



***The Caribbean American Political Action Committee (C-PAC)  
Holds Historic Immigration Town Hall Meeting***

***Press Release  
June 17, 2017***

As the country rages about immigration and border security becomes a focal point for discussion, now more than ever, our ability to work effectively across cultures in a way that acknowledges and respects the culture of the person or organization with whom we interact is paramount. It is against the backdrop of this uncertainty that ***The Caribbean American Political Action Committee (C-PAC)*** led a Immigration Town Hall Meeting in partnership with People's Congregational United Church of Christ (PCUCC) on June 16, 2017. "The premise is simple," said C-PAC Chair, Dr. Goulida Downer, a cultural competency expert on faculty at Howard University. "Immigration impacts ethnic groups differently. While Latinos are often vilified for entering the US illegally through the US-Mexico border the truth is that most actually fly here." Flight is also the primary transportation mode for other ethnic minorities including those from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean Diaspora. "And," she continues, "many immigrants from the Caribbean Diaspora come here legally as students, visitors, etc. and over stay their visas thus putting them in a quandary!"

The purpose of this culturally diverse Immigration Town Hall Meeting was to discuss both universal and culture-specific issues of immigration and to inform and educate the community about policies concerning our region's immigrant populations; including the impact of Washington D.C. as a "*sanctuary city*" for immigrants.

An esteemed panel of immigration experts addressed issues specific to the African, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Latino Communities as well as members of the Caribbean Diaspora.

In opening the event, Dr. Downer reminded the participants that it was a fitting place to hold this historic cultural event at Peoples UCC since as a member of the denomination, Congregationalists are well known as outspoken anti-slavery advocate, and who have long been devoted to humanitarian causes as evidenced by their formation of the Amistad Committee for the freedom of the

enslaved Africans aboard the Amistad centuries ago. In his opening remarks, Ward 4 Council member Brandon Todd reiterated his commitment to continue to serve all citizens of his ward. He also shared that Ward 4 has the highest number of immigrants, including those from the Caribbean Diaspora, in Washington DC.

The expert panel consisted of Mamadou Samba, Director, Mayor's Office on African Affairs; Naznin Saifi, Esq., Executive Director, Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center, Selene Tituana Mary's Center. Simone Williams, Esq. Williams Global Law, PLLC addressed Caribbean Diaspora Issues. The panel was moderated by Natalie O. Ludaway Esq., Chief Deputy Attorney General, for Washington, DC and who happens to be of Jamaican heritage.

Panelists addressed a range of questions posed by the moderator including, "Who is an Immigrant from your community? Where are they most likely from? Who usually comes to the US? Who typically stays? Who is most likely to be deported? Where are they most likely to be employed? What specific issues do your community face that may be common to all immigrant communities? What are the issues that your community faces that may be different from other immigrant communities? How are cultural specific immigration issues being addressed? Why should citizenship become a priority at this time for members of your community? What specific types of immigration relief are available for the community you serve?"

This audience consisted mostly of Caribbean Diaspora members. And during the discussions it was brought to the attention the moderator that several immigrant groups had planned to attend but were scared that Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) would be on hand to round them up after the meeting and deport them. As a result some individuals sent questions to be asked by attendees but did not attend. This underscored the need to inform the community and to help insure that everyone's rights are protected.

Our regional multicultural immigrant community expressed deep gratitude for holding the meeting C-PAC looks forward to continuing our collaborative relationship of providing multi-ethnic approaches to issues that are key to immigrants in our region and invite members of your community to participate as together we include our voices in the development of solutions to matters that impact us. As Desmond Tutu once said, "A time of crisis is not just a time of anxiety and worry. It gives a chance, an opportunity, to choose well or to choose badly."

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