



THE CPAC INFORMER

Political Issues Impacting the
Caribbean American Diaspora

Volume 2 Issue 2 December 2015

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear C-PAC Members, Supporters and Friends;

This year, marks ten years of C-PAC's unbroken service to our Community. We have worked diligently in our quest to advance the political agenda and articulate the policy positions of the Caribbean-American community in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area. And, despite all the work that has been done, C-PAC remains an unfolding narrative. In the section marked, "*C-PAC: An Historical Snapshot*" of this newsletter you will get a sense of what has been accomplished over the past ten years. These milestones should remind us of the challenges before us and what is possible when we leverage our knowledge, our passion, and our purpose to work together. Conceived in a spirit of inclusiveness, developed through exigencies of the region in which we live; while fostering a sense of togetherness; C-PAC has, for the past decade, successfully positioned ourselves as the authentic, unifying, political voice of the Caribbean Diaspora in our region!!

We were given a solid foundation on which to continue building the organization. And this year, we worked on expanding our membership base and enhancing our communication medium by including social media; all while continuing to strengthen our policy positions. We have also continued to successfully maintain the organization's strong financial stability and integrity.

The challenges for our current membership are:

- i. How do we leverage the ingenuity, courage, and hard work of the past 10 years?
- ii. How do we marshal the resources necessary to achieve our defined outcomes? and;

- iii. How do we channel the successes of the past 10 years into a constructive plan, allowing maximal benefit, and ensuring the sustainability of the organization?

Well, whether we work on the political narrative as part of the ongoing advocacy for Caribbean-Americans; or, work to bring solutions to contemporary political problems; or, simply be part of the intellectually-stimulating political conversations of things Diaspora ... we need you!!

In the upcoming year as the political battle field heats up, we have planned several community forums to insure our political voices are heard. I urge you to help us market these events. Not only that; please also attend them and fully engage our politicians. Our voices count!! Simply put; noting about us.....without us!!

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C-PAC: An Historical Snapshot

THE FOUNDING OF C-PAC:

In 2005, while serving as Chair of the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Caribbean Community Affairs (the Commission), Chris Gardiner concluded that it was necessary for the Caribbean Community to have a political organization, which it controlled, to advance its political agenda in the Washington Metropolitan Area (the DMV). In June 2005, Denys Vaughn Cooke and Elizabeth Stanley, two other members of the Commission, joined him to organize and found the Caribbean American Political Action Committee (C-PAC).

In order to get C-PAC "off the ground," the organizers decided to seek out ninety-seven other individuals to become initial members of the organization. These individual, along with the three founders, would forever be known as the "*Founding Patrons*." The task of identifying and convincing the ninety-seven Patrons fell primarily to our current chair, Goulda Downer. She was responsible for "convincing" over sixty of her colleagues and friends to join us. The Founding Patrons hail from almost every country in the Caribbean, to include the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands. Their initial contributions ranged from \$25 to \$5,000. Without them, C-PAC – a truly Pan-Caribbean organization – would not exist.

C-PAC'S LEGAL STATUS AND MISSION

C-PAC is organized under the laws of the District of Columbia as a non-profit, Political Action Committee and is registered with the DC Board of Elections as such. C-PAC must file annual and periodic financial reports of contributions and expenditures with the Board. These reports are subject to audit by the Board at its discretion. Contributions are limited by law, and expenditures can only be made for political purposes.

C-PAC's mission is to "advance the political agenda of Caribbean-Americans residing in the Washington DC Metropolitan Area - Washington DC, Maryland and Northern Virginia ("DMV")." As one of the first Caribbean-American centered, membership-driven,

non-partisan political action committees in the country, C-PAC serves as a national model for laying aside class, origin, race, language, and other barriers and instead focus on the shared goal of a unified, engaged, and connected Caribbean Diaspora. Additionally, C-PAC seeks to foster greater relationships between the United States' Federal, State and local Governments and the nations of the Caribbean.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE

C-PAC has successfully served as the key political voice of the DMV's vibrant and growing Caribbean-American community for the past ten years. Many candidates for public office in the DMV actively seek our endorsement and financial support. As a non-partisan, locally-focused organization, C-PAC endorses candidates with shared economic, educational, social, and cultural policy priorities. The following are some of the candidates in the DMV that C-PAC has endorsed and financially supported over the past ten years:

- Adrian Fenty for DC Mayor
- Vincent Gray for DC City Council
- Jim Graham for DC City Council
- David Catania for DC City Council
- Robert Bobb for DC School Board President
- Jack Johnson for Prince George's County Executive
- Shirley Nathan-Pulliam for Prince George's County Delegate
- Vincent Gray for DC Mayor (2010)
- Muriel Bowser for DC Mayor (2014)
- Cleve Mesdor for DC Council
- Rushern Baker for Prince George's County Executive
- Aisha Braveboy for Prince George's County Delegate
- Ike Leggett for Montgomery County Executive
- Shirley Nathan-Pulliam for Baltimore County Delegate
- Brandon Todd for DC City Council

The maximum contribution was made to each endorsee.

During the past ten years C-PAC was extremely active supporting causes and establishing relationships that would enhance its political profile and thereby benefit the Caribbean American community in the DMV.

Other Activities – 2007 to 2010

- In 2007, C-PAC participated in the Mayor's march on Capitol Hill in support of DC Voting Rights. Members wore T-shirts and carried a banner that read: *Caribbean-American PAC Supports DC Voting Rights*;
- C-PAC wrote to the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM), proposing a working relationship between C-PAC and its member Countries;
- At the Caribbean Conference of Prime Ministers in June, 2007, C-PAC Chair, Chris Gardiner spoke about the regional importance of C-PAC and the significant role C-PAC plays in the political process in the DMV;
- During this period C-PAC twice wrote to Mayor Fenty requesting the creation of an Office of Caribbean Affairs. There was no response from the Mayor;
- In 2010 C-PAC held various Community Forums in the District of Columbia, Prince George's County and Montgomery County leading up to that year's elections. Except for Mayor Fenty, all of the major candidates for political office in each of the jurisdictions participated in the Forums;
- C-PAC participated with various organizations in a headline-making press conference announcing its endorsement of Vincent Gray for Mayor of the District of Columbia.

Other Activities – 2011 to 2012

In the run-up to the 2010 elections, candidate Vincent Gray committed to C-PAC that, if elected Mayor, he would (a) re-activate the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Caribbean Community Affairs which had been allowed to "sunset" under the previous Mayor, and (b) allow the Caribbean Carnival to be held in 2011 so that a study of its economic impact on DC could be conducted. In 2011, C-PAC, together with the DC Carnival Committee, participated in five (5) high-level meetings with officials of the Gray administration to ensure that Carnival took place in 2011. Council Member Muriel Bowser, or a representative of her office, was present at most of the meetings in support of Carnival;

Mayor Gray kept his promise to C-PAC and Carnival was held in 2011. C-PAC arranged for Howard University to conduct a study of the impact of Carnival on the economy of the District of Columbia. The results of the study were very positive. In spite of this however, the Mayor chose not to continue support of the DC Carnival beyond 2011;

In June 2012, Maryland Governor O'Malley established the Governor's Commission on Caribbean Community Affairs. The Governor's Office contacted C-PAC directly and seeking recommendations for appointments to the Commission. A number of C-PAC's recommendations were accepted;

In August 2012, Washington, D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray, in accordance with his promise during the C-PAC candidate forum, re-established the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Caribbean Community Affairs. Most of the members were recommended by C-PAC and were either active or inactive members of the organization.

Other Activities – 2013 to 2015

- In 2013 C-PAC Co-Founder and Chair, Chris Gardiner, resigned after 8 years at the helm to encourage new leadership and growth of C-PAC;
- In May, Founding Patron Dr. Ivan Walks, is announced as C-PAC Chair. However, Dr. Walks resigns soon thereafter without taking up office due to increased professional workload;
- In November, Founding Patron Curtis A. Ward, Former Jamaican Ambassador to the UN, accepts position as Chair of C-PAC for a one (1) year term;
- In 2014 (March) the inaugural *CPAC Informer* newsletter is published and circulated to members;
- Following the Annual General Meeting, C-PAC elects a new Chair, Founding Patron Goulda Downer, Ph.D., to lead the Executive Board;
- In 2015 Co-Founder, and Former Chair, Chris Gardiner and C-PAC Founding Patron member Jennifer Selman of Crown Bakery are honorees in the inaugural Washington, DC Mayor's Caribbean Community Recognition Awards;
- C-PAC's Chair, Dr. Goulda Downer, former Chair Chris Gardiner and Honorary Life Member, and Caribbean American icon, Mr. Leo Edwards met with the CARICOM Caucus of Ambassadors to brief them on C-PAC's activities.

From the Chair *(continued)*

Our goal for C-PAC by this time next year is to have 1000 active members!! This goal can be primarily achieved thorough our multigenerational linkages. My mother says that if an alligator come up out of the water and tells her that the bottom of the river is full of delicious mangoes she will have to believe him; because she is not going down there to find out! I urge you to tell the stories to your 2nd, 3rd, 4th generations family members -the millennials; the generation Z's - and get them engaged in C-PAC and our political activities. *Let's not leave it up to alligators to tell our stories.*

You know, reflecting on the events that led to the existence of CPAC, what these three visionaries; Chris Gardiner, Elizabeth Stanley and Denys Vaughn-Cooke had to overcome to found, organize, and plan for this organization is remarkable!! Together, let us set an enduring stage; one aimed at achieving our goals while maintaining our relevance for decades to come, such that future generations of Caribbean-Americans can look back and appreciate the pioneering aspects of the political engagement that were developed by us, in our era.

Our annual *Founding Patrons' Luncheon* was its signature success this year!!! We pulled out all the stops befitting our milestone achievement. And, under the leadership of Dr. Frances Jefferson this year's Luncheon Chair and her committee, we all can agree

that this was another successful event befitting our ten years of existence. I must extend kudos to Mrs. Sonia Ward, a member of the luncheon committee who single-handedly invited over forty of her friends and associates to attend the luncheon. It is this kind of focused and intentional support the organization needs to thrive and be sustained.

Please meet our Advisory Board members in this edition of the *C-PAC Informer*. We are always seeking members to join our various Boards and Committees and hope you will become part of C-PAC's unfolding narrative. Remember, we need you!!

I invite you to walk with C-PAC on this course, enhanced by the combined experience and passion of a dedicated BOARD! Help us uncover our collective reach and seize the opportunities that are stretched out before us. So, my charge to each of us in the upcoming year is to sign up 5 paid-members next year and let C-PAC be one thousand strong!! Our website www.caribbeanpac.org will give a monthly tally of our collective efforts. As we herald in the year 2016, wish for you an oversupply of resplendent blessings!!!

Do be well!!!!

Excerpted from C-PAC Chair's report at the 2015 Founding Patrons' Luncheon

An Interview with Senator Shirley Nathan-Pulliam



Democrat
District 44
Baltimore City &
Baltimore County



1. How did you get into politics?

My interest in politics started from a young age. My neighbors shared stories that as early as nine years old I would talk about Jamaican politics and was fully aware of the political parties and what they were able to accomplish for the country, so it began in Jamaica. When I moved to the United States, I got heavily involved with my church and community in Baltimore City, by doing so I became aware of the conditions and challenges that residents were facing particularly with regards to the accessibility to healthcare. As a registered nurse, healthcare and the disparities within the Black community were very important to me. One of my mentors, Mr. Leo Edwards, a Founding member of the Caribbean Political Action Committee (C-PAC), who many refer to as the Father of the Caribbean advised me to continue serving within the community and become an advocate by getting involved in commissions. I joined so many commissions and organizations, like the Maryland Black Congress on Health Law and Economic, I co-founded the Black Mental Health Alliance which focused on the misdiagnosis of blacks, particularly black males, and many others. I sat of the feet of Congressman Louis Stokes and learned more about health care disparities which also fueled my passion. I became so embedded into the political arena that if a candidate ran for office and their objectives were in sync with mine, I would work on their campaign to help them get elected. After doing that for many years I discovered that I could make the same critical decisions that they made!

2. What, if any, are the differences between the Maryland State House and the Senate?

I served for 20 years for House and I like to explain the difference between the two by using England as an example. The House is like the House of Commons and the State is like the House of Lords. I have served in the House for twenty year, so I have done my time in the Commons now I am in the "House of Lords." There are 47 members of Senate and 141 members of House, which essentially means that in the Senate there is more work to be done. I serve on the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee which as you can imagine has a heavy workload. In the Senate we do a few things differently from the House, one of which is that we confirm all government appointments, we approve all the notary publics and we get more staff in comparison to the House. The senate is also a much smaller chamber and we operate by seniority. I like the senate, I feel very comfortable especially given my experience.

3. What are the priorities on your agenda as you begin your new role?

My priorities remain consistent. I am a registered nurse and I believe if you are not healthy you will not be able to achieve your fullest potential. You can't learn if you are sick; you can't become economically stable if you are sick. The environment, where and how you live directly impacts your health. I will also continue to place much emphasis on health education and advise my colleagues in the Senate on cultural competency and literacy that are important aspects within the overall fight to bridge the gap.

4. How important is the Caribbean Political Action Committee (C-PAC) to the Caribbean community?

C-PAC plays an important role in the Caribbean community! It is so very important to have one of our own organizations support our work. But more importantly, the focused manner in which C-PAC approaches lending its support. The membership of C-PAC takes the time and look at your body of work prior to endorsing you; instead of just offering an endorsement. Many organizations just endorse blindly. C-PAC's endorsement and financial support has helped and is important to any elected official; including mine. I thank CPAC again for thinking that I'm worthy enough to be endorsed.

5. What is your best advice to the younger generation who wish to follow in your footsteps?

My first piece of advice would be to make sure that you are registered to vote. Become educated on the issues, know what your passion is and who your elected officials are. I would also encourage young people to volunteer as much as possible, not just in organization that you know but find those that are a bit different, that is how you learn, and yes, not every position is paid but you will be surprised how much you can benefit even for free. Get to know the issues in your community, work on political campaigns and if you have a gut feeling that you want run for office, start deciding who you want to support and get involved with them. There are so many upcoming elections and races in 2016. We have the Presidential election, Mayor Race in Baltimore, get involved so that people can get to know you. Each state as a Democrat and Republican Central Committee, this is an elected position, start there and it will give you an opportunity to learn party politics, public speaking and how to fundraise, these are the things you will need in the future. Take on the challenge!

Meet CPAC's Board of Advisors



Rudolph Douglas, PhD

RESIDENCE: Washington, DC
CURRENT MEMBER SINCE: Founding Patron
OCCUPATION: Professor/Research Scientist
C-PAC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS:
Currently member of the Advisory Board
OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS: Mayor's

MACCCA; American Physics Society; American Chemical Society;
Mathematics Association of America

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ANCESTRY: Trinidad and Tobago



Leo Edwards

RESIDENCE: Montgomery County, MD
CURRENT MEMBER SINCE: Founding Patron
OCCUPATION: Retired
C-PAC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS:
C-PAC Advisory Board Member
OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

Co-Founder Caribbean American InterCultural Organization (CAIO);
National Coalition on Caribbean Affairs;
President Student Association, Howard University

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ANCESTRY: Jamaica



Carmen Edwards

RESIDENCE: Montgomery County, MD
CURRENT MEMBER SINCE: Founding Patron
OCCUPATION: Retired
C-PAC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS:
C-PAC Advisory Board Member
OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

Board Member & Chair Independence Committee; Caribbean American
InterCultural Organization (CAIO); National Coalition on Caribbean Affairs

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ANCESTRY: Jamaica



Frances Jefferson, PhD

RESIDENCE: Prince George's County, MD
CURRENT MEMBER SINCE: Founding Patron
OCCUPATION: Clinical Psychologist
C-PAC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: Advisory Board
Member; Luncheon Committee Chair
OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS:
American Psychological Association; American Cancer

Society Volunteer

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ANCESTRY: Bahamas



Berthie Labassierre MD

RESIDENCE: Prince George's County, MD
CURRENT MEMBER SINCE: Founding Patron
OCCUPATION: Physician
C-PAC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: Advisory Board
Member; Luncheon Committee
OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS: National

organization for the advancement of Haitians (NOAH)

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ANCESTRY: Haiti



Deanne Samuels:

RESIDENCE: Prince George's County, MD
CURRENT MEMBER SINCE: Founding Patron
OCCUPATION: Retired
C-PAC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: Former Vice Chair,
Advisory Board/ Currently Advisory Board Member
OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS: Chairperson,

Trinidad & Tobago Working Women's Committee/ Ex-Officio, Caribbean
Students' Scholarship Fund Inc., President, Episcopal Church Women,
Diocese of Washington, DC, Life Member, Trinidad and Tobago Association
of Washington, DC, (past president)

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ANCESTRY: Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



Jacqueline Sealy

RESIDENCE: Montgomery County, MD
CURRENT MEMBER SINCE: Founding Patron
OCCUPATION: Artist
C-PAC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: Advisory Board;
Luncheon Committee; Communications Committee;
Graphic Designer

OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

AT Andrews Old Girls Association; Smithsonian's Black Heritage Museum

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ANCESTRY: Jamaica



Jamila Thompson

RESIDENCE: Washington, DC
CURRENT MEMBER SINCE: Founding Patron
OCCUPATION: Congressional Policy Staff
C-PAC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: 2007-2011,
Advisory Board Member; 2011-2014, Secretary; 2015,
Advisory Board

OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS: Senior Fellow, Stennis Center
for Public Service; Commissioner, Mayor's Advisory Commission on
Caribbean Community Affairs; Women in International Trade; Women in
International Security; Young Professionals in Foreign Policy; Foreign Affairs
Congressional Staff Association; and the Sunday Brunch Group

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ANCESTRY: Bahamas



Dr. Solanges Vivens

RESIDENCE: Washington, DC
CURRENT MEMBER SINCE: Founding Patron
OCCUPATION: Registered Nurse and a Licensed Nursing
Home Administrator
C-PAC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: Advisory Board
Member

OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

Board Member, District of Columbia Health Care Association, Member of the
Choral Art Society, member Leadership of Greater Washington, DC

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ANCESTRY: Haiti



Denys Vaughn-Cooke

RESIDENCE: Washington, DC
CURRENT MEMBER SINCE: Founding Member
OCCUPATION: Business Owner
C-PAC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: C-PAC Co-Founder;
Advisory Board Member
OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ANCESTRY: Guyana



Ivan C. A. Walks, MD

RESIDENCE: Montgomery County, MD
CURRENT MEMBER SINCE: Founding Patron
OCCUPATION: Physician, Business Owner
C-PAC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: 2015 Advisory
Board
OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/ANCESTRY: Guyana



!!THANK YOU!!

Senator-Elect Shirley Nathan-Pulliam of Maryland's 44th Legislative District thanks CPAC for their endorsement and contributions that helped make my strong win in this past election possible.

“As the first Caribbean born person to be elected to the Maryland General Assembly, I have served in the House for 20 years and have now again reached another first by being elected to the Maryland Senate. I am proud that CPAC has been established and hard working to help those of us who are of Caribbean descent. January 14, 2015 is the day I will be sworn in the Senate Chamber in Annapolis.”

November 2015

Mayor elect Muriel Bowser thanks CPAC for our endorsement.

“I want to thank CPAC for their vote of confidence to be the next mayor of this great city. We are a District of rich culture, extraordinary history, and strong, diverse neighborhoods, and while we’ve made great progress, I truly believe our best days are ahead of us. With the broad coalition of support I’ve received from groups like CPAC, I’m confident we will build a District that works for all eight wards. I welcome CPAC’s endorsement and look forward to working with them as Mayor of the District of Columbia.”

November 2014

CPAC Annual Founding Patron's Luncheon

The 10th Anniversary of the founding of C-PAC was celebrated at its annual luncheon held on Saturday November, 7, 2015, and what a grand affair it was! The event was well attended and supported by many in the Caribbean community which included college students from local area colleges and Universities as well as Caribbean Ambassadors and government officials representing the various state and local governments of the District of Columbia and Maryland. Guests were entertained to great fare, sumptuous food and good music. Veteran media personality and long-time C-PAC supporter *Derrice Deane* of CARIBNATION TV and *Chardelle Moore*, TV Personality & Producer, FOX 45 Baltimore served as the event’s Co-hosts and had the crowd energized and fully entertained throughout the afternoon.

A historical overview of the 10 years of C-PAC’s existence and its various activities as an advocate for the Caribbean throughout the decade was given in the form of various narratives. As a Founding Patron, it was a distinct honor to present as part of the overview on C-PAC’s activities in the realm of the law and legal affairs.

Various speakers spoke of the importance of C-PAC and how valuable C-PAC has been in promoting the Caribbean agenda and making our voices heard. C-PAC’s Chair, Dr. Goulda Downer in summing it all up gave an inspiring speech honoring the commitment and hard work of the various C-PAC members, especially that of the Luncheon Committee, and encouraged all to continue to keep the organization strong as we advocate and effectuate change benefiting the Caribbean community. She illustrated C-PAC’s influence by recounting the various state and local officials that have been endorsed by C-PAC and who have become successful in their various bids for elected office. Finally, she acknowledged the many college students who were in attendance, and referred to them as the upcoming generation to whom the torch of the organization will eventually be passed. Seated quietly among the guests were Chris Gardiner the visionary behind C-PAC and his Co-Founder Denys Vaughn-Cooke. Both expressed their delight in the progress the organization has made. Mr. Gardiner shared later that the ongoing success of the organization confirms his belief when he stepped aside as chair, that C-PAC is important to the community and can, and will, survive without its founders being in charge.

The event was a tremendous success and we look forward to the next 20 years of C-PAC’s continued influence in our community. We truly anticipate that the 2016 luncheon will be even better and look forward to an even greater support by our Caribbean indigenes

Jaye A. Lowe, Esq. – Founding Patron

Thank You!!

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November 2015

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We are in the process of planning our 10th Anniversary Celebrations share with us what some things you would love to see! Have an idea? Send us a message!

STAY IN TOUCH

Have you liked our Facebook page?



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Email: Cpac.dmv@gmail.com



STAY INVOLVED

C-PAC will be celebrating 10 years this year. Stay tuned for more information on how you can get involved in our activities this year!

CPAC Newsletter Committee

Goulda Downer, PhD (Chair)
Lillian Crawford-Abbensetts, Esq
Jaye Ann Lowe, Esq.
Dshawna Bernard
Jackie Sealy
Denise Bailey

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