



THE CPAC INFORMER

Political Issues Impacting the
Caribbean American Diaspora

Volume 5 Issue 1 SPRING – SUMMER 2019

Letter from the Chair

Dear C-PAC Members, Supporters, Friends;

Welcome to this edition of The C-PAC Informer. As we welcome the warmer spring and summer months, and the pageantry of activities including those of nature that accompany it, we give thanks with renewed spirit and vigor; especially for a time like this.

Four hundred years ago, between July 30 and August 4, 1619, Africans were brought to a location in Virginia, a mere 160 miles from Washington DC. And while there are discussions regarding the actual place of their arrival – Jamestown or Old Point Comfort (present day Fort Monroe in Hampton Virginia) – what history tells us is that they were the first to be sold into forced labor thus initiating the American slave trade.

It is against this backdrop of this abomination that something remarkable has happened in our region. For the first time in the history of the Maryland General Assembly, six members of the Caribbean Diaspora now serve in that eminent body. They are: Senator Shirley Nathan-Pulliam (Jamaica); Senator Arthur Ellis (Jamaica); Delegate Regina Boyce (Barbados/Jamaica); Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk (Dominican Republic); Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins (Jamaica); and Delegate Gabriel Acevero (Trinidad & Tobago).

The Honorable Shirley Nathan-Pulliam is a political pioneer in our region. Read about her and the other formidable politicians with Caribbean heritage who responded to our questionnaire in this issue of the C-PAC Informer.

The Bible tells us that, “in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God...”. We also know that, in the words of that great hymn by William Cowper, “God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.” So, in honor of the African Diaspora having survived 400 years of an inhumane and brutal system, and in acknowledgement of Caribbean-American Heritage month, we invite our community to attend the Inaugural Caribbean Ecumenical Service. C-PAC, in collaboration with the leaders of several regional Caribbean organizations, hope that this faith-based service will bring together the Caribbean communities in our region in thanksgiving for having survived the snares set about us

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CARIBBEAN-AMERICAN LEADERS IN THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY (con't)

so maybe it's not Caribbean but that's the one I really live by. To me that saying means that you should meet people where they are, try to understand them and build consensus. That's how I try to get things done.

What is your island of origin?

I was born on Hispaniola in the Dominican Republic and I still have a lot of primos and tias there!



DELEGATE

Jheanelle Wilkins

As a local government official, how, and how often, do you interact with the Caribbean community?

I interact with the Caribbean community often. From close friends who are first- or second-generation Caribbean immigrants, to the breadth of the Diaspora living in the area, and the increasing number of elected officials who hail from the Caribbean, I interact often with our community. It's important that I receive input and feedback from every resident and ensure our community is at the table.

How is your work in the Maryland legislature relevant to this group?

The Maryland General Assembly sets the laws for the entire state. Our state policies can do great harm or can be of great benefit to our community. It's important to have the right people in positions of power to craft policy and set the agenda. Our work is relevant to every Caribbean, and I make it a priority to engage residents in the policy process and ensure all voices are heard.

What is the best way for members of the Caribbean community to engage with your office?

The Caribbean community can follow me on social media for updates (Facebook: /JheanelleWilkins and Twitter: @JheanelleW). They can also visit my website (www.jheanellewilkins.com) to subscribe to my email updates. I share important information, upcoming events, legislative information, etc. on my social media and by email.

When you first ran for office, what were your reasons for wanting to serve?

When I first ran for office, I was an advocate for social justice policies for a decade. After pushing for policy changes throughout my career, I was ready to have a seat at the table and make a direct impact as a lawmaker. My reason for running for office and serving the public is to make a difference in people's lives.

What do you find most challenging about your job?

Since the legislature is part time, one of the most challenging aspects of this role is balancing my full-time job with my legislative efforts. I work in Downtown D.C. during the week and participate in events and meetings before and after work. I am blessed to have a full-time job that is supportive of my legislative efforts, including the leave of absence I take for the 90-day legislative session.

Why should the Caribbean community care about the decisions that are made in your office? How are we directly impacted?

From racial profiling to maternal health, immigrant rights, and educational equity, the legislation I sponsor, and champion truly impacts

our community. These issues have a disproportionate impact on Black immigrants. I have also championed immigrant rights issues such as legislation to reduce state and law enforcement participation in ICE arrests and detainment. Other impactful bills I have supported include: raising the minimum wage, criminal justice reform, health insurance access, and a grant programs to support teachers. The Caribbean community should care about the decisions that are made and get involved because they are directly impacted.

How can we in the Caribbean community help you to be more effective in your position?

The Caribbean community can sign up for my various communications channels (newsletter, social media, etc.) to stay up to date on my legislation and events. They can help spread the word about the work I'm doing. Members can also make a donation to my campaign (www.jheanellewilkins.com) to support me and help me to continue to work on issues that matter.

Will you actively seek our support, as a distinct group, during the next election campaign?

Yes, I will. I hope to have your full support.

What is the Caribbean saying or motto that you live by?

Yes, yes. "neva carry man ova mountain" is one of my favorite sayings. It means that words are not enough. Actions and plans make a difference.

What is your island(s) of origin?

I was born in Kingston, Jamaica.

MEMBERSHIP

C-PAC is built on a strong foundation. We have developed a solid and efficient organizational structure. It gives us the ability to move beyond the administration of the organization as we continue to build a dynamic program. As a membership organization, C-PAC continues to work on maintaining an accurate database of our members and supporters. We encourage you to spread the word about C-PAC; renew your annual membership and become vested in the organization. Visit <http://www.caribbeanpac.org/about.php>

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NEWS You Can Use!!!

The Inaugural Caribbean Ecumenical Service in Acknowledgement of the Year 1619 and in Celebration of Caribbean-American Heritage Month: **Sunday June 30, 2019 at 10:00 AM at Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ, 4704 13th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20011.**

C-PAC Annual Founding Patrons' Luncheon: **Saturday, October 12, 2019, from 12:00-3:00 PM at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Silver Spring, MD.**

C-PAC Annual General Meeting: **November 9, 2019 from 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM. Details to follow.**

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Here are some of the ways you can support C-PAC (a) stay engaged, and (b) invite Caribbean-Americans and friends of the Caribbean across the metropolitan area to get involved.

Know someone who needs to become a member of C-PAC? [Download our membership application form](#) and get folks plugged in! General membership is \$50.00 and \$25.00 for students and those over 65 years.

[Follow C-PAC on Twitter @CPAC_DMV.](#)
We follow back. Are you on Facebook?
[Like our page](#) and invite your friends to like us too!

ALREADY A MEMBER?

Join a committee! Do you want to serve in Membership, Fundraising, Political Advisory, Communications, or Outreach? Take your pick, bring your ideas and be ready to serve.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Have an idea? Want to help plan or host a community forum? We're only an email away! Send us a message at cpac.dmv@gmail.com.

MAILING ADDRESS: 1701 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20006 • **PHONE:** 202-349-1498
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