of Camalote Village, was tragically cut short after a deworming pill, prescribed by the Western Regional Hospital, reportedly became lodged in the baby's airway.

The incident occurred on the morning of Friday, January 26, when Sarina Welcome, the 18-year-old mother of little Shawn, administered half of the

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Shawn Armstrong, deceased toddler

Corozal man dies in early morning fire

by Kristen Ku

COROZAL TOWN, Mon. Jan. 29, 2024

A house fire in Corozal Town early this morning, January 29, caused the death of one man.

At around 3:00 a.m., the Belize Police Department along with the Fire Department responded to an emergency call about a house fire on 7th Avenue. Upon their arrival, they saw a small house, measuring 10 feet by 15 feet, engulfed in flames. The house, constructed of zinc and wood, was completely destroyed by the blaze.



Omar Enrique Barahona, deceased



Burnt remains of the home

After the flames were extinguished, the charred remains of a person were found within the ruins of the house. Those remains were transported to the Corozal Community Hospital for an official death pronouncement, then to the hospital's morgue for a postmortem examination to confirm the identity of the deceased person and cause of death.

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BDF @ 46



Hon. Henry Charles Usher, Minister of Public Service

by Charles Gladden

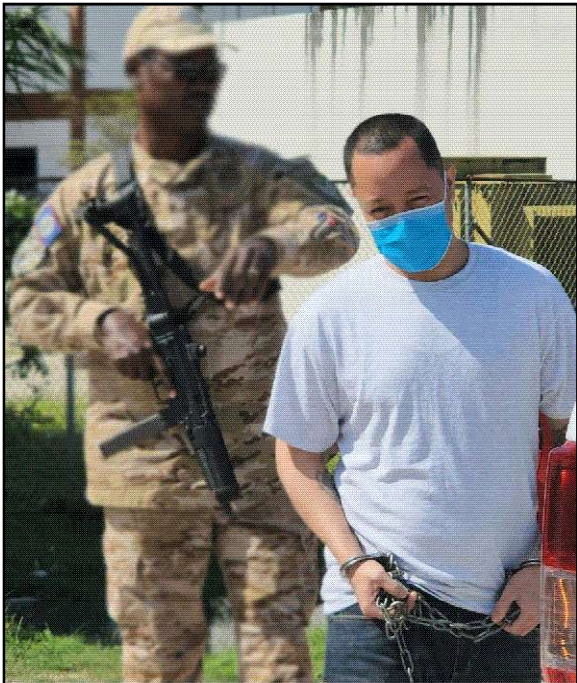
BELIZE CITY, Fri. Jan. 26, 2024
The Belize Defence Force (BDF) held its customary anniversary ceremony at Price Barracks in Ladyville, Belize District on Friday, January 26, to mark 46 years of serving the country by



securing its borders and providing a sense of security for Belizeans.
The BDF celebrated the occasion under the theme, “Defending Our Nation: 46 years of commitment and courage”.
“Your commitment sets the highest standards of military excellence, discipline, and patriotism. These sacrifices have not gone unnoticed. They have left an indelible mark, a legacy that Belizeans can all be proud of,” said Minister of Public Service, Hon. Henry Charles Usher during his keynote address. “As we celebrate this 46th anniversary, let us also celebrate the victories achieved, large and small. Belize is lauded as a tranquil haven of democracy, but these freedoms that we hold dear could not have been achieved without sacrifice, without the selfless dedication of [every] one of you,” he further mentioned.
Further, into his speech, Minister Usher touched on several topics that have been hovering over the military heads and seemed like a never-ending issue. Firstly, he highlighted a state-of-the-art kitchen

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Bladen 12 drug-plane trial adjourned for February 5



Elmer Nah, escorted to court under heavy police guard and high profile weapons, as he is on remand for the triple murder of the Ramnarace family in Belmopan

ago.
The case was before the court today as it was set for trial to commence; however, delays in the CMC (Case Management Conference) for interdicted Police Officer, Cpl. George Ferguson forced the court to adjourn the trial to February 5 through to the 20th. That’s because the Crown, represented by Head of Prosecution Branch, Alifah



George Ferguson, former escort for DPP Cheryl Lynn Vidal prior to his 2021 arrest.



(l-r) Johan Wall and Heinrich Redecop

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 29, 2024
12 men from various parts of Belize, including at least three law enforcement officers of the Belize Police Department as well as members of the Mennonite Community, are to be tried on several offenses in connection with an alleged drug plane landing that occurred back in November of 2021, more than 2 years



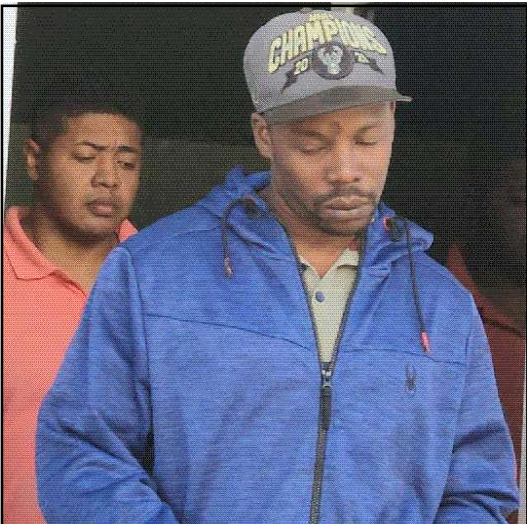
Fredy Orlando Gongora



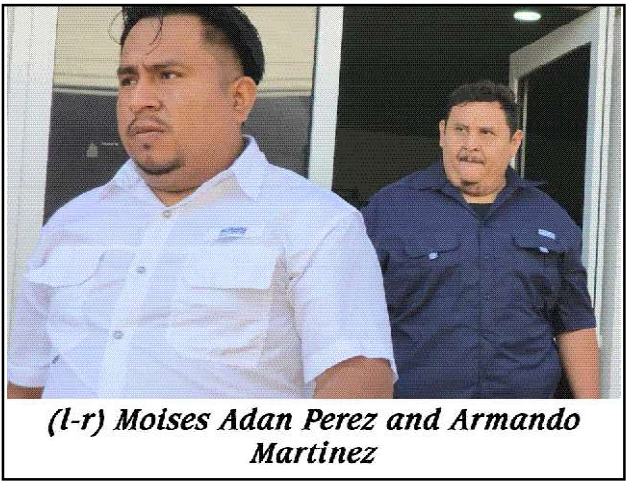
Adonis Campos



Efrain Cano



2 police officers (front) Delwin Castimiro and (back) Nelson Middleton



(l-r) Moises Adan Perez and Armando Martinez

kicked off at around 11:17 a.m. and by 12 noon it had concluded.
At the CMC, Ferguson was represented by attorney Richard “Dickie” Bradley.
The Bladen 12 are Armando Martinez, 43; Moises Adan Perez, 33; Juan Esparza Sanchez, 49;

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Juan Esparza Sanchez

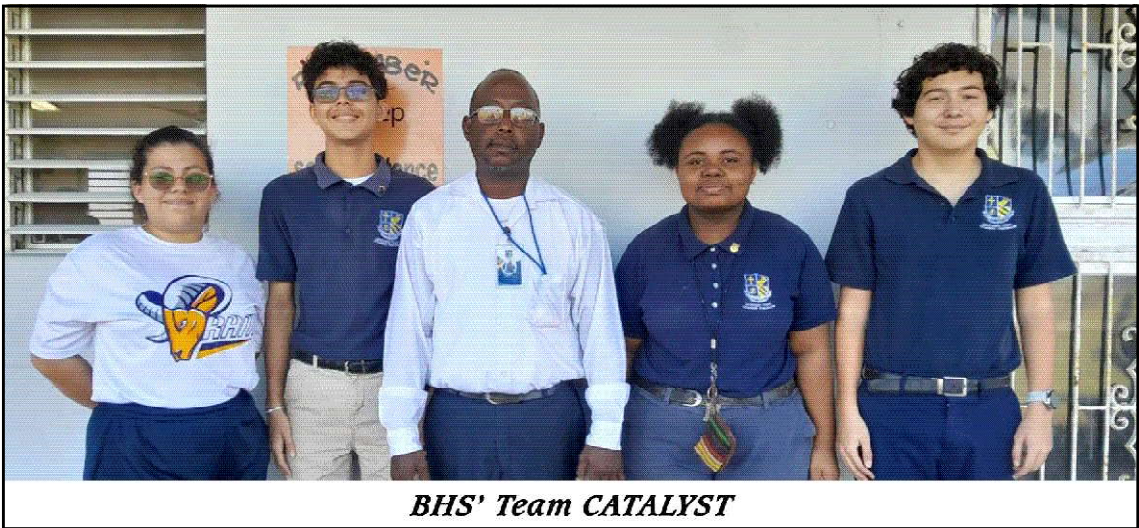
Belize places high in Caribbean STEM Olympiads

by Kristen Ku

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 29, 2024

The Caribbean STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Olympiads, held virtually from January 17 to 21, 2024, witnessed stellar performances from students of Muffles College in Orange Walk Town and Belize High School (BHS) in Belize City, placing them among the top representatives of the country.

Giselle Garcia from Muffles



BHS' Team CATALYST

They were asking her, ‘How old are you? How are you able to do this? How long have you been doing this?’ Because the work that she did was excellent.”

At just 13 years old, Garcia independently built and researched for her project, using the knowledge of coding she learned in her first-form class.

Muffles College also celebrated the success of Team Techtactic, comprising Osmar Lopez, Ryan Coc, Jaevanie De Paz, and Mannat Lalwani, who secured gold with their project, “Quest of Survival.”

Additionally, Miguel Pech, Rue Hung, and Mannat Lalwani won silver in the Level 1 Math Olympiad.

Denzel Armstrong, a mathematics teacher and mentor at Muffles College, expressed pride in their achievements. “It gives us assurance that our programs are working, and it gives us a boosted confidence in our students and in our country, and in our ability as teachers

Venezuela shoots down suspected narco jet registered in Belize



Belize registered plane destroyed in Venezuela

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 29, 2024

On Thursday of last week, January 25, the Venezuelan media reported that a suspected narco plane that carried a Belize registration number had been shot down.

The aircraft, identified as a twin-engine Gulfstream 200 or G-2 aircraft with registration numbers V3-GRS, was detected by Venezuelan radar entering the country’s airspace without authorization, and it was ultimately shot down in Zulia, Venezuela, by the country’s military which suspected that it was connected to drug trafficking operations.

As some readers might remember, this is the same aircraft that was intercepted in Belize by a local law enforcement team (including Belize Defence Force soldiers) off the Coastal Highway and was found to be carrying 70 bales of cocaine onboard.

So, how did it get to Venezuela? Amandala has confirmed with Nigel Carter, Chief Operations Officer at the Belize Civil Aviation Authority, that the plane had been confiscated and sold by the Government of Belize to an unknown buyer in Cozumel, Mexico.

“The Government of Belize, in 2021, if I’m not mistaken, auctioned off the aircraft, and at that point, the aircraft was bought and repaired over time. Starting last year, they decided to export the aircraft out of Belize. You would compare it to somebody buying a car, fixing it up, and trying to sell it when it’s repaired. It’s a similar activity; it’s a legal activity,” he said.

Carter further went on to mention, “At some point in time, it was auctioned off in accordance to the laws of Belize, and the aircraft was purchased and



Nigel Carter, Chief Operations Officer at Belize Civil Aviation

eventually exported out of the country, which is what occurred. The aircraft, when it left Belize, left legally, with all of its documents in order, because it met all the requirements of the law, and it went to Cozumel. After that, the certificate that we issued expired, and we have no responsibility over the aircraft anymore, because it is not registered to us then.”

Since the registration documents had already expired, there was no authorization for that aircraft to be in the air, said Carter.

Reports suggest that the aircraft first made landfall on Mexican soil on January 14, after leaving from Belize with an American pilot, Mexican co-pilot, and no passengers. It was held overnight in Mexico and departed to Granada, Spain, the following day, and returned to the region 10 days later, January 24, and was destroyed in Venezuela a few hours later.

When the plane was inspected by customs officials in Mexico, it was confirmed that the aircraft indeed had the proper documentation, which expired on January 20, 2024.

College High School clinched the platinum medal in the Level 1 Computer Coding Olympiad with her project titled “Protective Measures.”

The project, a multi-level video game designed to educate young people on hurricane preparedness, impressed the judges with its interactive approach and informative content.

Carim Ramirez, Garcia’s teacher and mentor, expressed pride in her achievement: “She did an excellent job ... the judges were very, very impressed.



Giselle Garcia, Muffles' Computer Coding Olympiad winner

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Young electrician dies after on-the-job mishap in West Lake

by Kristen Ku

WEST LAKE, Belize District, Mon. Jan. 29, 2024

A routine electrical job in the West Lake Community near the Mile 8 community on the George Price Highway turned fatal on Saturday morning, January 27, when a young electrician from Burrell Boom Village was apparently electrocuted while working at a local residence.

Twenty-year-old Terrell Matura had been contracted by 46-year-old Darlene Williams to fix two outlets in her bathroom.

According to reports, Williams had advised Matura to turn off the power supply to ensure safety during the repair. Matura, however, reportedly decided against this precaution, stating that the voltage was “just ah lee pinch” and thus a minor risk.

Tragedy struck shortly after Matura ascended into the attic to access the wiring. Williams, who was in the house at the time, heard Matura shout her name. Upon receiving no response to her calls, she climbed into the attic to investigate and found Matura lying down, gasping for air.

Williams immediately turned off the power and sought help from her brother and a neighbor. Emergency services were called, and a BERT team rushed Matura to the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH).

Attempts to resuscitate Matura were unsuccessful, however, and he was



Terrell Matura, deceased

pronounced dead.

Assistant Commissioner of Police, Hilberto Romero provided details of the incident at a police press briefing. He confirmed that Matura had been hired to do electrical work and that he was found unresponsive in the attic after letting out a scream.

“He went up into the ceiling to do repairs. Shortly thereafter she heard a scream, and then she did not hear any other sound. She then climbed up the ladder to check on him and saw him gasping for air and unable to move,” Romero said.

The police are currently trying to gather more information about the circumstances leading to Matura’s death. The official cause of death has not yet been released by hospital authorities.

2 men saved when triggerman’s gun snaps

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 29, 2024

A Belize City man whose attempt to shoot two men in broad daylight failed when his firearm snapped, has been charged with aggravated assault.

According to initial reports, on Friday afternoon, January 26, around 1:00 p.m., 23-year-old Norris Patnett and 19-year-old Norman Grant were on East Collet Canal Street loading a truck with supplies and had entered the truck when a man who is known to them approached the vehicle.

The man rode up to the vehicle on a bicycle brandishing a firearm and reportedly pointed it at Patnett and pulled the trigger in an attempt to shoot him; however, the gun snapped. The gunman then aimed at Grant to shoot

him also, but it snapped once more. After the failed attempts, the gunman then tucked the firearm back under the waist of his pants and rode away in the direction of George Street.

ACP Hilberto Romero, Regional Commander of the Belize Police Department’s Eastern Division, told local reporters that Jahale Craig, 20, a Belize City resident, has been charged with two counts of aggravated assault.

ACP Romero noted that Craig is a street figure who is known to the department, and has been criminally charged in the past. Most recently, in October 2022, Craig, along with six other men, was charged with “being a member of a gang.”

The police have not indicated a motive for the recent attempted shooting.

Two Toledo men dead after motorcycle-bicycle collision

by Charles Gladden

TOLEDO DISTRICT, Mon. Jan. 29, 2024

On Thursday, January 25, a motorcycle driver and a man on a bicycle both lost their lives when there was a collision between their bikes in Golden Stream Village, Toledo District.

The deceased victims were identified as Martin Ical, 36, of Big Falls Village, and Basilio Shol, 74, a farmer of Golden Stream Village, both from the Toledo District.

According to official police reports,

sometime before 7:30 p.m., Ical was riding alone on his motorcycle between Miles 70 and 71 on the Southern Highway in a north-to-south direction when he collided with Shol, who was riding a bicycle in the same direction on the right side of the highway.

When police arrived at the scene, they saw Ical lying motionless on the highway, with his motorcycle a few feet away from him. He was dead at the scene. Shol, on the other hand, was transported to the Punta Gorda Hospital for treatment, but later passed away.

MoHW investigates death of baby choked by pill

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prescribed pill to her son at around 9:30 a.m. It was not long after that the toddler began experiencing severe breathing difficulties.

The parents desperately rushed the unresponsive infant to the Western Regional Hospital, where it was reportedly discovered that the pill was visibly lodged in the baby’s airway; but despite the medical team’s efforts, including attempts at cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), the young child was pronounced dead shortly after 10:00 a.m. that Friday.

After news of the incident began circulating on social media, comments expressing condolences to the family turned into criticism of the hospital for purportedly prescribing a pill to an infant.

Others criticized the parents for not dissolving the pill before administering it to the child.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness has thus launched an internal investigation into the matter in an effort to trace the sequence of events leading up to the tragedy, and to pinpoint any possible lapses in healthcare protocols or acts of negligence that may have contributed to the baby’s death.

Hon. Kevin Bernard, the Minister of Health and Wellness, while expressing his deep condolences, stated that he is awaiting a full briefing on the investigation before making any detailed statements. “I will not want to get into the details of that, because the matter is under investigation,” he told reporters.

When questioned about the normalcy

of prescribing pills to such young infants, the Minister responded, “I will only say this as a parent: I would have never been able to do that. But at the end of the day, let me not get into that father issue.”

Dr. Melissa Musa-Diaz, the Director of Public Health and Wellness, confirmed the ongoing investigation, and also indicated that the Ministry is not in a position to comment further at this stage.

In an emotional interview, the toddler’s father, Shawn Armstrong, Sr., explained to reporters that the idea of deworming little Shawn surfaced during a conversation he had with Welcome about measures they could take to ensure the health of their child.

Welcome then took the child to the Western Regional Hospital, where the nurses administered two vaccine shots on his arm before prescribing the deworming pill.

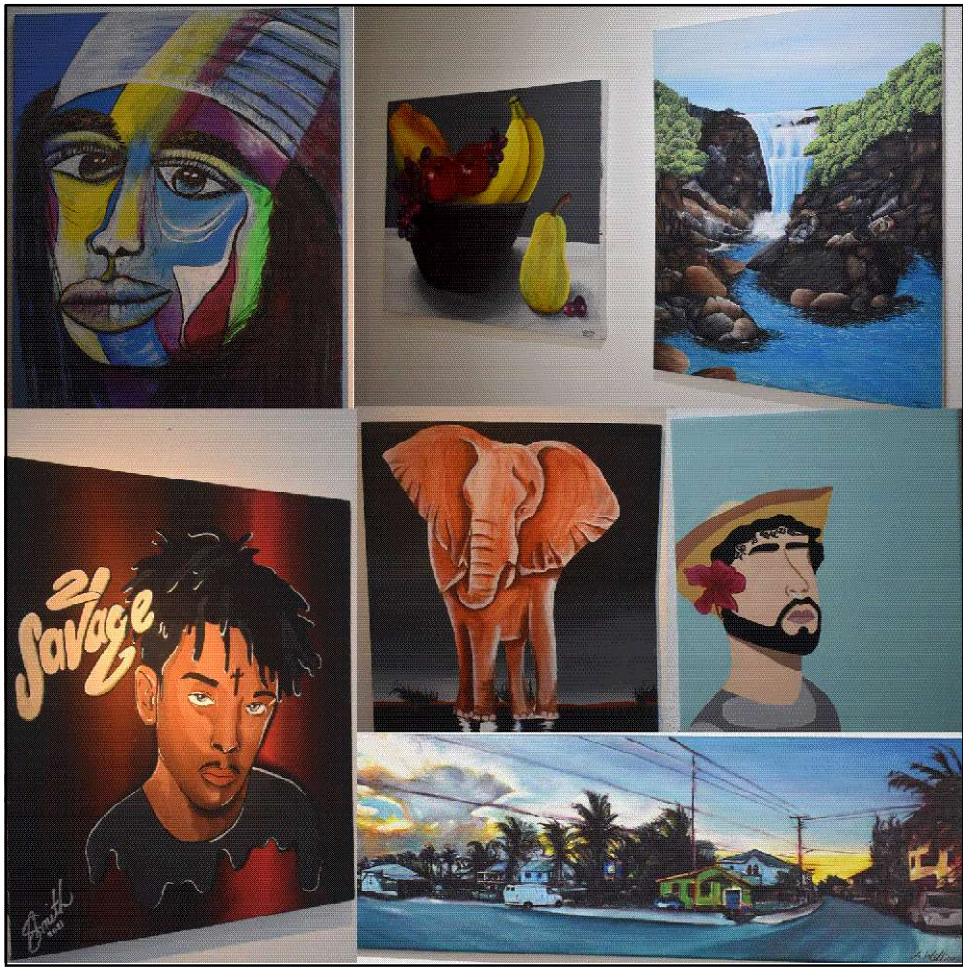
“All they told her was to give the baby the pills. They didn’t explain how to give him; he [the nurses] just said give the baby half of the brown pill,” Armstrong explained.

Also, Armstrong revealed that, contrary to what is being suggested on various media platforms, they actually gave the baby less than half the pill and made sure to soften the pill with water.

“We didn’t give my baby the pills hard. She [Welcome] softened it before we gave him,” he said, refuting the report made by police that there was ever a pill stuck in the baby’s throat. “That part is not true,” he said.

It is expected that a post mortem examination will be conducted as part of the investigation.

“Impact” by Adriana Smith



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Amandala that her artwork features a variety of styles.

“I prefer doing animals or plants; more nature-themed is my thing. I do cartoon or street-style when it comes to people, and that has always been my go-to for me. That’s the thing with the pieces I have in the art show: it goes from 2020, 2021, and 2022, and I’m showing the progress of my work from a while back,” she said.

“... I remember one that I did, it was a body paint theme; I do that too, so that art is not coming to a regular gallery and going. It’s more to that. It’s an

experience that you have put yourself out there and grasped that,” she added.

Besides Smith’s artwork, the art show will feature the work of 15 other artists as well as presentations of poetry and music.

“The whole purpose of it is to show the community how fun art is, and how easy it is for it to get into. It’s always a great hobby, not only for kids; you’re never too old to learn how to paint and draw, and you’re never too young either,” she said.

The exhibit opened on Friday, January 26, at the Image Factory on North Front Street and will be open to the public for a week.

Corozal man dies in early morning fire

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It is believed that the dead man was Omar Enrique Barahona, a 49-year-old laborer known to have lived in the house for the past two decades. “Information is that he was there alone at the time,” confirmed Assistant Commissioner of Police, Hilberto Romero.

Rojelio Pedro Barahona, the brother of the suspected victim, was the one to alert the police. Living close by, he reported hearing distressing sounds and seeing the blaze, which is what prompted him to call for help.


According to his report, his brother was last seen on the evening before the fire at the Sunset Restaurant with his ex-

common-law wife, Mariela Catzim, and he was reportedly consuming alcohol. Both Rojelio Barahona and Catzim have since been questioned by police and have given their formal statements.

Fire Station Supervisor, Kenneth Mortis is yet to provide a detailed report on the incident. Our efforts to reach out to him for comment before press time were unsuccessful.

The cause of the fire has not yet been determined.

When interviewed, Rojelio Barahona said that although there had been disagreements between him and his brother, he will miss him and will remember him as a very respectful person towards him and the entire family.



can be heard on the following frequencies:
96.5FM in Belize City, Punta Gorda Town, Santa Elena, Cayo and Carmelita Village;
91.1FM in Ladyville and Independence;
101.1FM in Dangriga Town, Camalote Village and Caye Caulker



Silent slaughter, small people and big powers

Monday, January 29, 2024

The world will never be the same; the common people of the world having been exposed to happenings that were well-kept secrets in the past, but are now spreading like wildfire through the information liberation of social media, which has allowed voices that could never be heard on the major politically controlled media, to now share their insights and views on a wide-open grassroots stage, where ordinary people can now “pick sense from nonsense”. The adage of the old computer culture that was spawned in the 1980s was “garbage in, garbage out”; and it accurately reflected the inability of common people the world over to make fair judgements of various conflicts when they were only fed one side of the news, the side that certain big powers that controlled the major news agencies wanted them to hear. But in the last few years, brilliant thinkers, professors and human rights activists whose views were not considered acceptable on CNN, MSNBC, FOX or BBC, have been able to share their thoughts through blogs and podcasts on YouTube, TikTok, etc. for everyone to read and hear. The brainwashing game is coming to an end, and the challenge for small and vulnerable countries like Belize, is how to maintain cordial relations and remain close allies with our Big Brother in the north, while at the same time letting him know in respectful terms that our eyes are now opened, and we fervently disagree with his actions, and sincerely advise that he change course and trod the path that leads to peace, as was so well-articulated by their former president in 1963.

For decades, there has been a conspiracy of constructive silence or deception by major “Western” news media that we have been exposed to in regards to the “Israeli-Palestinian conflict”. These major media outlets have generally focused their news stories on the regular skirmishes on the streets of occupied Palestine – youths throwing stones, Israeli soldiers firing back on them, occasional casualties, big funeral processions/demonstrations by the citizens of Gaza, and the beat goes on with those “violent people” in the distant Middle East. Any reference to injustice and domination by Israel, of taking over Palestinian lands against what was agreed by the United Nations in 1967, is either glossed over, or countered by arguments on the “norms of war and conflict,” whereby it is argued that the Arabs attacked Israel, and Israel defeated all of them, and seized more of their land, which is thus “justified” as the “spoils of war,” though not approved by modern standards of international law. Moreover, no mention is ever

made of the fact that Israel was/is never alone in its combat/defence against attacks from its Arab neighbors; it is always backed up by the economic (\$3 billion annually) and military hardware expertise of the mighty USA. But those days of one-sided media control are gone; people the world over, including Belizeans, are getting our news from all sides now, and we can clearly see who is taking unfair advantage of whom.

When our next-door neighbor Guatemala was undergoing a CIA-orchestrated coup d’etat in 1954 against their popular president, Jacobo Arbenz (see Wikipedia “1954 Guatemalan coup d’etat”), our Belizean people were kept totally in the dark. We didn’t have a clue. Just over a decade ago, when news contacts from the south informed us of tens of thousands of Hondurans demonstrating in the streets in support of their popular president Zelaya (see Wikipedia “2009 Honduran coup d’etat”), it had the blessing of the USA, and the major American news media we received in Belize had little to tell us about how he was removed from power and replaced by a US puppet (who was a few years later exposed as corrupt).

But the times “they are a changing,” and right now, thanks to the internet, Aljazeera, Democracy Now, and a number of individual social media blogs and podcasts, we know a whole lot about the ongoing atrocity being perpetrated against the Palestinian people in Gaza. Meanwhile, CNN, MSNBC and FOX prefer to spend most of their news time on local politics and the Trump litigation saga.

Even the American people, who, like Belizeans, were in the past kept in the dark about what their government was doing overseas in their name, are now getting their eyes opened with the new explosion of media outlets that cannot be stifled and controlled by the political establishment. And they don’t like what they are seeing in Gaza, just like the Belizean people; and there have been more and more demonstrations, even in cities in Europe, demanding an end to the slaughter. While some may argue that it is all about securing “national interests”, and that the US government has to sometimes do unpalatable things in foreign lands, so that their citizens back home can continue to enjoy their high standard of living; in this modern day, many of those same American citizens are battling inflation and an ever-widening gap between the poor and the obscenely rich, and whatever their circumstances, there is just so much that their humanity can endure with the blatantly vivid pictures showing what their taxpayer dollars are paying to do to thousands of innocent children and women, in the name of trying to capture and kill the enemy, Hamas. As much as Belizeans love the USA and share so much in common with the great American people, among whom are thousands of our diaspora Belizeans, we still feel compelled to humbly beg our mighty Uncle Sam, in the words of our past prime minister, “For God’s sake, stop it!”, Mr. Biden.

Some Belizeans, aside from those whose vision is blurred by religious confusion, are tempted to believe that, we are over here, and they are over there, and it is not our business, as much as we may sympathize. But it is our business, indeed, as we have already, with the Guatemala claim, submitted ourselves to the ICJ, an arm of the U.N.

At the ICJ, many Belizeans are confident in the justice of our case. It is our hope and our prayer that the US leadership also has come to see the wisdom of letting justice prevail over their own self-interest on a matter of principle, rather than being tempted to indulge in undue influence and intimidation through economic pressure on the organs of the United Nations that might somehow affect the judgement of the court. We have seen what is happening before our eyes and that of the whole world to the Palestinian people; and still, because of their strategic “interests,” the US insists that Israel is acting in “self-defense”. The ICJ has given them a month to reconsider their perspective. Pray for peace, Belize!



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"We are coming to you, Government!"

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to air their grievance with the proposed Maya Communal Land Policy draft. The politically savvy Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs saw the value in the engagement, but the Government's lead attorney did not, and thus the trust and confidence in the genuine sincerity of the state was severely diminished among the Maya villagers who had congregated in Santa Elena.

While the Minister of Indigenous Peoples' Affairs, Hon. Dolores Balderamos Garcia in an interview on Thursday, January 25 indicated that Government officials *would* meet with residents from the 41 Maya communities of Toledo on Saturday in Santa Elena Village, a release the next day confirmed that she had misspoken. On Thursday she said they would attend, but would have police present to ensure peace. However, the Friday press release notified that the Government would proceed with its scheduled consultations in Punta Gorda Town on its latest controversial draft of the Maya Communal Land Policy. So, while hundreds of Maya villagers were waiting in Santa Elena, the Government officials were gathered at the Social Security Board conference room in town.

The Government's lead attorney on the Maya Land Rights case, Senior Counsel Andrew Marshall, did not think it prudent to take up the Maya's invitation. He said nothing productive could come from discussions or interactions with "a mob," even though the Minister acknowledges that, at some point, they will need to engage the communities rather than just their leaders.

Leslie Mendez, attorney for the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA), an Appellant in the Maya Land Rights case, said the intention was for the



Hundreds of villagers from Toledo's 41 Maya communities gather in Santa Elena Village to reject GoB's latest draft of Maya Communal Land Policy. (Photo credit: Maya Leaders of Southern Belize Facebook Page)

Government officials to hear for themselves directly from the villagers how they feel about the policy and what is their response to it. She expressed, "We have told them, but they sometimes don't believe us. Sometimes they think that it's only a few people, about 10 people, who think this way." When one village police passionately demanded, "The Government should come here and face us!" the crowds erupted in agreement.

While villagers took turns at the mic to affirm their individual positions, their stance was emblazoned on their posters. One read, "We reject # 5." Another said, "Dividing Belizeans is your strategy. We will not allow it." A third affirmed, "All of Belize is being sold out except for Toledo! We stand to protect our lands!!" But since no Government official showed up to hear and see their message, the Mayas committed to ramp up their actions. One placard read, "You will need our votes again. Think about that."



Leslie Mendez - attorney representing TAA

TAA spokesperson, Cristina Coc made reference to the commitment of the ruling People's United Party in its Plan Belize Manifesto that it will "respect the communal land rights to ancestral land." She declared, "We will not stop until this Government has delivered on their promise ... and if this Government does not deliver on their promise, we promise *them*, that in a year and a half, we're not just going to reject this policy. We are going to reject this very Government."

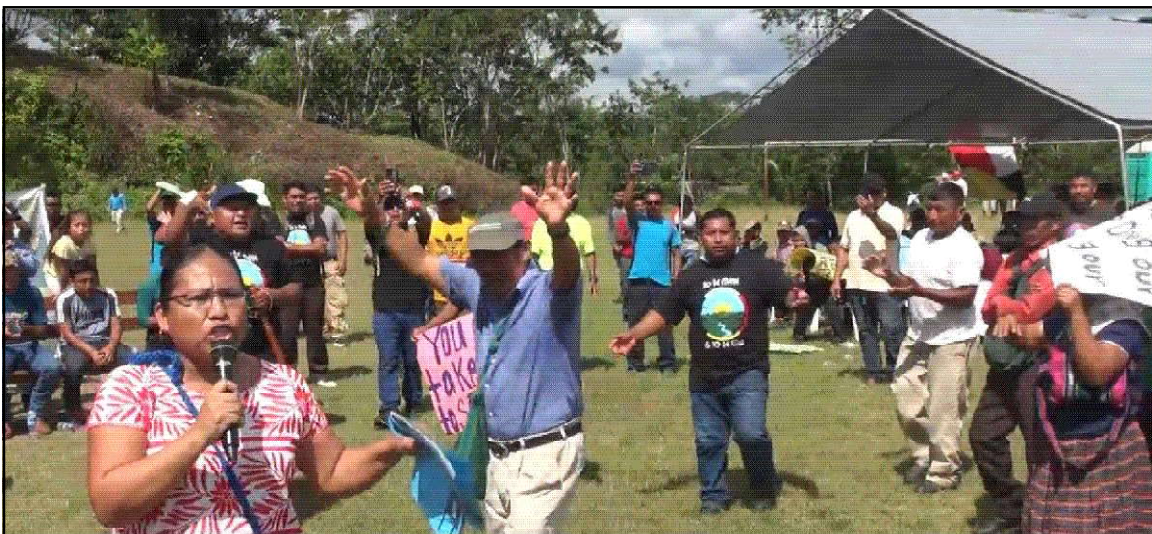
In an emotional delivery which roused the crowd to join her at the mic, Coc directed herself to the Government, proclaiming that they will get their message across. She stated, "But the Government knows that it needs us. The market in Punta Gorda – we supply the food for everybody in that town. You take our food, we take yours! ... We will not be blinded by the little projects, the launch of many projects in our villages. Even before our houses are connected, they want to celebrate the launch of a project, right? Communities, it is time for us to stop our Government from fooling us! It is time for us to stop our Government from blinding us with these little projects. The projects are short-lived. Our land is forever. We deserve those projects because our taxes are being paid."

Coc then spoke about taking their message closer to Government. She declared, "You see us here now; we might

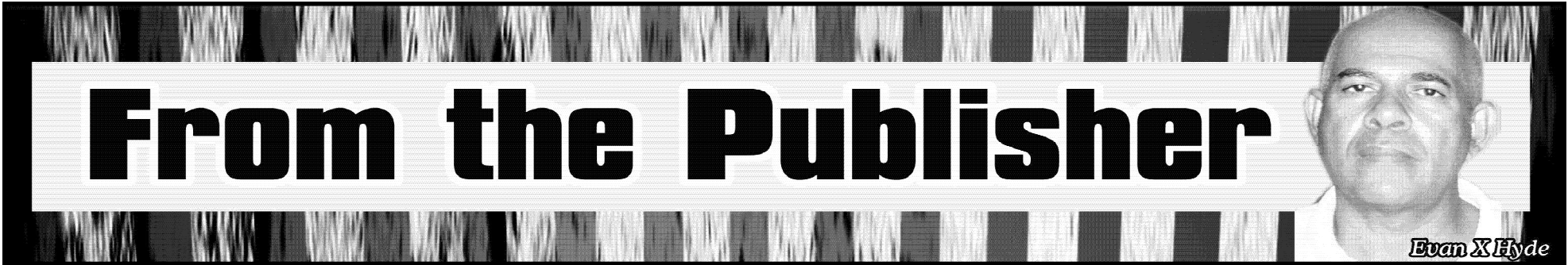
be 3,000. The next time you see us, we're not gonna be 3,000. We're gonna double our numbers every time we come to you. We're gonna double our numbers in Belmopan. We're gonna double our numbers in Belize City ... we are going to bring our people to the Prime Minister. We are going to bring our people to the ministers in Government who are writing this policy. We are not going to sit and take this disrespect. We are coming to you, Government! We are going to find you in your homes; we are going to find you in your offices. We are going to find you on the streets ... You don't come to us, we are coming to you." With her words then close to being drowned out, not only because of those crowding around her but also from emotion, Coc cited the late Maya leader, Julian Cho, saying, "In the words of the late Julian Cho, come hell or high water, we are going to fight! Come hell or high water we are going to defend our land, because this is our survival!"

In her own emotive presentation, human rights attorney Mendez spoke of the life-changing experience it has been to be working in the Maya communities of Toledo for the last three years. She considers it "the highest honor and privilege of her professional career to serve these communities ..." She then expressed gratitude to the communities for setting an example to the country "that integrity still matters. That not everything has a price. That the land is not for sale, and that communities always come back."

At the meeting, the communities signed a 10-point declaration which will be presented to the Government on Tuesday, January 30.



TAA Spokesperson, Cristina Coc points to PUP's Plan Belize commitment to respect communal land rights



In last Friday’s column, which I had thought was the last effort on my part to provoke you into reading about the Caste War, I mentioned how hard I had worked on Nelson Reed’s opening chapter, in order to condense and paraphrase and stuff like that. His opening chapter is about the Ladino

world in the Yucatan at the time of the 1847 Caste War explosion. On Sunday, however, I was doing a little fiddling around with Mr. Reed’s second chapter, about the Mazehual world in 1847. It is a shorter chapter, and it mentions an incident at Quisteil in 1761. There are reasons we

Belizeans were not taught about the Caste War in school, and Quisteil is one of them, I believe. What follows in italics is a direct quotation from Nelson Reed’s book, second chapter:

the cry of rebellion. The twenty-man posse sent to arrest the murderers walked into an ambush and lost half their number, including their commander, and what probably began as a drunken riot became something else. Committed by this act, Jacinto, the batab of Quisteil, fortified his village and assembled fifteen hundred men from his own and neighboring villages. He then changed his name to Can Ek, after the pagan ruler of the Itza nation in the Peten who had been conquered only sixty-four years earlier. Living in isolation in the jungles of Guatemala, the Itza had avoided Spanish domination for almost two centuries, and during that time had provided sanctuary for fugitives from Yucatan. The books of CHILAM BALAM had prophesied that a king of the Itza would one day return and drive the foreigners into the sea.

For a large majority of the Mazehual, tied by family or habit to the land, the white man became a more regular presence in the years following independence. He had the power to question the Mazehual at will or make him kneel to kiss his hand; he could demand to be transported for miles in the colche or insist that his baggage be carried on a tumpline. In addition, the Mazehual saw their sacred corn trampled and smashed by unfenced cattle, their very land stolen away. And they had no recourse when their women were sexually exploited.

To the name Can Ek, Jacinto added the title of king; he was crowned in Quisteil, using regalia from the santos in the church there, and offered himself as the fulfillment of the prophecy. His reign was short. Two thousand well-armed dzulob converged on Quisteil within a week, took the place by assault, and slaughtered five hundred Mazehual. Can Ek escaped that day but was captured soon after and marched up to Merida with the other prisoners. The vengeance was brutal. He was drawn and quartered in front of the cathedral, his bloody fragments burned, the ashes scattered to the winds. Eight others were garroted, two hundred received two hundred lashes and had an ear cut off to mark them as rebels (if they survived the lashes.) This was the end of Jacinto Can Ek and his kingdom, but not the end of memory; the story was passed on to the third generation and was well remembered in 1847.

The byproduct of this exploitation, the child of mixed blood, had a particular price to pay. Inheriting to an extent his or her father’s world, the child could be despised in that world because of the mother’s genes. Such a man was Bonifacio Novelo, blue-eyed and “lighter than the generality of the natives.” Growing up poor in the San Juan barrio of Valladolid, he had little choice but to side with the Maya. He wrote in the Maya language, not only to native leaders, but also in the one known letter addressed by him to a white officer. There were more like him — Felipe Ayala, Pedro Encalada, Jose Maria Barrera, and others. Were they to be considered white or Indian? Circumstances would decide.

The Mazehual had not always been docile in the face of such treatment. He had fought against the original invader and then in a series of bloody revolts until he was powerless to do more. The most recent uprising had come in 1761 at Quisteil. A merchant was killed during a fiesta, and the local priest had fled to Sotuta with

FROM THE PUBLISHER en Español

En la columna del viernes pasado, que pensé que era el último esfuerzo de mi parte para provocar que leyeran sobre la Guerra de Castas, mencioné lo duro que había trabajado en el capítulo inicial de Nelson Reed, para condensar y parafrasear y cosas así. Su primer capítulo trata sobre el mundo ladino en Yucatán en el momento de la explosión de la Guerra de Castas de 1847.

El domingo, sin embargo, estaba jugueteando un poco con el segundo capítulo del Sr. Reed, sobre el mundo Mazehual en 1847. Es un capítulo más corto y menciona un incidente en Quisteil en 1761. Hay razones por las que a los beliceños no nos enseñaron sobre la Guerra de Castas en la escuela, y Quisteil es uno de ellos, creo.

Lo que sigue en cursiva es una cita directa del segundo capítulo del libro de Nelson Reed:

Para una gran mayoría de los Mazehual, ligados por familia o costumbres a la tierra, el hombre blanco se convirtió en una presencia más regular en los años posteriores a la independencia. Tenía el poder de interrogar al Mazehual a voluntad o hacerlo arrodillarse para besarle la mano; podía exigir que lo transportaran por kilómetros en la colche o insistir en que su equipaje fuera transportado como mochila. Además, los Mazehual vieron su maíz sagrado pisoteado y destrozado por ganado sin cercos, y les robaron sus mismas tierras. Y no tenían ningún recurso cuando sus mujeres eran explotadas sexualmente.

El subproducto de esta explotación, el niño mestizo, tuvo que pagar un precio particular. Al heredar hasta cierto punto el mundo de su padre, el niño podría ser despreciado en ese mundo debido a los genes de la madre. Un hombre así era Bonifacio Novelo, de ojos azules y "más claro que la generalidad de los nativos". Al crecer pobre en el barrio de San Juan de Valladolid, no tuvo más remedio que ponerse del lado de los mayas. Escribió en lengua maya, no sólo a los líderes nativos, sino también en la única carta conocida que dirigió a un oficial blanco. Había más como él: Felipe Ayala, Pedro Encalada, José María Barrera y otros. ¿Debían ser considerados blancos o indios? Las circunstancias decidirían.

El Mazehual no siempre había sido dócil ante tal trato. Había luchado contra el invasor original y luego en una serie de revueltas sangrientas hasta que se vio incapaz de hacer más. El levantamiento más reciente se produjo en 1761 en Quisteil. Un comerciante fue asesinado durante una fiesta y el sacerdote local había huido a Sotuta con el grito de rebelión. El grupo de veinte hombres enviado para arrestar a los asesinos cayó en una emboscada y perdió a la mitad de ellos, incluido su comandante, y lo que probablemente comenzó como un motín de borrachos se convirtió en algo más. Comprometido por este acto, Jacinto, el batab de Quisteil, fortificó su aldea y reunió mil quinientos hombres de su propia aldea y de las vecinas. Luego cambió su nombre a Can Ek, en honor al gobernante pagano de la nación itzá en el Petén que había sido conquistado sólo sesenta y cuatro años antes. Los itzá, que vivían aislados en las selvas de Guatemala, habían evitado la dominación española durante casi dos siglos y durante ese tiempo habían proporcionado refugio a los fugitivos de Yucatán. Los libros de CHILAM BALAM habían profetizado que un rey de los itzá regresaría un día y arrojaría a los extranjeros al mar.

Al nombre de Can Ek, Jacinto añadió el título de rey; fue coronado en Quisteil, usando insignias de los santos de la iglesia de allí, y se ofreció a sí mismo como cumplimiento de la profecía. Su reinado fue corto. Dos mil dzulob bien armados convergieron en Quisteil en una semana, tomaron el lugar por asalto y masacraron a quinientos Mazehual. Can Ek escapó ese día pero fue capturado poco después y fue marchado hasta Mérida con los demás prisioneros. La venganza fue brutal. Fue arrastrado y descuartizado frente a la catedral, sus fragmentos ensangrentados quemados y las cenizas esparcidas al viento. Otros ocho fueron garroteados, doscientos recibieron doscientos azotes y les cortaron una oreja para señalarlos como rebeldes (si sobrevivían a los azotes). Éste fue el fin de Jacinto Can Ek y su reino, pero no el fin de la memoria; la historia pasó a la tercera generación y fue bien recordada en 1847.

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Masacre silenciosa, gente pequeña y grandes potencias

Lunes, 29 de enero de 2024

El mundo nunca volverá a ser el mismo; la gente común del mundo ha estado expuesta a sucesos que eran secretos bien guardados en el pasado, pero que ahora se están extendiendo como la pólvora a través de la liberación de la información por las redes sociales, lo que ha permitido que voces que nunca podrían ser escuchadas en los principales medios de comunicación políticamente controlados, puedan compartir ahora sus ideas y puntos de vista en un escenario de la base ampliamente abierto, donde la gente común ahora puede “distinguir lo que tiene sentido del sinsentido”. El dicho de la antigua cultura informática que surgió en los años 1980 era “basura entra, basura sale”; y reflejó con precisión la incapacidad de la gente común de todo el mundo para emitir juicios justos sobre diversos conflictos cuando sólo les informaban de un lado de las noticias, el lado que ciertas grandes potencias que controlaban las principales agencias de noticias querían que escucharan. Pero en los últimos años, pensadores brillantes, profesores y activistas de derechos humanos cuyas opiniones no fueron consideradas aceptables en CNN, MSNBC, FOX o BBC, han podido compartir sus pensamientos a través de blogs y podcasts en YouTube, TikTok, etc. para que todos lean y escuchen. El juego del lavado de cerebro está llegando a su fin, y el desafío para los países pequeños y vulnerables como Belize es cómo mantener relaciones cordiales y seguir siendo aliados cercanos de nuestro Gran Hermano en el norte, y al mismo tiempo hacerle saber en términos respetuosos que ahora tenemos los ojos abiertos y estamos fervientemente en desacuerdo con sus acciones, y le recomendamos sinceramente que cambie de rumbo y recorra el camino que conduce a la paz, como tan bien lo expresó su ex presidente en 1963.

Durante décadas, ha habido una conspiración de silencio constructivo o engaño por parte de los principales medios de comunicación "occidentales" a la que hemos estado expuestos en relación con el "conflicto israelí-palestino". Estos grandes medios de comunicación generalmente han centrado sus noticias en las escaramuzas habituales en las calles de la Palestina ocupada: jóvenes lanzando piedras, soldados israelíes respondiendo contra ellos, víctimas ocasionales, grandes cortejos/manifestaciones fúnebres de los ciudadanos de Gaza, y el ritmo continúa con esa “gente violenta” en el lejano Medio Oriente. Cualquier referencia a la injusticia y la dominación por parte de Israel, a la apropiación de tierras palestinas en contra de lo acordado por las Naciones Unidas en 1967, se pasa por alto o se contrarresta con argumentos sobre las “normas de la guerra y el conflicto”, mediante los cuales se argumenta que los árabes atacaron a Israel, e Israel los derrotó a todos y se apoderó de más tierras de ellos, lo que por tanto está “justificado” como “botín de guerra”, aunque no aprobado por los estándares modernos del derecho internacional. Además, nunca se hace mención del hecho de que Israel nunca estuvo/está solo en su combate/defensa contra los ataques de sus vecinos árabes; siempre está respaldado por la experiencia económica (3 mil millones de dólares al año) y en hardware militar del poderoso Estados Unidos. Pero esos días de control unilateral de los medios han quedado atrás; Ahora personas de todo el mundo, incluidos los beliceños, reciben nuestras noticias de todas partes y podemos ver claramente quién se está aprovechando injustamente de quién.

Cuando nuestro vecino Guatemala estaba sufriendo un golpe de estado orquestado por la CIA en 1954 contra su popular presidente, Jacobo Arbenz (ver Wikipedia “Golpe de estado guatemalteco de 1954”), nuestro pueblo

beliceño se mantuvo totalmente a oscuras. No teníamos ni idea. Hace poco más de una década, cuando contactos de noticias del sur nos informaron de decenas de miles de hondureños manifestándose en las calles en apoyo de su popular presidente Zelaya (ver Wikipedia “Golpe de Estado en Honduras de 2009”), contó con la bendición de Estados Unidos y los principales medios de comunicación estadounidenses que recibimos en Belize tenían poco que contarnos sobre cómo fue destituido del poder y reemplazado por un títere estadounidense (que unos años más tarde fue expuesto como corrupto).

Pero los tiempos “están cambiando” y ahora mismo, gracias a Internet, Aljazeera, Democracy Now y una serie de blogs y podcasts individuales en las redes sociales, sabemos mucho sobre la atrocidad que se está perpetrando contra el pueblo palestino en Gaza. Mientras tanto, CNN, MSNBC y FOX prefieren dedicar la mayor parte de su tiempo informativo a la política local y la saga del litigio de Trump.

Incluso el pueblo estadounidense, que, al igual que los beliceños, en el pasado no sabía nada sobre lo que su gobierno estaba haciendo en el extranjero en su nombre, ahora está abriendo los ojos con la nueva explosión de medios de comunicación que no pueden ser sofocados ni controlados por el establishment político. Y no les gusta lo que están viendo en Gaza, al igual que al pueblo beliceño; y ha habido cada vez más manifestaciones, incluso en ciudades de Europa, exigiendo el fin de la matanza. Si bien algunos pueden argumentar que se trata de garantizar los “intereses nacionales” y que el gobierno estadounidense a veces tiene que hacer cosas desagradables en países extranjeros, para que sus ciudadanos en casa puedan seguir disfrutando de su alto nivel de vida; En estos tiempos modernos, muchos de esos mismos ciudadanos estadounidenses están luchando contra la inflación y una brecha cada vez mayor entre los pobres y los obscenamente ricos, y cualesquiera que sean sus circunstancias, hay un límite a lo que su humanidad puede soportar con las imágenes descaradamente vívidas que muestran lo que su dinero de contribuyentes está pagando por hacer a miles de niños y mujeres inocentes, en nombre de tratar de capturar y matar al enemigo, Hamás. Por mucho que los beliceños amen a los Estados Unidos y tengan mucho en común con el gran pueblo estadounidense, entre los cuales se encuentran miles de beliceños de nuestra diáspora, todavía nos sentimos obligados a rogar humildemente a nuestro poderoso Tío Sam, en palabras de nuestro ex primer ministro: “¡Por el amor de Dios, basta!”, Sr. Biden.

Algunos beliceños, aparte de aquellos cuya visión está borrosa por la confusión religiosa, se sienten tentados a creer que nosotros estamos aquí y ellos allá, y que no es asunto nuestro, por mucho que podamos simpatizar. Pero, de hecho, es asunto nuestro, ya que, con el reclamo de Guatemala, nos hemos sometido a la CIJ, un brazo de las Naciones Unidas.

En la CIJ, muchos beliceños confían en la justicia de nuestro caso. Es nuestra esperanza y nuestra plegaria que los dirigentes estadounidenses también hayan llegado a comprender que es prudente dejar que la justicia prevalezca sobre sus propios intereses por una cuestión de principios, en lugar de verse tentados a ejercer una influencia e intimidación indebidas mediante la presión económica sobre los órganos de las Naciones Unidas que de alguna manera podrían afectar el fallo del tribunal. Hemos visto lo que está sucediendo ante nuestros ojos y los del mundo entero al pueblo palestino; y aún así, debido a sus “intereses” estratégicos, Estados Unidos insiste en que Israel está actuando en “autodefensa”. La CIJ les ha dado un mes para reconsiderar su perspectiva. ¡Oremos por la paz, Belize!

I don't think the Pope had the 23% in mind

by Colin Hyde

Many Christians, some of them Catholics, are disappointed in Pope Francis for his embrace of Gays. There isn't overwhelming approval for the nonconformist Pope's embrace of Muslims either. "Historic" is the word Margarita Arredondas used in a piece in *Atlatlaya* to describe the Pope's 2019 visit to the United Arab Emirates, where he signed the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace with Muslim leaders. In a 2022 piece in *Catholic News Agency*, Courtney Mares said the Pope had been to Bahrain, and while there he said "that Catholics and Muslims alike are called to work to promote peace in the world," that "The God of peace never brings about war, never incites hatred," that "We, who believe in Him, are called to promote peace..."

Most Christians, including many Catholics, believe that Muslims are pagans, in line for no eternal reward. Bah, according to that strict line, those of us who are Christians shouldn't expect to make acquaintance with Leigh Hunt's great hero, *Abou Ben Adhem*, because loving fellow human beings, God's other children, is not enough to get us a seat on the plane to heaven.

Ah, our Pope, he is soft on other religions, and he isn't too hard on gay people. David Crary, in an Associated

Press story in 2023, said the Vatican had released a story in which the Pope "formally approved allowing priests to bless same-sex couples, stipulating that people seeking God's love and mercy shouldn't be subject to 'an exhaustive moral analysis' to receive it." Crary reported that Francis suggested such blessings could be offered under some circumstances if they didn't confuse the ritual with the sacrament of marriage.

The Pope, a great man, hasn't gone as far as Jimmy Carter, another great man, who said he couldn't see Jesus turning down loving gays who wanted to get married. If you are reading me for the first time, I want you to know that I believe Jimmy is a really special brother. But I think he went too far with the nuptials thing. Like the Pope says, gays should be kept away from the sacrament of marriage.

He has no problems with gay men in the priesthood. Thinking about it, a law to block Gays from the priesthood would deny men from serving just because of their biology. And why should the private sexual inclinations of a man matter in the priesthood when they are called to celibacy? Unfortunately, some gay priests really messed up. We can expect that the non-gay priests and nuns are not too happy with their major failure.

None of my family in the US whom I've maintained close contact with are

fans of Leviticus. I don't think I was ever a real homophobe. I think when I learned about gay love's existence I was shocked, incredulous. I will say I don't like anyone bringing homosexuality around me, but I don't like anyone exhibiting their heterosexuality around me either. I am comfortable with the civilized world, which is the polar opposite of the animal world between sunrise and sunset. In our world, asexuality is the rule in the daytime.

Yes, I think the Pope is great. But I think he does have to watch his steps. The Bahai's teach that Jesus had to temper His teachings because His understanding was so above the people of His time. Staying in that same stream, our hero, Leviticus, he couldn't have explored this bad behavior beyond its ramifications. Whoa, I just asked Google why Lot offered his daughters to the mob, and *Quora* popped up with a hundred interesting answers. The simple story is that he didn't want the men to engage in homosexual sex. I don't know what Lot's wife was about when she looked back—I think that means "returned" to that hedonistic place. Eve sank Adam, but Lot, glory for him for keeping his head on the journey out of Sodom.

The reason I say the Pope has to step very carefully is that he could be drawn into the frivolous. This 2024 story I read in NBC News, by Matt Laviertes, said 28% of Gen Z adults—the 18 to 25 group—are LGBTQ "according to a report released this week by the Public Religion Research Institute." Laviertes said "the report found 72% of Gen Z adults identified as straight, 15% as bisexual, 5% as gay or lesbian, and 8% as something else." If you read what I read there, what that says is that 5% are gay, 23% can and are fooling around, and 72% are heterosexual.

I give props to the Pope for embracing true gays, stopping short of the nonsensical step of welcoming rice thrown on their heads. But this 23%, to embrace them is to embrace promiscuity, fooling around. He has to see the clear separation between fooling around and desperate prostitution. And I too have to watch my step, so I'm changing topics, heading to a more safe space.

"106 homicides per 100,000 people" that year—to one of the most peaceful as it relates to homicides today.

A 2024 report in Reuters by Alvaro Murillo and Isabel Woodford, "Once tranquil Costa Rica eyes Salvadoran-inspired response to crime surge," said that while the murder rate in El Salvador "plunged to 2.4 after being the highest in the world less than a decade earlier"... "Costa Rica saw its murder rate jump to 17.2 per 100,000 people in 2023 from 11.7 in 2018." The report said "whispers of support for tougher policies are growing, fueled by fears for the country's \$2 billion tourism sector", and while El Salvador's president, Nayib Bukele, "was voted Costa Ricans' favorite political leader in an October survey by research firm Indice", the poll ratings of Costa Rica's president, Rodrigo Chaves, "have plummeted nearly 30 percentage points since his election in May 2022."

Reuters said analysts attributed "Costa Rica's spike in homicides" to "gang warfare among cocaine traffickers." The report said "gang recruitment was helped by growing social discontent and unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic."

No country escaped the economic ravages of the pandemic, and, as explained by sociologists the world over, bad economic times foster an environment for more crimes. Human beings, being animals, their first need is food, and the cost of that commodity has increased tremendously since 2020, the year when the pandemic hit.

Determining the borders

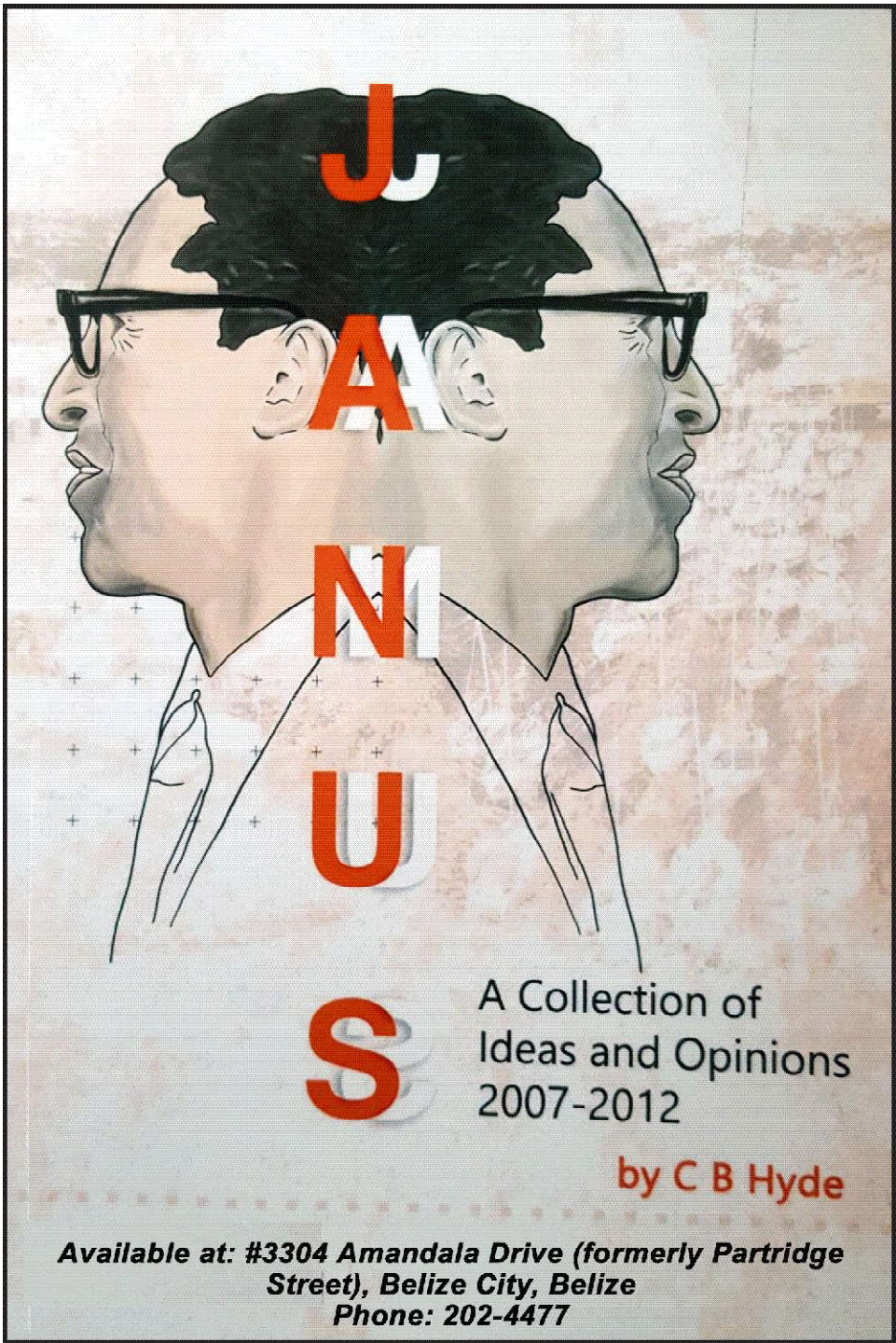
So, we have finally, finally arrived at the determination of what lands in the Toledo District will fall under communal ownership. This process should have started in earnest over a decade ago, and we are here now, at last. The MLA spokesperson who said they had gone through the process already and so it is only for the government to recognize, to effectively agree to, what the MLA considers to be communal lands—maybe they should be excused, maybe their argument is only a negotiation tactic.

I thought the theater, tearing up the draft proposal, was unfair to the country. The MLA must understand that GoB is negotiating on behalf of the people. This is a tikilish matter, drawing borders, and we must be respectful at all times.

We know the MLA has gotten financial support from friends from America, financial support that was essential to getting their position before the court, and the great victory won. But on the ground, the friends are clueless about the Belize reality. Too much zeal is spoiling a beautiful thing.

A close neighbor looking to take a page from El Salvador's book

Honduras has taken a page on violence control from El Salvador's book, and now reports are that Costa Rica, one of the two wealthiest countries on the Central American Isthmus, is contemplating doling out a dose of the tough medicine El Salvador gave out to transform itself from the world's most murderous country in 2015 -- according to Dan Rivers at *itvNews*, El Salvador had



A Collection of
Ideas and Opinions
2007-2012

by C B Hyde

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Sportsman/entrepreneur, Rudolph McKoy, Sr. passes

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 29, 2024

On Wednesday, January 23, 2024, Rudolph McKoy, Sr. of #29 Dean Street in Belize City, passed away at his home. Rudy, as many knew him, was born in 1934. For many years he was the Supply Officer for the Forestry Department. After retiring from government, he started his business at Dean Street - Rudy's Mini Mart.

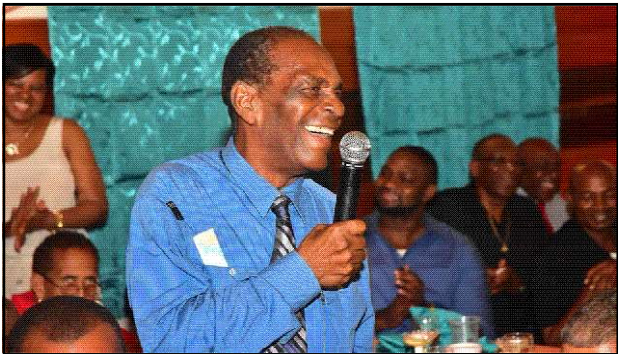
Apart from being a successful entrepreneur, he was active in sports as a fan and as a football player. During the 1970s he would never miss a game on Sundays at the MCC. His favorite team was the dominant Landivar team of the late 1960s to early 1970s. He was also a fan of the Charger football team of the mid-1970s, on which his son, Rudolph "Bolo" McKoy played. Not only



was he a fan, he also played for several teams in his youth, such as the Landivar team from the 1950s to the 1960s.

His favorite hang-out spot was the CBA Club where he also played pool and table tennis. He will be missed by many.

His funeral will be on Friday, February 2, at 1:00 p.m. at Wesley Church on Albert Street, and interment will be at Lord Ridge Cemetery. R.I.P. brother Rudolph "Rudy" McKoy!



PLB Week 3 results

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 29, 2024

In Week 3 action in the Premier League of Belize (PLB) 2023-2024 Closing Season, Latrell Middleton of Port Layola FC scored again to maintain his lead in the PLB goal scoring column.

We can't yet verify all the scoring details so until Friday we'll just go with the final scores received for this past weekend's games.

On Saturday night at the People's Stadium in Orange Walk, home team Progreso FC played to a 2-2 draw against defending champion Altitude FC. At the Isidoro Beaton Stadium, it was the visiting Benque United FC coming away with a 3-1 victory over Bandits Sports. And at the Marshalleck Stadium, it was the visitors again victorious, as Port Layola FC also prevailed, 3-1, over Police United FC.

In the only Sunday game, in the afternoon at the Carl Ramos Stadium in Dangriga, once more the visitors came away with the win, as league leading Verdes FC cruised to a 5-nil victory over Wagiya SC.

Upcoming PLB Week 4 schedule:

Saturday, February 3

7:30 p.m. - Altitude FC vs Benque United FC - M.A. Stadium in Independence

7:30 p.m. - Police United FC vs Bandits Sports - Marshalleck Stadium

Sunday, February 4

4:00 p.m. - Port Layola FC vs Verdes FC - Marion Jones Sports Complex

4:00 p.m. - Wagiya SC vs Progreso FC - Carl Ramos Stadium

PLB 2023-2024 Closing Season								
Standings at Week #3, Sun. Jan. 28, 2024								
TEAM	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Diff	Pts
Verdes FC	3	3	0	0	9	0	4	9
Benque United FC	3	3	0	0	5	1	4	9
Port Layola FC	3	2	0	1	10	6	4	6
Altitude FC	3	1	1	1	5	5	0	4
Wagiya SC	3	1	0	2	3	10	-7	3
Bandits Sports	3	1	0	2	3	7	-4	3
Progreso FC	3	0	1	2	3	5	-2	1
Police United FC	3	0	0	3	1	5	-4	0

Belize places high in Caribbean STEM Olympiads



Muffles' Math Olympiad team



Muffles' Team Techtactic

Continued from Page 3

and as students to show that there's a level of proficiency and competence when it comes to these areas," he told us.

He was particularly proud of the student's accomplishment, given the major setback and effect the pandemic had on the growth of the student's mathematical sharpness. "Securing a win as well in the Mathematics Olympiad, especially since our country doesn't run one anymore, shows that we have competency when it comes to mathematics," he expressed.

The Math Olympiad, conducted in a Jeopardy-style format, covered topics from consumer arithmetic to vector calculus. The Computer Coding Olympiad tasked applicants with creating apps, games, and websites aimed at solving challenges faced by Caribbean communities, such as sustainable development and awareness of environmental hazards.

In total, 131 students from eleven Caribbean countries registered for the 2024 Olympiads, with 39 teams making it to the finals.

Medals and cash prizes were awarded for platinum, gold, silver, and bronze achievements.

BHS' Team CATALYST, featuring Lia Hunt, Aden Zabaneh, Maliyah Casey, and Daniel Sharp, won silver in the Level 2 Computer Coding Olympiad with their project "MyCRIME."

The project, an app providing live statistics and updates on local crimes, aimed at enhancing public safety.

"The solution that Team Catalyst

decided on was Public Safety. The app they created would be a user-friendly app that would share live statistics for the area. A special feature was an alert that would be sent directly to the Police Department. The app was created by the students, and with the support of Mr. Gabriel Casey, the app was presented as a 'live app.' I am pleased with this performance by our young Belizeans," expressed IT teacher and mentor Godfrey Sosa of BHS.

Jamie Usher, BHS' principal shared her enthusiasm with us stating, "... part of our education has to be that we're not just working in a bubble. We have to think bigger and we have to ask our kids to participate in a wider range. So, when they see what other teens their age ... it doesn't matter if they're Caribbean, doesn't matter if they're European. We want them to know what other kids their age are doing, so that we can be as competitive as them, because we don't want to be the little Belizean who, you know, didn't realize that all of this was happening."

With the ongoing efforts of BHS to put Belize on the map when it comes to STEM education, their next quest is to tackle the annual FIRST Lego competition this coming March in Oklahoma, U.S.A.

They also plan to engage Belizean students in robotics in their first-ever Belize National First Lego League Challenge 2024, which will be held on March 16 at the Belize Elementary School gymnasium. "We're asking kids to come over to the gym for that day if they want to join in this robotics and practical application scenario," Usher said.



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Kenya, Belize, and Haiti!

Friday, January 26, 2024

On Friday, January 26, 2024, the Kenyan High Court prohibited the deployment of 1,000 police officers to Haiti. The court decided that the process through which the orders to deploy were issued was unconstitutional. This has stalled the deployment of an international force to police and restore order to a nation in the midst of gang rule and gang violence, with little or no resistance from an impotent government. Haiti has been mismanaged ever since it had the gall to fight for, and declare, its independence in the early 1800s. They were never given a chance or the luxury to succeed, by all those European colonizers, who had the enthusiastic backing of a recently formed United States of America! The Americans, of course, couldn't tolerate their own slaves rising up and fighting for their freedom, so they were more than eager to make sure that a black Haitian government would fail. Now the United Nations and United States are pushing this peacekeeping force, mostly comprised of African and Caribbean peacekeepers to restore order!

According to the *New York Times*, Mr. Rufo, the president of Kenya, has very good relations with the United States, who in this year of national elections, is trying to curtail the number of refugees seeking asylum. But the courts, thank goodness for courts everywhere, are standing in the way of arbitrary moves by leaders who have their own agendas. And I'm talking about courts in democratic countries, like Kenya, Israel, the United States and Belize.

I was amazed and disappointed to learn that Belize is sending a small number of our soldiers to Haiti! It's not that I'm unsympathetic to Haiti and its mounting insecurity crisis, but we do have our own borders that are not being sufficiently protected, with daily incursions that are becoming more nakedly aggressive. Guatemala uses our territory, if reports are true, to plant coca and marijuana crops. Apart from all the abuse Belizeans suffer on the Sarstoon, and all the pirates coming in and robbing us in broad daylight, and the depletion of our waters, of our fishes and other

natural resources, now they're trying to turn us into a narco state. Belize is being invaded and disrespected and overrun by people who don't believe that we belong, or that there's a border to stop them. None of this is new, but now that we are more aware of their intentions, you would think that our government would want to concentrate more forces along our borders to hinder these advances, to at least let them understand that there's a price to be paid for their impunity.

So, you can see why I was surprised and disappointed by our volunteering defense forces to quell civil disobedience in Haiti while our own State is so insecure. The ICJ has just ruled on the limits of Israel's military operations in Gaza to prevent the genocide of the Palestinian people. After 3 months of fighting, they have ruled on this emergency! Meanwhile, it has been years since the Belize/Guatemala question has been simmering in the Court, with no signs of progress or settlement of our own national emergency! It is a national emergency, whether we will remain a country, whether we'll be displaced and become Palestinians, whether we'll be refugees like the Haitians and so many others, or just second-class citizens in a land with a new landlord?

And so, while it is noble for us to want to help the people of Haiti, who don't deserve this recurring nightmare that they have always endured, we should make sure that our own house is in order before trying to repair our neighbors'. The nonchalance of our seemingly innocent view of the Guatemalan threat has to end. And I'm not forgetting the Quislings among us who would welcome this takeover. We have to be very proactive in securing our homeland, pushing and fighting and demanding a quick resolution to the question of our sovereignty! And while we are waiting, we should never lose sight of the consequences of a ruling against us, what it would mean, and what we would do! What would we do?

Glen

Unreflecting love!

Sunday, January 28, 2024

Maybe it's just me, but as I grow older I find myself being repetitious, watching the same movies or series, over and over again. Same thing with books; I'll read the same ones maybe 2, 3 times a year. It's almost as though I don't want to move on, to go through that inevitable cycle, the process of aging. I find myself reliving moments in my past that were special to me, going through photographs of special times, longing for the days that are no more. I spend time on the phone with my lifelong friends, reminiscing, wistfully trying to relive the past, sometimes embellishing memories that have become hazy with time. Finding comfort in sharing those special moments that have disappeared into the background of my long life!

I am finally realizing how fleeting life is, and how careless I've been, not fully embracing what was right in front of me, instead of feeling that the grass was greener on the other side. Well, I have to admit that it's not; it never was. I believe that it is human nature, or maybe

it's just me, to be restless and always wanting more, when you're holding the prize in your hand. You are master of your universe, but instead of taking the time to make the most of it, your wandering soul wants more. The insatiable desire for more blots out what is in plain sight, the most important thing or person that you will ever know. Again, maybe it's just me, but that need to wonder and wander has kept me rudderless and drifting.

I've always wondered if that's a sign of immaturity or just plain human nature. I truly believe that it is the former. I have friends who are settled and obviously content to be committed to their partners, their families, their communities and their circumstances; in other words, anchored! I admire them and their certainty. For me, it's like faith; I wasn't born with those genes. My daughter thinks that it stems from my childhood, or even when I was inside the womb; she knows stuff that I can't even wrap my mind around. By that I mean she is a psychologist in the making.

Belmopan man robbed and shot by men on motorcycle

by Charles Gladden

BELMOPAN, Mon. Jan. 29, 2024

A Belmopan man was robbed and shot by two men on a motorcycle on Thursday night, January 25.

According to police, Ernel Vasquez, 24, a Belizean laborer of Belmopan, reported that he was walking on George Price Boulevard in the vicinity of Chon Saan Palace in Belmopan when he was ambushed by two men on a motorcycle.

The men, who held him at gunpoint,

snatched an undisclosed amount of cash from Vasquez, then one of the robbers attempted to steal his cell phone; but it appears that Vasquez resisted that attempt and a struggle ensued between them, during which Vasquez was shot by one of the men.

The two men then sped away, down the boulevard.

Vasquez was taken to the Western Regional Hospital for treatment, but later discharged himself.

Police are investigating.

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and the renovated barrack rooms for soldiers so they can be comfortable while away from their homes.

Also, the Sarstoon Forward Operating Base situated at the southernmost end of the country will live to see brighter days as its renovation is soon to be completed, along with works at Camps Belizario and Fairweather.

When he met with members of the media, Minister Usher said: "It's an honor for me to be a part of this 46th anniversary of the Belize Defence Force. When Minister Marin asked me

to give the keynote speech and to inspect the guards, I readily agreed. It's something that I feel passionate about, and it's an honor for me to be here today."

During the ceremonial march at the Sir Colville Young Parade Square at the Price Barracks, Ladyville, the inspection of the guards was done, and awards were given to six soldiers and officers for long years of service and another six for outstanding service.

The military group was established on January 1, 1978, after the disbanding of the Belize Volunteer Guard and the Police Special Force the year before.

Bladen 12 drug-plane trial adjourned for February 5

Continued from Page 2

Heinrich Redecop, 39; Johan Wall, 45; Fredy Orlando Gongora, of the Mennonite Community, 38; Adonis Campos, 28; and Efrain Cano, 37; along with interdicted police officers, Delwin Casimiro, 36; Nelson Middleton, 28; George Ferguson, 37; and former police officer, Elmer Nah, 40

The group is charged jointly with 2 counts of possession of a controlled drug with intent to supply, one count of conspiracy to land a plane at an unlicensed aerodrome, and one count of abetment of the importation of a controlled drug.

It is alleged that the group of 12

and others were found on November 4, 2021, on the Southern Highway, Toledo District, in possession of 763.68 kilograms of cocaine for the purpose of supplying it to another person or persons for drug trafficking.

In late 2023 George Ferguson was read additional charges for possession of prohibited ammunitions, kept ammunitions without a gun license, and possession of prohibited firearm.

The attorneys representing the men are Richard "Dickie" Bradley, Leeroy Banner, Oscar Selgado and Lyndon Jones; however, only Bradley and Selgado were present in court today, as Selgado held brief for attorneys Leeroy Banner and Lyndon Jones.



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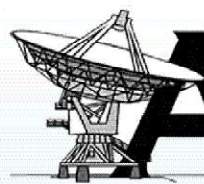
I know that we can't relive our past, that we should live in the present, and treasure every moment. I know that age and time and life are not guaranteed to any of us, that things change because nature insists that they do, that no matter how hard we try to hold on, we can't. The weight of living wears us down, humbles us; and no matter how hard we try, that weight always wins in the end.

I have started to train myself, and especially my mind, to be thankful for the life I've lived. To be grateful for all the happiness I've harvested from my family, my friends, from all the dreary intercourse of daily life, as Wordsworth put it.

I'm grateful for all my adventures, my encounters, my experiences, my passions, my loves, for everything. My family, my beautiful children and grandchildren, the love of my life, my amazing friends, for nature and her countless gifts, for my health, and for living a life full of mistakes and failures and triumphs and happiness!

I believe that we have to be unapologetic about our choices, cognizant of our frailties, but absolutely unapologetic about the road we have taken. It is what it is, and in the autumn of one's life, just be yourself!

Glen



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