

FLANKER DIGEST

Jamaican Difference in England

Vol. 5, Issue 1 January, 2009

By Keirn Thomas

Three representatives from the Flanker Peace and Justice Centre and five members of the Montego Bay Boys and Girls Club visited with the Bishop Auckland Theatre Hooligans (BATH) at the King James I Community Arts College in Bishop Auckland, Durham, England from January 17-27, 2009.

This effort was as result of the BATH coming to Jamaica in the summer of 2008 to learn more about the youth and life in Jamaica overall. The 'Jamaica Difference project' as it was captioned, was inspired by one of the BATH student members (Shane) who wanted to know more about his Jamaican roots. The group was passionate about going to see what Jamaican life is like compared to life in England.

The group documented their sojourn in Jamaica in an elaborate exhibition of film, photos, art and craft for the residents of Bishop Auckland to share in. As a consequence, representatives from the respective groups in Montego Bay were invited by BATH to participate in the exhibition as well as to share their views on life in Jamaica with the residents of Bishop Auckland and the students of King James I Community Arts College.

In England, the Jamaican delegation was hosted by the BATH members and from day one was engaged in a myriad of fun filled family activities. In addition to being guests in their homes, the delegation was exposed to the full gamut of favoured English pass time activities. These include going out to the pubs for drinks and dinner, bowling, site seeing, playing sports and meeting with new people.

An important part of the visit was meeting with the students of King James I Community College during

form time (done every morning). This was one of the highlights of the trip as the students would learn more about Jamaica and the Jamaicans would in turn learn more about their English counterparts. The head teacher expressed his gratitude to BATH and the Jamaican delegation for offering the King James and the Bishop Auckland community such an enriching experience.



Nakitta Williams and Keirn Thomas with student members of BATH

The launch of the "Jamaica Difference" exhibition was no doubt the major highlight of the trip. The support was overwhelming and the commendations and accolades were beyond repute. Andre Mowatt, from the Montego Bay Boys and Girls Club who inspired much of the exhibition delivered a heart-rending speech on the impact that the experience has had on him. Shane, who inspired the Jamaica Difference project, also made a moving presentation at the launch. Chairman for the Council of County Durham and many of his fellow councilors were present and spoke highly of the exhibition and the project in general.

Jamaican High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Burchell White-man, visited Bishop Auckland to view the exhibition and meet with the delegation. He was given a tour of the exhibition by Keirn Thomas and was very impressed with the work of the Flanker Peace and Justice Centre and the Peace Wall Mural in particular. The commissioner

was very keen on the follow-up to these activities and has pledged his support in whatever way he can.

Allan Bernard, of the Flanker Peace and Justice Centre, made presentations on the 'dancehall popular cultural space' and 'the realities of inner-city life in Flanker'. He used video footage from actual dancehall events in the community, as well an unfinished docudrama on life in Flanker being produced by one of the community members. The presentations were well received and were the focus of many discussions afterwards.

The week was not 'all work and no play' as the young visitors edutained the students in the latest Jamaican dance craze. Member from Flanker with the kind assistance on the school canteen staff and BATH student volunteers treated King James to a variety of Jamaican culinary delights. The head teacher was the first on site to sample the food, and he gave it his full stamp of approval.

Bonds were formed, friendships were made, and the possibilities of a good partnership established. The questions now remaining are how will this programme be sustained and how will it affect the lives of those who had a chance to be a part of it? Thanks BATH for being a part of our lives and allowing us to be a part of yours.

JSIF on the go

On January 10, 2009 the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) Community Committee (CC) facilitated the second of two meetings to usher in the beginning of the road works project in Flanker. The meeting was held in the Red Dirt area of the

community and saw community members interfacing with the Member of Parliament for the constituency and the Minister of Water and Housing as well as various JSIF representatives and the project contractor on the methodology of the project and concomitant and outstanding concerns.

The first project management meeting with the community was held on the 1st of December 2008. Here the contractor was introduced to the community and the JSIF team received valuable input from the community as to how the implementation of the project should be rolled out. There was also the selection of community coordinators for the work and the level of community contribution that can be expected.

Subsequently at the second follow-up meeting contractor Clive Sterling was given the opportunity to comment on the methods of operations that will govern the road works and the implementation strategy. He also received important suggestions for consideration from community members. Gene Shaw, JSIF project manager, also outlined the terms of reference for the project and encourage community members to take ownership of the project and work closely with the implementing and other partners as we move to develop our community.

Representatives of the JSIF Emergency, Technical, Environmental and Communication teams took turns in addressing the concerns of community members while reinforcing the importance of collaboration.

One of the heated issues laid to rest was that of homes (boundaries) encroaching on the designated road trajectory. The call for collaboration and ownership was clearly heeded as progressive discussions are ongoing to arrive at an amicable solution. Suffice to say that work has since commenced with the laying of pipeline. The official ground breaking ceremony will be on February 5th 2009.

Kudos to Dr. Chang - Minister of Water and Housing and Member of

Parliament (M.P.) for North West St. James Dr. Horace Chang, recently handed over musical equipment valued at over \$1,000,000 from the purse of the Constituency Development Fund to Principal Hugh Miller of the Flanker Primary and Junior High School. (Western Mirror, Friday January 30, 2009)

Peace Wall Commemoration

By: Tonya Pratt

On the 1st of January 2009 the Youth Crime Watch of Flanker (YCWF) held its Peace Wall Commemoration ceremony. In what is now an annual community event to mark the beginning of the year, the Peace Wall Mural was put on show as a symbol of the community's commitment to peace and good will among its members. 2008 will go down as the dawning of a renewed community spirit and a subsequent thrust towards development and empowerment.

Participating in this year's ceremony were mayor of Montego Bay and councilor for the Flanker division Charles Sinclair, Superintendent in charge of the St. James Police division Maurice Robinson, the new General Manager of Sandals Montego Bay Phillip Cardinell, and Constable Ricardo Clarke from the Mobile Reserve. They all praised the community for its exemplary status and pledged their commitment and continued support to the Centre and its leadership role in managing the peace process. Mrs. McIntosh-Nash, the Director of the Flanker Resource Centre and Mikhail McLeod, Chairperson of the Youth Crime Watch of Flanker also addressed the audience.

The programme was interspersed with performances from the community marching band and members of the community's various creative and performance groups. Of note was the rendition of 'Remember the Days' by the YCWF group and the debut performance by 'TaBri' (Tajuanna Brown and Britany McIntosh), singing another of the YCWF's signature songs, John Lennon's 'Imagine'. The marching band in their usual spectacular form

closed the ceremony with a 30 minutes performance that rocked the audience from start to end.

After the ceremony guest and attendees were invited to share in our traditional pumpkin soup and additional refreshments that were on hand. The event, which ended at 6pm was a quiet mix of music, games and interactions, and full of reflection and introspection.

It is the extended wish of the Youth Crime Watch of Flanker that this ceremony set the trend for the rest of the year.

YCWJ introduces new executive members

Two new members were introduced to the YCWJ executive fold. Edward Dixon will be responsible for the coordinating the south-east region and Tonya Pratt will carry out similar responsibilities in the western end of the island.

Edward is a former member of the College Crime Watch of Jamaica and a graduate of the University of the West Indies and a social worker. He has recently returned from New York where he worked with youth in Brooklyn communities and schools. Prior to his stint in the US, Edward was a Youth Empowerment Officer employed to the National Centre for Youth Development in Jamaica.

Tonya was the youngest person to be certified by the YCWJ in Montego Bay and is a past chairperson of the YCWF. She has also recently returned from the US and is preparing to enter university. Tonya has a long and outstanding record of community involvement and volunteerism, which have earned her the enviable record of being a young achiever.

These two young energies are well positioned to add value to the organization as well as meeting the challenges associated with the current youth environment. The YCWJ executive now reads Allan Bernard – chairman; Alfred Palmer – deputy chairman; Marlon Moore – administrator; Latoya West – research and training; Pauline Lewis – finance; Edward Dixon, Romel Gordon, Tonya Pratt and Gavin Myers – regional coordinators.

Flanker Digest is a monthly publication with the aim of reporting on the issues and activities in the community. It is a free newsletter edited and compiled by the Youth Crime Watch of Flanker under the auspices of the Flanker Peace and Justice Centre.