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NEGRILLIERS SHUN 'NEW NEGRIL'



Buju Diaspora

Jessie Ripoll
drum donation



Negrilliers view ‘New Negril’ master plan with high suspicion

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

SOME STAKEHOLDERS in Negril are viewing the New Negril Master Plan, the preparation of which is being undertaken by the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), with high suspicion.

The stakeholders were vociferous in voicing their concerns during a presentation by senior physical planner at NEPA, Isau Bailey, at a meeting of the Negril Chamber of Commerce last Tuesday in that resort town.

According to Bailey, the New Negril boundary will begin at the Hanover/Westmoreland border and extend more than 30 kilometres along the entire coastline, to the community of Esher in Hanover, and will allow for the establishment of high-rise hotels of unlimited heights within that space.

But one returning resident



Daniel Grizzle

who was present at the meeting, expressed concern that the development plan emerged

virtually ‘out of the blue’. He said there appears to be undue haste in getting the ‘master plan’



completed. He also took issue with the continued use of the name ‘New Negril’ in reference to the proposed plan.

He sees this as a ploy by what he described as ‘forces’, to circumvent the long-overdue restoration of the resort town by ‘writing off

the original Negril’ because the State is not committed to making the necessary expenditure and have resorted to exploiting Hanover’s largely pristine, virgin coastline, which will allow the original town to “die a slow death”.

“What is driving the ministry



and the Cabinet to do this now? Who are the interests behind this new plan?" he questioned. "My perception of all this is that there is a body of people trying to not repair the Seven Mile Beach, but want to exploit another section and piggyback off the name Negril.

"And when the town (centre) of Negril is not totally considered as a core part of the discussion, it sends a very strong message. I am not saying you are intellectually dishonest, but the thinking is intellectually dishonest and if we are going to level on the table, there are more forces driving these things than we as locals are being exposed to ... It is not a matter we should take lightly," the returning resident told the NEPA representatives.

He said that with all the resources being poured into the New Negril plans, it "could run old Negril to the ground through top-end marketing.

"I invested in Little Bay Country Club and would not want to see the investment run down and they buy us out for little and nothing. These people want to come and put high-density resorts and it's all about revenue generation. And unlike we who see Negril intimately as a place our foreparents preserved [to allow for] four storeys, people will come and abuse our environment for the sake of the capital," he contended.

"They have no nexus; they have no relationship; they have no attachment. They just see us as a country that they can come exploit. We have white beach, so they see us as money machine," he argued.

Hotelier and immediate past president of the Negril Chamber of



Commerce, Daniel Grizzle, again bemoaned the present and previous political administration's reticence in overhauling the Negril town centre. He said that NEPA and the prime minister will be written to express the organisation's concerns regarding the use of the name Negril and recommendations for physical and intelligent development of the area.

"I think, which I have been saying all the while, they don't mind we fall into slum, disrepair, so some big company can come in

and say: 'Oh, they are all struggling. I will buy all of you out for little or nothing.' It is something they have done in other developed countries; they 'slummify' an area and then the developers pick it up cheaply," he said.

"And, I think it's not an accident, I think it is a planned thing to let the town centre be a slum. We lack water; we lack proper policing; we lack everything. So to devalue our property so they can buy it cheaply. You have got to have the feeling that our Government is part of the

plan. And this has nothing to do with this Government or the other. Both governments have treated us with the same disregard and don't think of us as a potential big money earner or an area where we are going to be prosperous," he said.

Also voicing his objection to the New Negril agenda was hotelier Dalton Hill, who called for a letter of objection to be sent to the relevant government ministers behind the New Negril concept, demanding the rehabilitation and establishment of a proper town

centre as well as aborting the use of the name 'New Negril'.

"I am a born and grow Negril person. A no now we deh hold on pon dis name; and now they want to take it away from us. We have no post office; we have no school. We have nothing. Of the millions that are coming out of this town; nothing we no have. With all of what's happening here, the people of Negril have been left out totally," he said.

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Keep building height law – Issa

KEEP BUILDING-HEIGHT law or don't use the name 'New Negril', resort stakeholders declare.

Operator of Couples Resorts Lee Issa says that he is of the view that whatever building ordinance currently exists within the resort town of Negril, it ought to apply to the proposed New Negril.

"If you are going to use the Negril name, I think you are going to have to respect the origins of Negril and how it should be built – low density, low rise. If the new ordinance is four storeys for the whole Negril, it should be four storeys for the New Negril. So if you are going to use the Negril name, we don't want people saying, 'Oh, you look like Cancun. How they can call this Negril'?" Issa told officials of the National Environment and Planning Agency last Tuesday during a meeting of the Negril Chamber of Commerce.

"So I think they need to be consistent. And the image of Negril, which has been made so popular over the years, is maintained and continues to flourish. If they are going to go 10, 12 storeys on the Hanover side, then they cannot call it Negril. They should call it something else," Issa added, in making his comments following an address by NEPA's senior physical planner, Isau Bailey at the meeting.

The NEPA official was also counteracted by Issa when he said that there was insufficient land space within the proposed New Negril area, in Hanover, and this would prevent hoteliers from "spreading out laterally."

"That is not true," Issa said. "The two properties that were sold recently in the Green Island area are quite large. So whoever the developer is, he could be prudent and smart and do a spread-out type of development than high rise because people are leaving big cities. They don't want to come to another resort, where you have high rises.

"My advice is if they want to invest their money wisely, do it, spread out. Don't go higher than four storeys and it will be much more feasible than high-rise

buildings. We don't have any shortage of land in Hanover. I know that much," the hotelier added.

Former Chairman of the Negril Green Island Local Planning Authority Cliff Reynolds, who was in attendance at the meeting, also objected to the plans to discontinue using the same four-storey height limit when the New Negril is officially established, contending that despite the height limit and other measures being put in place when Negril was just being developed as a tourist destination, the environment has still undergone serious decay.

"For the record, I would like to make my objection to the word 'unlimited'. I am a hundred per cent sure there are better choices of words that can be used. And I am convinced that the use of the word 'unlimited' was used deliberately. I feel embarrassed listening when I heard the word unlimited," Reynolds declared.

"I am thinking that our forefathers had a limit on buildings in Negril to preserve the aesthetics of Negril. But we now, in 2019, are opting to convince our local persons, now, to support unlimited buildings. This term 'Old Negril' and 'New Negril', I object to it. If you are going to leave it open to extended heights, I will object to using the name 'Negril, attached to that name," he said.

Hotelier Michael Russell, of White Sands resort, concretised the concerns, stating that he was petrified that the new development plans, would convert Negril into another 'Downtown Ocho Rios' with an excess number of mass concrete structures.

"When I get leery is when I hear 'modelling Nassau, modelling South Beach and large buildings'. I am very concerned that Cabinet is going to sanitise our product and it is only going to be one product. In all your scientific looks, you should look at what makes Negril unique and then go from there," he said.

NEPA outlines Cabinet's 'New Negril' Agenda

SENIOR PHYSICAL Planner at the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) Isau Bailey was at pains to convince Negril stakeholders that the name 'New Negril' was not cast in stone during a meeting at the Negril Chamber of Commerce last Tuesday.

Bailey, who came under heavy criticism, said that the name was only being brought up because of stipulations in the Cabinet document for the New Negril Master Plan.

Addressing stakeholders in the resort town, Bailey admitted that 'the name' had always come up as an issue, and so his team would be making notes and seeking to make representation to the requisite ministry regarding the issues so that they could be rectified, but noted that the name would continue to cause some amount of controversy.

"The Cabinet has mandated the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation and NEPA to make the creation of a new development area called 'New Negril', a priority with unlimited building heights, and authorised the preparation of a master plan for the area," Bailey said.

"The name New Negril is what we are using because that was what was in the Cabinet submission. I don't think it is the intention that the place will be

called 'New Negril'. I am not sure, but it is something that we are hoping to have consultations with stakeholders on and with the Cabinet in this regard. But I know the name has been causing a tiff, but I think it has served its purpose in terms of grabbing everybody's attention and bringing persons to the fore," Bailey said.

The planner said that the project would be undertaken by NEPA in collaboration with the Negril Green Island Planning Authority as well as the Hanover and Westmoreland Municipal Corporations.

UNLIMITED HEIGHTS

According to Bailey, the New Negril boundary will begin at the Hanover-Westmoreland border and extend eastwards to the community of Esher in Hanover. It will allow for the establishment of high-rise hotels of unlimited heights within that space.

Bailey told the meeting that the master plan is a conceptual layout that will guide future growth within the area, which has a population of just under 11,000. It is to feature, among other things, land use and sector plans, solid-waste management, a city-management plan, a feasibility plan, an updated area profile analysis, a long-term physical-development plan; social cultural development plans, as well as economic and financial

development plans in accordance with Cabinet directives.

He said that the Cabinet had opted to pursue this area of Hanover as there were fewer constraints, more greenfield sites, and more land that would accommodate high-rise buildings, similar to resort models in countries north of Jamaica.

"When the Cabinet mandated us to prepare a master plan, I know they would have been looking at some resort models. A couple that comes to mind was Miami, South Beach, and Nassau, Bahamas. So we are looking at those resort models and trying to position the country in attracting those tourists that would otherwise have been going to those destinations, and I think they, in their thinking, were probably thinking that Negril would be the best place to do such a venture," he explained.

"They were looking at some of the constraints that were existing in Negril. A portion of the Old Negril is covered by the Great Morass and it backs on to the hills by west end. They were thinking that this area is too constrained by these natural features to have any significant development in terms of what they are proposing to do to tap into the tourist markets persons who would be going to destinations such as Nassau, Bahamas, South Beach etc," he said.

Improved tourism for rural parishes

Gareth Davis Sr
Hospitality Jamaica Writer

WITH TWO of the three aerodromes islandwide, Ken Jones and the Negril domestic airport, racking up huge losses annually, a senior tourism strategist is forecasting new fortunes for Portland and St Mary for 2019 and beyond.

Chief communications strategist and adviser in the Ministry of Tourism, Delano Seiveright, has hinted that the economic and tourism fortunes of St Mary and the neighbouring parish of Portland have become inextricably linked to the Ian Fleming International Airport in Boscobel, located in the north-eastern parish of St Mary.

In an exclusive interview with **The Gleaner**, Seiveright said the airport, formerly known as Boscobel Aerodrome, while undergoing expansion work to accommodate more visitors, will undoubtedly be “what the doctor ordered” as it relates to enhancing the growing popularity of the north-eastern region of the island.

“Air connectivity has been described as one of the main recipes for success in the tourism business,” commented Seiveright.

“As Minister Edmund Bartlett will gleefully tell you, the people who come to our beautiful island did not swim to get here, which simply means we have to create the infrastructure that will allow for air connectivity to happen. Once we get that rolling here at Ian Fleming, then there is no stopping this side of the island.”

Seiveright added that some

visitors, particularly those who come in on long flights, find it difficult to drive to faraway places like St Mary and Portland, preferring to stay at hotels within close proximity to the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay, St James.

“Tourists need time to allow their bodies to recuperate, so they will opt to stay at hotels that will give them that opportunity,” he noted.

Seiveright said the Ian Fleming expansion will now open up new opportunities for bigger aircraft to come in and “with even more people”.

“The big planes, the super jets that fly into the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay and also the Norman Manly International in Kingston, cannot fly into Ian Fleming,” Seiveright pointed out.

“The Lear jets and the ATR types are, however, good fits that can easily be accommodated and which we want to consistently get in here.”

He argued that few places are more beautiful or have more attractions than the north-eastern region, adding that this will also open up opportunities for the villas and small hotel owners and operators in St Ann, St Mary and Portland.

“They can now use the connectivity access as their major selling point, as part of their marketing strategy. Tourists (foreigners) can, or, I should say, be able to fly directly into the airport, after which the drive to wherever they want to go is not that long,” he added.

“The Ian Fleming Airport,



Senior communications strategist in the Ministry of Tourism, Delano Seiveright (centre), sharing a light moment with the director of international division at H10 Hotels, Antonio Hernandez (left) and project Manager for the H10 Hotels Chain, Gustavo Arroyo.

following expansion work, will give both St Mary and Portland a major economic boost and will also enhance or improve the fortunes of tourism operators along the beautiful corridors here in Boscobel and also Tower Isle, St Mary.”

Seiveright, in the meantime, said

he has been having “a heavy load” of meetings and consultations with tourism stakeholders right across Jamaica, with the aim being to build on the gains and momentum of the past two years.

“A few weeks ago, we were in Falmouth breaking ground for a new

hotel, and shortly after that in Negril. We will be in the north-east region very soon to have dialogue on the way forward,” Seiveright concluded.

The Ian Fleming Airport had a total of 2,059 passengers and 2,338 aircraft movements during 2015 and 2016.

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BUJU DIASPORA

Janet Silvera

Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator

“I ACTUALLY felt like a real Jamaican last weekend,” says Tracey Leemingvick, a Jamaican who visits the island every three months, on average, but stays in the resort towns or New Kingston.

Leemingvick says for the first time, she walked the streets of downtown Kingston and the brawta she earned equates to, “we were not harassed. I have always been told that we could never do this (walk downtown Kingston). Everything must be all-inclusive”.

Like the hundreds of Jamaicans living in the diaspora who flew into the island last weekend in support of Buju Banton’s ‘Long Walk To



Two patrons celebrating their ‘Jamaican-ness’.



Beres Hammond (left) and Buju Banton. PHOTOS BY ASHLEY ANGUIN

Freedom’, the hygienist in the US Army, who was also experiencing Hellshire Beach for the first time, credited the concert for instilling a form of unity that can be reinforced among the people.

“Music is universal, and if it took one artiste to bring so many people

together in one stadium, it can be done on another scale,” she urged, adding that her trip to Jamaica was worth every penny spent.

And she was only one of eight persons in her office who flew into the island for the event. They were ‘victims’ of the ticket sales website



Supreme Ventures’ Gail Abrahams (left) and Director of Public Prosecutions Paula Llewellyn. PHOTO BY JANET SILVERA

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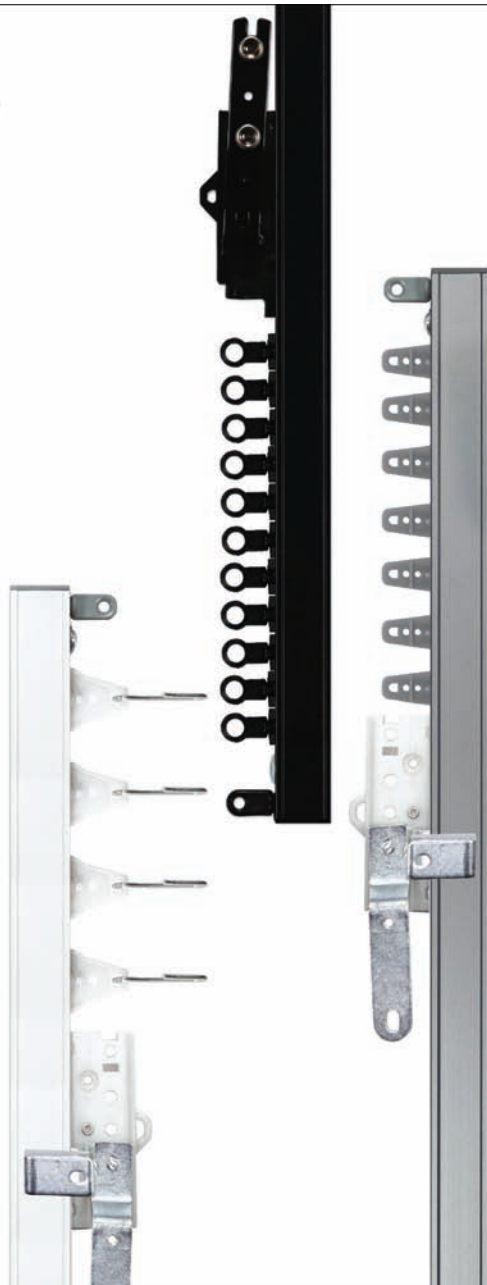
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Hamptonians in the house! Some of them flew in from far to share the 'Long Walk To Freedom' together. PHOTOS BY ASHLEY ANGUIN



Jamaican-Canadian Delrose Miller-Brown showing off her Buju Banton outfit.



Chairman of the St Ann Municipal Corporation, Councillor Michael Belnavis and his wife Dianne.



Tourism Linkages Network coordinator Carolyn Riley, easy like Sunday morning at the Buju Banton concert. PHOTO BY JANET SILVERA

crash, but say they wouldn't change a thing.

"When the website crashed, we were told to go ahead and purchase, they would send us a link to print and we did exactly that, trusting every word, because this reunion was not going to miss us."

The financial benefits derived from the event are evidenced by the buzz that was noticeable in the restaurants, hotels, car rental agencies, homesharing businesses and the taxi operations; even the Jamaican theatre received some of the spin-off.

Hospitality Jamaica interviewed June Brown-Davis, an occupational therapist from Maryland in the USA, and her husband Al, who has been a Buju Banton fan since age 15. On Sunday night, along with a party of nine others, they had

just left the Centre Stage Theatre, having watched **Romi and Julie**, a play they would not have known of had it not been for Buju's concert.

The couple booked their airline tickets to Jamaica on the day the concert date was announced.

"From he came out of jail we were saying that if he was having a concert we would be in attendance. He is my all-time favourite and having followed his trajectory, even when Jay-Z visited him in jail, I had to be here," said Brown-Davis.

She said she cried when Buju Banton was released from prison.

Brown-Davis and her husband made their trip here a mini vacation, staying at RIU Reggae in Montego Bay for three days, then moving on to Kingston.

They did Sunday brunch at Terra Nova, partied at Friends on the Deck on Friday, and were checking out the Dub Club on Sunday night after the play at Centre Stage.

Her friend, Joy Robinson, an attorney-at-law who also resides in Maryland, had booked a viewing with a real estate agent on Monday, with the aim of buying an apartment in Kingston.

"Had it not been for Buju, I don't think I would be considering an investment in the capital city," Robinson told **Hospitality Jamaica**.

Spending a week after the show in Jamaica, this Saturday she will be trekking to St Mary for Lanville Sankey's annual birthday bash in Robin's Bay, she says.

For 34-year-old, South Florida

resident Doran Francis, a graphic designer and recording artiste, the moment he heard Buju had been released and the concert date announced, he booked his ticket.

"I stayed up until 1 a.m. in order to get tickets to the show," he revealed, having experienced the website crash as well.

Francis bar-hopped, ate at Tracks and Records and organised a photo shoot in downtown Kingston and Port Royal for his latest single, **Lead the Way**.

"We made sure to eat some Tastee patties and we did KFC, because although it is in the States, it is not the same," said Francis, who was probably the 1,000th person to say the Long Walk To Freedom concert was epic.

What was glaringly evident was that Buju's return allowed a type of reunion that Jamaicans living in the diaspora were hungry for.

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Heaven's Texaco's Claudine Heaven enjoying every minute of the music.



Seventy-one-year-old Basil Burke waved his Jamaican flag proudly after successfully completing the marathon.



5k Male winner Dwayne Graham collecting his prize from the ladies of The Courtleigh Hotel Group, Celia Steele and Jodi Edwards-Williams.



The Strawberry Hillbillies from the Strawberry Hill Hotel were in a good mood to start their 5k run. From left: Front Desk Agent, Shenik Francis; General Manager, Diana Marley, Events Manager, Nashera James; and Accounts Representative, Denise Mgowan.

Kingston City Marathon draws DIVERSE CROWDS

A WIDE cross section of participants came from countries such as Japan, Australia, Finland, Colombia, Spain, Ireland, Italy, Puerto Rico, Cayman, and El Salvador for the first year of the Kingston City Marathon (formerly Kingston City Run and Half-Marathon).

Held on the streets of Kingston on Sunday morning, right after the Buju Banton Long Walk to Freedom concert, the event attracted thousands, with just over 50 persons participating in the Marathon.

“We consider this a great effort for a first time and are happy to have a home-based male win one category. The other first-place winner, a female, is from Finland,” stated the organisers, who have been staging the road race for the past seven years.

Ideally, the organisers had hoped for an incident-free and satisfying event, and when the last runners converged on the Emancipation Park on Sunday, they were satisfied.

“That was definitely achieved and the planning team is proud that the first-ever staging of a full marathon went seamlessly.”

The partnership, they remarked, with participants, sponsors, volunteers, officials, and spectators was a tremendous success.



First-ever marathon winner in the male category: Oshane Archibald from Jamaica with a time of 2:52:42.



The children thrilled the audience as they showed off their dancing skills to ‘Fling yuh shoulda’.



The Courtleigh Hotel Group team members were excited to support a great cause.



Marathon winner Mari Kauri was delighted as she collected her prize from Norman Manley International Airport Senior Director of Commercial Development and Planning Alfred McDonald and the Jamaica Tourist Board's Maureen Smith.



Wheelchair winner Vinette Green (left) celebrated with her daughter and grandson after her victory.



Minister of Tourism, Hon Edmund Bartlett (sixth from right) paused for a moment with the finalists who will vie for the coveted award of national champions in the Tourism Service Excellence Awards on March 30. Standing to the right of Bartlett, from left: Chairman of the TSEA Programme, Dr Carole Guntley, Executive Director of Jamaica Vacations, Joy Roberts, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Jennifer Griffiths, Dr Carey Wallace, Executive Director of the Tourism Enhancement Fund and Executive Director of the Tourism Product Development Company, Dr Andrew Spencer. The occasion was the official announcement of the TSEA finalists which was held at the Spanish Court hotel on March 12.

Bartlett lauds Tourism Service Excellence finalists

T OURISM MINISTER Edmund Bartlett has lauded the contribution of the finalists who will vie for the coveted award of national champions in the Tourism Service Excellence Awards (TSEA) on March 30.

The TSEA, which is in its sixth staging, was created by the Ministry of Tourism and is implemented annually by the Tourism Product Development Company Limited. The awards seek to recognise and reward tourism entities and individuals that have consistently provided exemplary service in the tourism industry.

“Sixty per cent of the value of the visitor experience is service, and it is because of your service to the sector that we were able to, last year, break another record in terms of arrivals and earnings by welcoming about 4.32 million visitors and securing approximately US\$3.3 billion.

“So service for us is not a reference, but service is what we do, and in tourism, he who does it the best gets the most,” said Bartlett.

Nineteen finalists are set to contend for the award of national champions in the TSEA come March 30. The finalists, 10 of whom represent organisations and nine, the individual category, were selected from the six resort areas of Jamaica. One hundred and seven nominations were received this year from the major subsectors of the tourism industry, from which 50 semi-finalists were shortlisted and further narrowed to decide the final 19 contenders for the major awards and prizes.

Bartlett added: “Our phenomenal arrivals and earnings last year helped us to employ 120,000 people

directly and another 250,000 indirectly. This enabled us to contribute close to J\$450 billion to the GDP. In fact, 22 per cent of the earnings or the revenue that went into GDP came from tourism.

“We could not have done it without the exceptional service of our tourism workers, and these 19 finalists represent workers who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to ensure our visitors experience service beyond expectation.”

Bartlett also underscored the importance of rewarding tourism entities and individuals for their contribution to the tourism sector and the impact they continue to have on visitors to the island, which has resulted in an impressive 42 per cent in repeat business – this represents the highest percentage in the region.

He recognised as well the importance of the service excellence awards programme, which acknowledges, celebrates and showcases service.

The finalists for the 2018 TSEA are Beaches Negril, The Tryall Golf & Country Club, Ultimate Freedom Bed & Breakfast, The Joy Spence Appleton Estate Rum Experience, Half Moon Hotel, Deja Resort, Miss T’s Kitchen, Jamaica Inn, VIP Attractions, and El Sol Vida from the organisation category. From the individual category and Shenade Quarrie of Sandals Negril, Yanike Brown of Beaches Negril, Coleen Powell-Gordon of Jakes Treasure Beach, Kingsley George Blake of Round Hill Hotel, Conroy Thompson of Half Moon Hotel, Paul Norman of Dolphin Cove Jamaica, Nardia Angus of Golden Eye, Duane Phillips of Knutsford Court Hotel, and Caroline Bonner of VIP attractions.

JTB wins three Recommend Readers' Choice Awards

THE JAMAICA Tourist Board are the proud recipients of three Recommend Readers' Choice Awards after copping the Gold Award for Best Selling Destination in the Caribbean & Bermuda; Gold Award for Best Travel Agent Support – International Destination; and Silver Award for Best International Wedding/Honeymoon Destination.

Laurel Herman, president and editorial director at Worth International Media Group, presented the awards which recognise top destinations, tour operators, resort/hotel chains, cruise lines, car rentals, airlines and other travel suppliers chosen by readers of **Recommend Magazine**.

"We are thrilled to be recognised by **Recommend** readers for the 22nd Annual Readers' Choice Awards," said Donnie Dawson. "The awards embody the efforts of the Jamaica Tourist Board and reaffirm our commitment to travel agents. Our visitors from around the globe can expect only the very best service and experience when visiting Jamaica."



From left: Laurel Herman, President and Editorial Director at Worth

'Join Me In Jamaica' campaign cops three awards at American Advertising Awards

JAMAICA TOURIST Board's (JTB) 'Join Me in Jamaica' digital campaign copped three awards at the 54th Annual Nashville American Advertising 'Addy' Awards earlier this month. The awards included: Silver Addy – Online/Interactive Campaign; Silver Addy – Webisode Series; and Silver Addy – Online/Interactive Campaign – Join Me In Jamaica Sweepstakes.

The JTB's Join Me In Jamaica digital video campaign was launched in the summer of 2018 to connect travellers to the people of Jamaica and showcase the authentic experiences the island offers. The campaign presents a series of 90-second videos featuring local celebrities and friends of Jamaica sharing unique stories about their passion, love of the island, and what makes



it a great place to visit. Each video was created using the unscripted responses as narrative and accompanied by the spectacular visuals related to their natural surroundings. A new video was launched weekly during the campaign.

To further promote the authentic experiences in Jamaica, the JTB invited consumers to explore the sights, sounds and flavours of the beautiful island through a one-month-long promotion, where travellers could enter to win a trip to Jamaica and experience a specially curated Join Me In Jamaica vacation experience.

The American Advertising Awards is the advertising industry's largest competition, with the Nashville American Advertising Awards ranking as one of the top local competitions that recognises Nashville's creative talent. DVL Seigenthaler/FINN Partners, the Nashville-based hub for FINN Partners, accepted the awards for their creative work on the Join Me In Jamaica campaign.

MoBay mayor welcomes Grand-A-View to city's investment landscape

MONTEGO BAY'S Mayor, Councillor Homer Davis, has described the opening of the Grand-A-View Restaurant and Event Place as the start of something new for Queen's Drive, popularly known as Top Road.

Addressing guests during the opening ceremony, held on Saturday, March 9, Davis stated that Grand-A-View brought to the fore another great venue option for event promoters.

"This indoor/outdoor spacious facility has a grand view of the city and it is in reach of everyone," said the mayor, adding that for months passers-by were drawn to the architecture of the building, many convinced it was a Chinese restaurant, among others.

In congratulating the owner of the facility, entrepreneur Carl Erskine and his wife medical doctor Barbara, for their multimillion-dollar investment, Davis said Montego Bay, as a city, is in the perfect position to gain significantly from the entertainment industry, which contributed well over \$71 billion to the Jamaican economy between 2012 and 2016.

"I openly laud Erskine, a native Montegonian, and his wife for investing in their city and making a solid contribution to the growth of this resort town."

He pointed out that not only was the tourism capital seeing great financial benefits from the industry, but tourism had created sustainable jobs thousands of Jamaicans.

He added that Grand-A-View provides a wonderful family entertainment space to Montego Bay, which complements major developments that have been taking place along Jimmy Cliff Boulevard, formerly Gloucester Avenue or 'Bottom Road'.

"Montego Bay remains the fastest developing city in the Caribbean and with major developments set to come on stream in very short order, the addition of this facility to our township have breathed life into the 'Top Road', complementing what is already here."

He committed that the St James Municipal Corporation would continue to undertake projects which are aimed at the ongoing development of the city of Montego Bay and the parish of St James.



From left: Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett, Mayor of Montego Bay Homer Davis and Dr Karl Blythe, a former government minister.



Journalist Clinton Pickering wears matching colours with his date Renee McHayle at the official opening of the Grand-A-View.



Operators of Grand-A-View Restaurant and Event Place, Carl Erskine (right) and his wife Dr Barbara Erskine, share lens time with his brother George Erskine at the grand opening of their new facility on Queens Drive in Montego Bay last Saturday night.

Where have all the ‘rum heads’ gone?

I’M NOT a ‘rum head’. I have never been, and will never be. For, while my palate has a love affair with rum, my head does not. Rum makes it spin, and puts it into another space and time, and I refuse to be in another space and time.

I must be aware of where I am, whom I am with, where I am going, and what I am saying. And in these days of smartphone cameras and social media, and cold, uncaring people who revel in your distress and death, opting to share your ordeal for the world to see, rather than to keep it down and help you out, I cannot afford to make the ‘whites’ send my head to

the other side.

Yet, I love the taste of rum, especially when it is infused with coconut. The pleasure it gives is indescribable. My palate can’t get enough of it, and it certainly will not. It is my brain over my palate.

My brain led me to the first-ever Jamaica Rum Festival, recently held at Hope Gardens, in St Andrew. And thousands of rum hopefuls turned up in the gardens to imbibe all they could. It was going to be a dizzying weekend. My main intention was to find stories, to cover the event.

Well, I was particularly looking out for engaging eventualities, outlandish bar talks, people telling lies and revealing their deep-rooted secrets under the influence of the spirits. Yet, there was not much or any of these. I wondered about what was going on with the patrons. Everybody was just nice and decent, well-behaved, and ‘stoosh’; not one was ‘stocious’.

Where were the real rum heads, the ones you can smell from afar, the ones with the unkempt appearance, and the ones with the slurred and incomprehensible speech? I guess they think the festival was too posh for them to patronise it. So, they stayed out of context. Or was it that people were drinking responsibly? Not everybody at all.

For, on the first day, after I have given up on finding any possible motivation for a story, with my feet and new sandals covered with brown dust, I came across a white man stumbling from one of the main sponsor’s booth. He had absolutely no idea where he was going. I stood and gaped. There goes a stocious one. He was really gone!

He turned the corner towards some patrons who were chatting in a small group. He groped on to an empty rum barrel that was near the patrons. The barrel shifted. As he was about to keel over with the barrel, two men grabbed him and propped him up.

Then I saw a white woman



Stylised ceramic rum glasses from Dana Baugh of BAUGHaus Design Studio.



Dajorn Commock of J. Wray and Nephew Academy showing a patron how the cocktail shaking is done.



The legendary master blender Joy Spence of Appleton Estate Jamaica Rums telling patrons what is ‘Inside the Bottle’.

rushing towards him. She took his hand, and the 'little baby' was led away from what could have possibly been a very unpleasant, but memorable scene. Picture a drunken man on his back under a rum barrel.

I said to myself, "You see why yuh nuh drink in public." And I smiled.

However, for the sake of my palate, to appease it somewhat, I partook of the complimentary shots and the samples in the seminars that were held by J. Wray and Nephew, global rum ambassador Ian Burrell, senior blender David Morrison, and master blender Joy Spence. I particularly enjoyed those sessions, especially Morrison's, for 'food' and 'dessert' were also served.

And with all the rum around, I walked out of Hope Gardens on day one with a big bottle of Leopold Maye's cane juice. It was the first thing I bought. He kept it in his deep freezer all day. When I reached home, there was no cane juice. I returned to find it frozen. By then the day was winding down, and I was proud. I did not hit the ground. Brain over palate.



There could never be a rum fest without dominoes.



Rum 'blue draws' anyone?



The 'Road Hogs', Anthony Taylor and Anthony Dyke, were there with mouthwatering jerked meat to absorb the rum.



Students at Jessie Ripoll Primary School in Kingston playing the drums that were donated to the school by American vocalist Marissa Lolegeais.

Jessie Ripoll drum donation

Paul A Williams

Hospitality Jamaica Writer

FROM SATURDAY, February 2, to Sunday, February 10, a group of reggae enthusiasts from the USA visited Jamaica on a mission called 'Inside Reggae Music – The Ultimate Journey into a Jamaican Cultural-Musical Immersion'.

Hospitality Jamaica published that story in our February 20 issue

One of the places the group visited was Jessie Ripoll Primary School in Kingston. There, the group had a jam session with the music students. And among the participants was vocalist Marissa Lolegeais. She was so impressed with the music programme at Jessie Ripoll that she was moved to contribute to it.

Through Maroghini, a Jamaican master drummer, who also helped to organise the February tour, Lolegeais acquired five drums which she donated to the school. The drums were handed over to the music department during 'Jamaica Day' on February 22 in the presence of its vice-principal and music director.

Anthony Postman, one of the participants on the tour, who was still in Jamaica



Musician Anthony Postman reads a message from American vocalist Marissa Lolegeais, who recently donated five drums to Jessie Ripoll Primary School in Kingston, while acting vice-principal Raphael Davis (gold shirt), students and master drummer Maroghini (right) look on. **PHOTOS BY AFREE KAN**

on Jamaica Day, made the presentation on behalf of Lolegeais. He read Lolegeais' message, which says, "It was wonderful to meet you and share music. I enjoyed it so much that I wanted to donate some drums to your music programme. I hope that you will not only enjoy jamming on these drums, but respect them, and unlock the very special magic they have within them. Enjoy."

In responding to the gesture on behalf of the entire Jessie Ripoll family, acting vice-principal Raphael Davis expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the gifts, likewise the musical director at Jessie Ripoll, Wayne Davis, who said, "With these drums we will beat our own rhythms, thanks very much."

Prior to the donation, the musical director said, the school, which is very popular in the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission annual festival of arts, had only two drums. One was "out of commission" and the other "needed tuning". Now, Raphael Davis said, "These drums will be the basis for the formation of a drum corps."

The students present could hardly wait to beat their own rhythms. Accompanied by other instrumentalists, the drummers gave a splendid foretaste of what is to be expected when their drum corps is formed.



Master drummer Maroghini talks to America vocalist Marissa Lolegeais about the Maroon bench drum while she was on a tour of the Charles Town Maroon village in Portland earlier this year.



Backrow, from left: acting vice-principal Raphael Davis, musician Anthony Postman, master drummer Maroghini, musical director Wayne Davis and some of the music students at Jessie Ripoll Primary School in Kingston posing with drums that were donated to the school by American vocalist Marissa Lolegeais.

Do agritourism in a structured way – Grizzle

THE RECENT announcement by Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett, suggesting backyard farmers as suppliers to hotels, has been met with ambivalence by Negril-based hotelier and farmer Daniel Grizzle.

Two Saturdays ago, Bartlett announced in Montego Bay, that the Tourism Linkages Network of the Ministry of Tourism had commenced an initiative involving subsistence farmers to boost agritourism.

At the time, the minister said backyard farmers within the Lilliput community in St James, which is the site of the Iberostar and the soon-to-be-constructed Hard Rock Hotel, are

the first targets and that the initiative will also extend to other resort towns such as Negril and Ocho Rios.

But Grizzle, who is the immediate past president of the Negril Chamber of Commerce, said unless this was done in a structured way, it will only amount to what he described as temporary appeasement and not truly help to uplift and provide sustainable sources of income for those farmers, or encourage young people to become primary food producers.

“There is nothing better than to have our farming community supplying the food that our guests eat. But you don’t want to do it as

appeasement. I think most of the time when we do things for the poor, it is an appeasement of the poor,” Grizzle stated.

“Young people want to earn good money. They want to have their little motor cars; they want to have their nice houses. With a little backyard farming, you are making people feel good but you are not really moving them out of poverty. Agriculture is key for tourism; tourism is good for agriculture, but it must be done in a proper, professional way,” he added.

Over the past year, Agriculture Minister Audley Shaw has

complained bitterly that the majority of the island’s food imports are directed to the hotel sector and that most of the food served by hotels “comes into the island on the same planes that fly in the tourists”. Shaw has also declared that the problem will have to be ‘addressed frontally’.

Grizzle has recommended that branches of the Agricultural Marketing Corporation’s (AMC) be resurrected across the island to market farmers’ produce to buyers across the island, including hotels.

“We need structure to sell these goods. A farmer is not a salesman, a farmer does not have time to go to a

hotel to sell, and when a hotel manager has a thousand people to tend to, do you think he has time to go deal with a guy with 200 pounds? You have to have a system. So the minister is right in terms of agriculture, (but) the issue is how you do it,” Grizzle said.

He argued that Jamaica is renowned for throwing away things before even realising its value. The AMC Market was badly managed, he noted.

“As a farmer you would take your goods there and they distribute it. It was a brilliant idea; we need to go back to it. You knew the price you were getting; the price was low but you sell large volumes, so you didn’t have to worry about sale; you worry about production,” he explained.



IN THE DNA make-up of possibly every Jamaican, there is a similar characteristic – creativity.

Jamaicans are known to make the best of every situation, ‘tun wi han mek fashion’; they work relentlessly to ensure their skills and talents survive, often doing so with their hearts and soul.

In Ensom Acres, a community on the outskirts of Spanish Town, you will find Dr Verona Barnes, an art teacher and craft producer who has dedicated her time and life to the arts. Her experience in the classroom spans over 45 years, serving in various capacities such as art teacher and examiner for visual arts.

Barnes is the perfect example of the concept, ‘if you do what you love, then it doesn’t feel like working’, since she has managed to enjoy the art and craft world through teaching.

“Although my art-making activities are done on a part-time basis, I enjoy helping my students to engage in the creative process. It helps them to develop and enhance their creative, innovative and imaginative geniuses. This provides a deep sense of gratification for me,” she says.

Like most artists, her blood is rich with imaginative energy flowing through it, and it would seem as if her skills were realised from the moment she left her mother’s womb.

Barnes was a young girl when she started in fashion, thanks to her



Verona Barnes

mother who was a seamstress. She continued to hone her skills while attending St Andrew Technical High School, where she learnt more about clothing and textile, and got the chance to practise putting her thoughts on fabric.

Barnes continued on to university, where her skills in textile design and fibre were unearthed while enrolled at the Jamaica School of Art, now the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts. She later pursued a Master of Arts in Teaching at the Maryland Institute College of Art, which is when she really got the chance to improve her textile and fibre arts skills.

She now lives a life that is consumed and fuelled by art, and states that she is mostly inspired by Jamaica’s local flora and fauna.

“The Jamaican flora and fauna is useful for the surface design process, and I am also drawn to African textiles, especially works



Verona Barnes work – Barnes’ machine-embroidery centrepiece, using rayon thread on polished cotton fabric.

done employing the dye-resist methods, such as tie and dye and batik. Some artists I look up to are Faith Ringgold, Elisabeth Scott, Aminah Robinson and our own Jamaican batik artist Dawn Scott.”

This lover of art and craft even goes to the extent of purchasing plants, particularly orchids, due to their colour longevity, to fully immerse herself in the natural art. To get her creative juices flowing, Barnes visits and revisits the flowers to admire the intricacy of the petals and the vibrancy of the colours. She then transfers the inspiration received from flowers on to fabric; her secret, she says, to create top-notch items is to work at night-time when there is peace and quiet, and little possibility of interference.

To create her breathtaking pieces, Barnes has a preference for certain types of fabric. She employs the use of yarn, silk, wool and natural fibres to create her beautiful work. But this is not without challenges as the material can be hard to source, and she states that certain media, such as fibre arts, require much dexterity and the techniques can be time-consuming.

Notwithstanding, Barnes has kept the faith, and feels her creative skills heightened when she visits galleries and museums to view exhibitions.

Although craft has its down side,



Screen Printing done on linen fabric.

Barnes remains true to her work and displays an admirable love for the arts.

“Textile has an impermanent nature, which I love. Also, the malleable characteristic of the fibres and fabrics with which I work, lend themselves to the artists to be able to explore and experiment with a range of manipulative techniques.”

Barnes’ proudest moment that encouraged her to carry on was in 1999 when her work was displayed in the Young Generation Exhibition at the Mutual Life Gallery. The piece, titled ‘Everyone needs protection’, was a tie-dye map of Jamaica, embellished with miniature crochet hats. The piece was later bought to be given as a gift to people of Haiti.

Barnes’ biggest dream is not for herself but to witness the fruits of her labour. Whereby, the persons who are gifted with the art skills, or those who receive training in the workshops, courtesy of organisations such as the Tourism Product

Development Company Ltd, will have pride of place in the Jamaican art and craft industry; producing and selling art and craft products that are of the finest quality.

“This (art and craft) should bring about the ‘erasing’ of the labels that are now being seen; to make way for the signature brand/labels boasting ‘Made in Jamaica’. Art and craft has to do with human creativity. I am not referring to the cookie-cutter products, but those works that reflect imagination, innovation and dexterity. We, the creators, are actually exposing our inner being. Therefore, we would like for others to show an appreciation for what we create.”

This innovator and celebrator of fine craft reminds us, in the words of American football player and coach Vince Lombardi, that “every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it. Autograph your work with excellence”.