



ANNUAL REPORT

2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2-3
GENERAL	4-5
REPORTS	
PERSONNEL AND OPERATIONS	
• <i>Personnel</i>	6-9
• <i>Operations</i>	10-11
PUBLIC EDUCATION & AWARENESS UNIT	12-19
LEGAL AND INVESTIGATIVE UNIT.....	20-28
MEDIA MONITORING UNIT	29-37
FINANCE	38
RECOMMENDATIONS	39-41
CONCLUSION	42
ANNEX A – Code of Conduct for Political Parties	43-47
ANNEX B – Public Education & Awareness Highlights	48-61
ANNEX C- Press Releases for 2021.....	62-101
ANNEX D – Swift Response Committee Report.....	102-129
ANNEX E- Harmony Colouring Book	130-166

INTRODUCTION

The Ethnic Relations Commission commenced the year with much enthusiasm of fulfilling its projected work program in 2020 but these plans were inhibited by the pandemic of Covid 19. Despite the challenges of the pernicious virus, the Commission continued to function and befittingly carried out its mandate.

Early in January 2020, the Commission launched the “I AM US” Movie at the Caribbean Cinema Movie Theatre, Giftland Mall. The initiative formed part of the phase two (2) Harmony Campaign which focused on the imminent elections and pushed the message of peace and tolerance for all Guyanese during the elections period. Free admission was provided to almost 1500 Guyanese that provided overwhelming positive feedback on the film.

The run-up to the March, 2020 General Elections were also monitored by the (41) forty-one temporary elections monitors that were hired and trained by the Commission.

Following the No Confidence Motion in December, 2018 and the holding of deferred general elections in March, 2020, the Commission worked assiduously to mitigate the impact of those events. The ERC, in February, 2020, successfully obtained the agreement of the eleven Political Parties contesting the elections to sign its “Code of Conduct” to commit to clean campaigning. **(See Annex A)**

The Commission, for the first time since it was established in 2002, commenced legal action in 2020 against alleged violators under the Racial Hostility and Representation of the People Acts to discourage the growing, alarming trend of racial incitement, especially on social media. This was further reinforced through ERC’s Persons of Interest Ad in the newspapers and on social media.

The Commission’s Investigation Unit received and addressed 225 complaints during 2019 and 2020, of which approximately 170 were fully investigated and closed. Some are still pending. A public whatsapp number was established to allow the public to send complaints readily.

During the West Coast Berbice unrest, the ERC issued several press statements condemning the senseless killing of the teens at Cotton Tree and called on the Joint Services to re-establish law and order along the East Coast and West Berbice. Commissioners and staff on Thursday, September 17, 2020, visited the grieving families of the Henry cousins, Isaiah and Joel and Haresh Singh, offering prayers and words of comfort to parents and guardians of the slain youths.

In the second phase of its ‘Harmony Campaign,’ the Commission produced an additional five PSA’s and launched the first ever Virtual “National Conversation” in December, 2020 in collaboration with the University of Guyana and the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator. The “National Conversation on improving Ethnic Relations” was held at Herdmanston Lodge, Georgetown.

The two-day event was intended to solicit the inputs from Guyanese at home and in the diaspora. It attracted over 50,000 views on social media and was viewed by thousands more on local television. Thousands tuned in to the live broadcasts on NewsTalk Radio, TVG Ch 28, HBTv Ch 9 and HGPTV Ch 67.

During the year in review, the commission engaged two consultants on developing a roadmap for a 5 year strategic plan that will better position the ERC to strengthen and develop soft and hard measures to strategically respond to events and ethnic tensions in the country.

The Commission has throughout its tenure placed much emphasis on the importance of education. To this end, in an effort to increase awareness among Guyanese children- in late December 2020 the ERC held a soft launch in front of Republic Bank for its Harmony Colouring Book titled "Colour your History and Heroes" The book depicts a number of notable historical events and figures, generally unknown to Guyanese students and even adults, it is intended for distribution to Primary School students. The Commission sees the critical need for collaborative efforts between the body and the Ministry of Education towards having the book forming part of the social studies syllabus.

THE ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2020

GENERAL

Prior to the general and regional elections, Commissioners were granted Observer Status to monitor elections on E-Day. Teams that included two (2) Commissioners were formed and fanned out to observe the electoral process in regions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10. The Commissioners unanimously reported that they saw no major incidents involving voters and the conduct of the elections. Subsequent to E-Day Commissioners also participated in the recount process.

An internal swift response committee comprised of senior staff members and Commissioners was formed prior to elections to provide quick response/warning to political party members whose narrative during the campaign trail had violated the code of conduct or had the potential to caused ethnic instability. A colour code was used as a guide for immediate actions to be taken, a number of party leaders were written on the violation. (See Annex D for Elections report and letters disseminated)

The Commission in 2020 continued its thrust to provide the relevant equipment needed to ascertain operational efficiency departmentally and organizationally. There were twelve (12) statutory meetings held by the Commission in 2020, meetings generally occurred on the fourth Thursday of every month. The Commission also met for a number of Special Meetings throughout the year to tackle matters that required timely dialogue and decisions.

The four (4) Sub-committees continued to meet often to ensure that projects were on course and matters arising were given the required attention. More specifically, the Media and PR sub-committee met to brainstorm and submit meaningful creative proposals to the board that were congruent to ERC's mandate. There was one new addition to the Complaint Sub-Committee; Commissioner Deodat Persaud was added to the committee bringing its membership to seven (7) members. Below is the composition of each sub-committee:

- **Media & Public Education & Relations**

Mr. Neaz Subhan-Chairman

Mr. Barrington Braithwaite

Haji Dr. Roshan Khan

- **Complaints**

Major-General (Ret'd) -Chairman

Norman McLean

Haji Dr. Roshan Khan

Mr. Barrington Braithwaite

Mr. Norris Emanuel Witter

Mr. Ashton Simon

Ms. Rajkumarie Singh

Pandit Deodat Persaud

- **Human Resources**
Ms. Ruth Howard-Chairwoman
Pandit Deodat Persaud
Mr. Norris Emanuel Witter
Major-General (Ret'd)
Norman McLean

- **Finance**
Rev. Dr. John O. Smith-Chairman
Ms. Rajkumarie Singh
Mr. Ashton Simon
Mr. Neaz Subhan

PERSONNEL AND OPERATIONS

PERSONNEL

STAFFING MATTERS

The Commission started the year 2020 with thirty (30) staff members and six (6) vacant positions as follows: -

Staff Members:

➤ Chief Executive Officer/Secretary	1
➤ Head, Public Education & Awareness Unit	1
➤ Head, Media Monitoring Unit	1
➤ Head, Investigative Officer	1
➤ Administrative Officer	1
➤ Finance Officer	1
➤ Legal Officer	1
➤ Assistant Finance Officer	1
➤ Public Relations Officer	1
➤ Senior Investigative Officer	1
➤ Programme Officers	5
➤ Videographer	1
➤ Senior Accounts Clerk	1
➤ Accounts Clerk	1
➤ Special Assistant to the Chairman	1
➤ Administrative Assistant to the CEO	1
➤ Media Monitors	4
➤ Administrative Clerk 1	1
➤ Administrative Clerk 11	1
➤ Receptionist/Telephone Operator	1
➤ Driver	1
➤ Office Assistant/Driver	1
➤ Cleaner/Maid	1
	<hr/>
	30

Vacant Positions:

➤ Dispute Resolution Officer	1
➤ Investigative Officers	3
➤ Research Assistant	1
➤ Driver	1

Due to resignations during 2020, the Commission ended the year with twenty-nine (29) staff members and seven (7) vacant positions as follows: -

Vacant Positions:

➤ Head, Public Education & Awareness Unit	1
➤ Head, Investigative Unit	1
➤ Dispute Resolution Officer	1
➤ Investigative Officers	2
➤ Research Assistant	1
➤ Driver	1

The position of Chief Executive Officer was filled by the Head, Public Education & Awareness Unit, thus that position became vacant.

RESIGNATIONS

Ms. Yvonne Langevine, Chief Executive Officer - Effective February 26, 2020
Mr. Lloyd Smith, Head, Investigative Unit - Effective October 12, 2020

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Jason Samuels - Investigative Officer - October 1, 2020

STAFF CONTRACTS

In order to access the approved Duty-free Concessions, the Commission approved the amendment of the Contracts for the Chief Executive Officer, the Finance Officer and the Administrative Officer to three (3) years instead of two (2). All other staff members are on two (2) year contracts.

ANNUAL LEAVE

Staff members who were at home (but were not working virtually) were required to proceed on their Annual leave with effect from June so as to prevent a buildup of persons proceeding on leave when the work of the Commission resumed.

With the exception of the new Chief Executive Officer and the Finance Officer, all other staff members were able to enjoy their vacation leave for 2020.

ATTENDANCE

During the period March 17 – 27, in light of COVID-19 pandemic and as approved by the Department of Public Service, on the Directive of President David Granger (Circular PS: 16/0^{viii}), staff members were allowed to work on a rotational basis, with the exception of senior staff and the Cleaner (senior staffers were allowed one half day per week and the Cleaner worked every day from 8:00 hrs. to 13:00 hrs.).

From July 10 to August 1, employees of the Administrative Department and the Investigative Unit were in full attendance at the office on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and whenever necessary to facilitate meetings, receiving complaints, etc.

All employees were in attendance on a rotational basis as per the PSM Circular from August 2020. Heads of Departments were not on full rotation due to the exigencies of the Commission.

PERFORMANCE

All staff members supported the Commission's activities during 2020 and performed at high standards.

For a period, it was recommended that the office be closed as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Notwithstanding, staff continued to display commitment in the performance of their duties through virtual connectivity.

However, the CEO, Finance Department, the Administrative Officer and other Senior staff were in office on occasions to carry out necessary financial and administrative functions.

FACILITY

All the necessary furniture are in place to ensure that staff are made comfortable to the extent that the limited accommodation allows.

COVID-19 MEASURES

In an effort to address and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the office with the return of staff back to work, a temperature thermometer was purchased and put into use in keeping with the MOPH Guidelines for COVID-19 Measures. Additionally, a sink was installed by the entrance of the compound, for the washing of hands, along with wall dispensers around the office

COVID-19 POLICY GUIDELINE

The Commission at its 9th Statutory Meeting held on September 24, 2020 approved the following COVID-19 Policy Guideline for immediate implementation within the Commission.

COVID-19 GUIDELINES

EMPLOYEES PERSONAL OBLIGATION

Every staff member is obligated to report immediately to his/her Supervisor in the event that a member of his/her household is tested positive for COVID-19.

During this period of the pandemic, it behooves everyone to be extremely mindful of the health and well-being of their co-workers

As stated previously, the Commission embraces an open-door policy, in which all employees, **affected or not** can share his/her concerns. The Commission wants what is best for its employees and as the global pandemic continues, it will do all that is possible within its ambit to assist its employees.

ERC COMMITMENT

The Commission has committed to paying the full salary to any of its employee who contracts the coronavirus or is required to be in self-isolation, to a maximum of fourteen (14) days.

Staff will be required to furnish the Commission with a Medical Certificate indicating the number of days of isolation.

Before resuming duty, it is essential for staff to produce a Certificate of Clearance from the Ministry of Public Health.

UNIFORMS

All staff members were issued four (4) sets of uniforms to be worn from Monday to Thursday and an ERC Monogrammed Shirt to be worn on Friday.

OPERATIONS

EQUIPMENT

The Commission commenced the year with all staff members having the necessary equipment to effectively execute the Commission's work.

The Media Monitoring Unit and the Office of the CEO had new Biz Fibre Internets installed in order to effectively execute the work of the Commission.

The generator was maintained but unfortunately, after a long period of power outage, the engine burnt and as such the Commission is without a GenSet which will seriously affect the work of the ERC and the Rights Commissions.

All air condition units were all maintained and worked well.

PROCUREMENT

During the year the Commission was successful in acquiring the following items pertinent for the enhancement of its work, some with approvals for procurement from the NPTAB:

- ❖ 1 Handheld Digital Audio Recorder & USB Interface
- ❖ 4-Channel / 6-Track Multitrack Field Recorder with Onboard Omni Microphones
- ❖ 2-Person Camera-Mount Wireless Omni Lavalier Microphone System
- ❖ LED Studio 3-Video Light Kit
- ❖ 1 Vehicle - 15 Seater Mini Bus
- ❖ 1 Laminating Machine
- ❖ 1 Shredder
- ❖ 5 L shaped Desks
- ❖ 16 Chairs for board room
- ❖ 2 Mesh Back Chairs on wheels with handle
- ❖ 3 Fridge 9 cubic feet
- ❖ 2 2-door Storage Cabinet with lock
- ❖ 18 External Hard Drives
- ❖ 6 Voltage stabilizer 1200 Watts
- ❖ 6 UPS Back Up Battery
- ❖ 2 Laptop
- ❖ 3 Desktop Computer Systems
- ❖ 1 Computer Software – Quickbook
- ❖ Three thousand (3,000) Silicone Bands
- ❖ Drone Camera

VEHICLES

The Commission's vehicles are in working condition. Both the Nissan Frontier and the Navara were serviced and are well maintained. The new vehicle, a Mini-bus, will be of great use to the Commissioners in the performance of their duties.

BUILDING

General maintenance of the building continued as a matter of priority. The building was fumigated (bi-weekly) by MOPH Vector Control.

SECURITY

The security of the premises continued at an acceptable level. There were no adverse reports from any of the other Commissions on the premises. It is hoped that there will be a continuance of this level of performance.

PUBLIC EDUCATION & AWARENESS UNIT

Summary

It must be emphasised that the execution of projects by the Unit was curtailed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impasse after the March, 2020 General Elections. Face-to-face interactions were significantly less and a period of uncertainty existed over the five-month elections stalemate.

However, in January and December respectively the Unit was fully involved in two significant events of national importance; the debut of the local movie “I Am Us” at Caribbean Cinemas, GIFTLAND Mall and hosting the *fully virtual* inaugural “National Conversation” on improving ethnic relations in Guyana. The signing of the ERC “Code of Conduct” in February by the eleven contesting Political Parties was also a major highlight in the run-up to the general elections.

A number of new Public Service Advertisements (PSA’s) were also produced and disseminated to promote peace and tolerance as well, despite the new challenges. No major engagements with stakeholders were organized due to the aforementioned reasons. However, other projects were executed in the area of branding, a logo competition, spreading awareness on offences and even inviting persons of interest to the Commission for infractions committed.

A major undertaking was the preparation and planning of a “Virtual National Conversation” on improving ethnic relations to which much time and effort were devoted. This report also provides a far-reaching glance of the public relations activities for the year. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the year ended with the soft launch and public distribution of 200 copies of the ERC Harmony Colouring Book intended for Primary School students.

Major Events

I AM US – The Movie

In January, “I Am US”, the locally produced movie adapted from the 2019 stage play of the same name was launched and shown for one week at Caribbean Cinemas, GIFTLAND Mall with free admission to cinema goers. The link to view the movie was also provided on the ERC YouTube Channel for Guyanese unable to watch “I Am Us” in the cinema or living in outlying regions. At the time of preparing this report the movie according to You Tube statistics was viewed 41,460 times. The ERC in 2020 also participated at film festival where the movie was shown at the Umana Yana. The link was also shared to the email addresses of stakeholders with whom the ERC has interactions since its re-activation in 2018.

With a cast of characters representing the country’s ethnicities, the movie was also seen as a catalyst to promote tolerance in the run-up to the March, 2020 Regional and General Elections. The plot of the movie brought to the fore the hurdles faced by two neighbouring families composed of the two major ethnic groups and living in harmony, but latent suspicions and mistrust surfaced during an upcoming election.

In the story, not without typical Guyanese humour which the local audience welcomed, both families were forced to reconcile in the interest of their young offspring. Almost two thousand persons watched the movie at Caribbean Cinemas.

The ERC “Code of Conduct” for Political Parties

Following engagements with representatives of political parties for a few months prior, the eleven contesting Political Parties signed on to the ERC “Code of Conduct” at a simple ceremony in February at the Georgetown Club to register their commitment to clean elections campaigning.

The ERC “Virtual National Conversation” on Improving Ethnic Relations

With the country still reeling from the global pandemic, the Commission took a bold step to organise the first ever national discourse on improving ethnic relations in Guyana. After much brainstorming, a decision was finally made for the event to be fully-virtual to avoid a crowded but safe environment. A Logo Competition was also launched to select best logo for the “National Conversation”. A logo submitted by Mr. Godis Accra was declared the winning entry from close to one hundred submissions.

The ERC in collaboration with the University of Guyana and the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator hosted the “Virtual National Conversation” on Improving Ethnic Relations at Herdmanston Lodge, Queenstown on December 14 and 15.

Mainstream media as well as the ERC social media pages were saturated with messages to promote the event. The Public Education and Awareness Unit took a lead role in the planning and execution of the two-day event. Almost 25 presenters were canvassed to give presentations from the Youth and other segments of the society representing religion, known political

affiliation, gender balance, ethnicity, etc. to reflect diversity. Guyanese were urged to participate by asking questions, offer suggestions or follow the ‘conversation.’

The fully virtual format allowed for broad participation on social media while the event was broadcast on HBTV Channel 9, TVG Channel 28 and HGPTV Channel 67. The discourse enjoyed over fifty thousand views on social media alone and thousands more watched the “National Conversation” on television. A performance representing different cultures brought the curtains down on the inaugural event.

Public Relations Activities

Press Releases

The media community is regarded as a major and valued stakeholder by the ERC in its country-wide mission. During 2020, information was shared to the media fraternity for dissemination in the midst of challenges mentioned earlier but coverage was facilitated. The ERC issued thirty six (36) press releases for the year in review. **(See Annex C for a full read)**

-ERC MOVIE “I AM US” AIMS FOR UNITY AND TOLERANCE DURING ELECTIONS PERIOD (January 9, 2020)

-ERC CALLS FOR CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES DURING CAMPAIGN (January 11, 2020)

-RUN UP OF POLITICAL PARTIES TO THE MARCH 2 GENERAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS (January 17, 2020)

-ERC CONDEMNS BEHAVIOUR OF POLITICAL SUPPORTERS ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL (January 31, 2020)

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN, ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION (ERC) ON THE UPCOMING MARCH 02, 2020 GENERAL & REGIONAL ELECTIONS (February, 2020)

-PRESS STATEMENT- ERC has concluded its investigation into the complaints made by the Private Sector Commission of Guyana and Captain Gerald Gouveia (February 26, 2020)

-ERC WRITES POLITICAL PARTIES & MEDIA ENTITIES ON ELECTION RELATED ISSUES (February 27, 2020)

-ELECTORAL PROCESS FREE AND FAIR – RESULTS MUST BE RESPECTED (March 4, 2020)

-CREDIBLE ELECTIONS VITAL TO PEACE AND HARMONY (March 6, 2020)

-ERC WELCOMES AGREEMENT FOR NATIONAL RECOUNT OF VOTES (March 16, 2020).

-ERC URGES COMPASSION TOWARDS ALL ETHNICITIES IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC (April 17, 2020)

-GREETINGS ON RAMADAN

(April 24, 2020)

-ERC ARRIVAL DAY MESSAGE -100 YEARS SINCE END OF INDENTURESHIP

(May 4, 2020)

ERC ENCOURAGES GUYANESE TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING, AS WORK CONTINUES TO PROMOTE HARMONY DESPITE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

(May 15, 2020)

-ERC PROBING RECENT INCIDENTS

(May 19, 2020)

-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE- The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), has since noted remarks made by one of its Commissioners, - Haji Dr. Roshan Khan.

(June 9, 2020)

-LET PEACE PREVAIL AS GECOM PREPARES TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT ANNOUNCEMENT ON MARCH 02 ELECTIONS

(June 14, 2020)

-Ethnic Relations Commission meets with “Guyanese Critic” on racial statements made.

(June 16, 2020)

-PRESS RELEASE-The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), undeniably supports an articulate and free press which contributes to the good tenets of a democratic nation.

(June 29, 2020)

-ALL ARE URGED TO WORK TO DE-ESCALATE TENSIONS

(July 5, 2020)

-A MESSAGE FROM THE ERC ON THE OCCASION OF EID-UL-ADHA 2020

(July 30, 2020).

-ERC EMANCIPATION MESSAGE-2020

(July 31, 2020)

-ADVISORY TO PERSONS OF INTEREST TO VISIT ERC OFFICE

(August 18, 2020)

-ERC CONGRATULATES PRESIDENT ALI AND GOVERNMENT

(August 18, 2020)

PRESS RELEASE -(ERC), has been diligently conducting investigations into complaints.

-ADVISORY TO PERSONS OF INTEREST TO VISIT ERC OFFICE

(September 7, 2020)

-ERC CONDEMNNS SENSELESS KILLINGS OF TEENS AT COTTON TREE, WCB

-calls for swift action by the Police

(September 7, 2020)

-ERC CALLS ON JOINT SERVICES TO RE-ESTABLISH LAW AND ORDER ALONG EAST COAST AND WEST BERBICE

(September 10, 2020)

DISCLAIMER -The Ethnic Relations Commission, ERC, wishes to disassociate itself from social media posts made by ERC Commissioner Haji Dr. Roshan Khan Sr.

(September 11, 2020)

-PRESS RELEASE-The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), fully supports the call by H.E. Dr. Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, for persons caught spewing race hate and hostility on social media.

September 12, 2020)

-ERC VISITS WEST COAST BERBICE FAMILIES (September 22, 2020)

A MESSAGE FROM THE ERC ON THE OCCASION OF YOUMAN NABI 2020

-Let's all be inspired by the pertinent lessons (October 28, 2020)

-ERC URGES ALL GUYANESE TO EMBRACE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEEPAVALI

(November 13, 2020)

-ERC TO LAUNCH NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON ETHNIC RELATIONS IN DECEMBER

(November 17, 2020)

ERC CHAIRMAN URGES GUYANESE TO TAKE PART IN NATIONAL CONVERSATION

(December 3, 2020)

SOCIAL MEDIA LINK AVAILABLE FOR ERC NATIONAL CONVERSATION

-Guyanese urged to participate

(December 12, 2020)

-ERC INVESTIGATING DANGEROUS SOCIAL MEDIA POST ALLEGEDLY ATTRIBUTED TO CATHY HUGHES

(December 16, 2020)

-ERC COMMENCES LEGAL ACTION AGAINST DEFAULTERS

(December 31, 2020)

-SOFT LAUNCH AND DISTRIBUTION OF ERC HARMONY COLOURING BOOK

(December , 2020)

Branding Initiatives

The variety of branding for the year was limited due to the restricted environment outlined above. However, some initiatives were accomplished and continuous branding will help to achieve the Commission's objective to cultivate a new perspective about the ERC and encourage public support.

Branded items:

- 320 ERC 2021 Calendars
- 1 Pull-up Banner for National Conversation
- 1 Backdrop Banner - National Conversation
- 2,000 pcs Bookmarks depicting ERC milestones

Electronic Materials

- 2 PSA's – National Conversation
- Assorted Promo Videos- National Conversation

Links to the inaugural "National Conversation"

- **ERC National Conversation on improving Ethnic Relations**
<https://fb.watch/3mUbUjJOhJ/>
- **Message from Ms. Mikiko Tanaka, UN Resident Coordinator**
<https://fb.watch/3mUswKseyM/>
- **Countdown to National Conversation**
<https://fb.watch/3mUB6CTrv4/>
- **Cultural Promo-National Conversation**
<https://fb.watch/3mUVF7OH2i/>
- **National Conversation**
<https://fb.watch/3o5V75LJ1C/>

LEGAL & INVESTIGATIVE UNIT

About the Investigative Unit

The Investigative Unit is tasked with receiving and investigating complaints of “*Persons Causing Racial or Ethnic Violence or Hatred*”, “*Excitement of Racial Hostility or Ill-Will*,” under the Racial Hostility Act and the Representation of the People’s (Amendment) Act. The Unit is also tasked with investigating political hostility and religious intolerance under Article 212D of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana,

Modus Operandi of the Investigative Unit

The Investigative Unit is governed by the Chairman and members of the Complaints Sub-Committee which comprise:

Deputy Chairman, Major General (Ret’d) Norman McLean	Chairman
Commissioner Norris Witter	Member
Commissioner Rajkumarie Singh	Member
Commissioner Ashton Simon	Member
Commissioner Deodat Persaud	Member
Commissioner Barrington Braithwaite	Member
Commissioner Haji, Dr. Roshan Khan	Member

The staff who sit on the Sub-Committee are as follows:

Staff

Mr. Aidan Sparman	Head, Investigative Unit (ag.)
Ms. Kimbely Yearwood	Legal Officer
Mr. Remington Eastman	Head, Media Monitoring Unit

The above staff is referred to as the Tripartite; The Head of the Media Monitoring Unit sends matters to the Head of the Investigative Unit to be investigated and the Unit conducts its investigations and sends the complete file with a recommendation to the Legal Officer for her advice. The Legal Officer then gives her advice, and based on her advice, the file either goes back to the Investigative Unit for further action or to the Complaints Sub-Committee for deliberation before it goes to the plenary for ratification.

Staffing

In 2020 the Unit had the following staff:

- 1) Mr. Lloyd Smith – Head, Investigative Unit (He retired in the month of October 2020.)
- 2) Mr. Aidan Sparman – Senior Investigative Officer
- 3) Mr. Jason Samuels – Investigative Officer (He was employed during the last quarter of the year 2020.)

Forms

The following forms are used by the Unit:

1. Complaint Form – This is the standard form used for making walk-in complaints.
2. Investigative Log Sheets – This form is used by investigators to make notes when conducting investigations.
3. Close of Complaint Forms – This form is written up when a complaint has been deemed closed. Information on the date of closure and the reason for closure is written therein.

Key activities of the Unit

Activity 1 - Treating with complaints

- a. Receiving complaints via letters, email, Facebook, walk-in, etc.
- b. Acknowledging receipt of letters and electronic complaints (Not applicable for walk-in complaints).
- c. Conducting Investigations – This entails sending letters to the respondent and to persons/ organizations that would be of assistance with our investigations. Also, it includes visiting various locations to obtain statements and evidence from witnesses, organizations, and respondents.
- d. Compilation and submission of reports with recommendations to the Legal Officer for advice.
- e. Sending of copies of the file with advice from the Legal Officer to the Complaints Sub-Committee thru' the CEO for their information and decision.

Activity 2 – Record Keeping

- a. Recording complaints received in the 'Record-Keeping Ledger'.
- b. Recording all complaints and the relevant data needed for reporting purposes in the Investigative Unit Database.
- c. Opening and keeping files for each complaint. These files contain the official complaint, statements, and evidence. All digital evidence is stored on the computer.
- d. Scanning and converting all old files to PDF (Electronic retention of files).
- e. Keeping all documents related to investigations in special files.

Activity 3 -Facilitation of the Complaints Sub-Committee Meeting

- a. Informing the CEO of the date and time of meetings of the Sub-Committee.
- b. Printing of spreadsheets with updates on all active complaints.
- c. Printing of reports and any other documents for the meeting.
- d. Storing of all relevant images and videos on a flash drive to view with the aid of the boardroom's Smart Television if necessary.
- e. The audio recording of all meetings.
- f. Prepare minutes of meetings and print them for perusal and adoption for the next meeting.
- g. Facilitate dispute resolution activities as directed by the Sub-Committee.

Activity 4 – Reporting and Budgeting

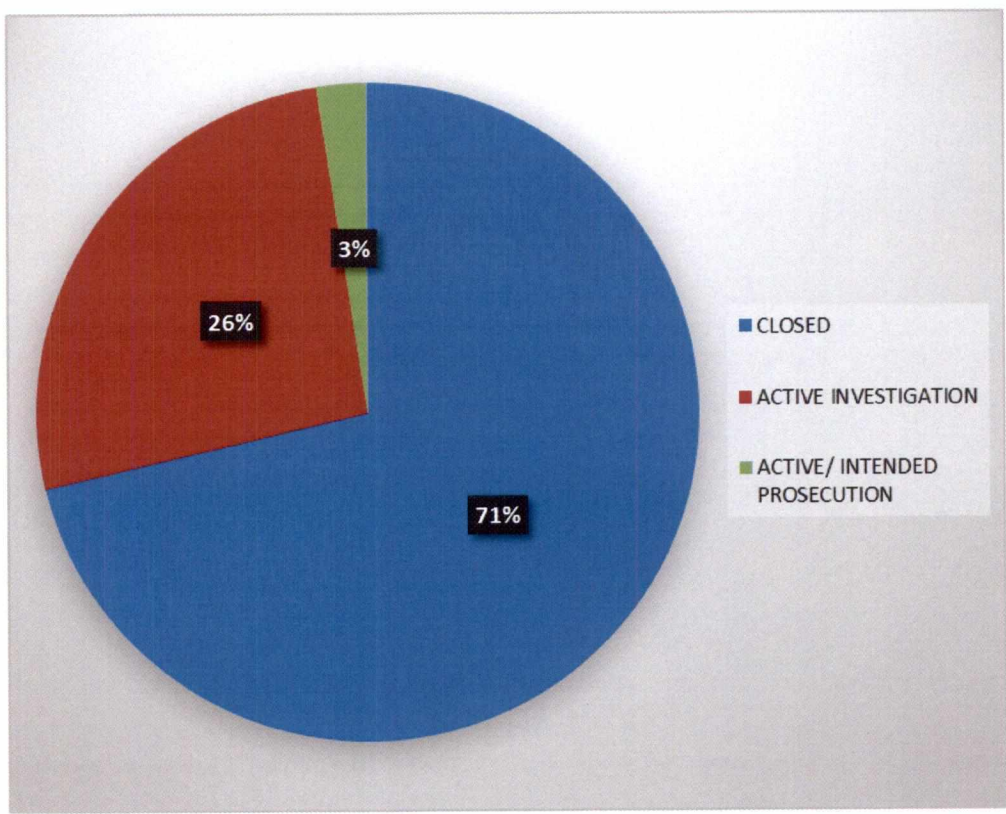
- a. Preparation and submission of Biannual and Annual Reports.
- b. Preparation and Submission of Annual Departmental Budget.
- c. Preparation and submission of budgets for an investigation to be conducted out of the Region/District.
- d. Preparation and submission of monthly reports for Statutory Meetings.

Activity 5 – Special Duties

- a. Upon request, work along with the PE&AU on exhibitions, community outreaches, and other activities aimed at enlightening the public of the roles and functions of the Investigative Unit.
- b. Taking complaints at exhibitions and community outreaches.
- c. Assisting the Admin Department with the conducting of any internal investigation.

Investigative Unit Data Analysis

Pie Chart - Status of Complaints as of December 31, 2020



As the Pie Chart above depicts, at the end of December 2020, the Investigative Unit successfully closed 71% of the matters brought to its attention for investigation. 26% of the Unit's investigations were still active due to reasons such as non-cooperation from respondents and persons deleting their Facebook profile.

Towards the end of the year, the Complaints Sub-Committee decided to prosecute offenders which accounts for 3% of the matters investigated by the Unit.

MEDIA MONITORING UNIT
Annual Report (2020)
Period: 01/01/20 – 31/12/20

Executive Summary

In keeping with its constitutional mandate as adumbrated in the Herdmanston Accord (1998) to promote ethnic harmony and good relations between and amongst all citizens of Guyana [ref: Constitution (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 2000], the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) belatedly established its Media Monitoring Unit (MMU) in 2011, to boost the Commission's institutional capacity to monitor the country's mainstream print and broadcast media and all other forms of media (inclusive of the Internet), used in the communication of information likely to influence the spread of ethnic hatred and racism in the society.

The MMU, in pursuit of the Commission's mandate, scrutinizes information communicated through mainstream and social media, political speeches and the conduct of all other related activities done at political meetings during the pre-, peri- and post-elections periods in the country, for infractions of the *Racial Hostility Act (1964)* and *Representation of the People (Amendment) Act (2001)*.

Operationally, the Unit is comprised collectively of two (2) sections – a media monitoring section and an elections monitoring section. The media monitoring section of the Unit operates on a permanent basis, while the elections monitoring section is temporal and is activated seasonally to coincide with General and Regional Elections (constitutionally due every 5 years) and Local Government Elections (bi-annually).

Administratively, the MMU created and maintained its own archive of media information which is used for its own research purposes, and which can also be easily accessed for reference, if and whenever complaints or allegations of ethnic discrimination/bias or racism are received from concerned members of the public, aggrieved individuals or any organization which perceives that they have been ethnically/racially profiled or harmed in a negative way through the media.

As is known, the just concluded year (2020) was an elections year in Guyana and the MMU's focus was primarily centered on implementing and completing an elections monitoring program (EMP) across 7 regions of the country on behalf of the Commission. The results indicated that

the initiative was relatively successful in keeping to minimum, instances of racial/ethnic clashes amongst the officials and supporters of the two main contesting political parties – PPP/C and APNU+AFC. In fact, the timely implementation of program went a far way in positioning the Commission to make informed interventions to mitigate and resolve numerous instances of racial/ethnic hotspots that erupted intermittently at public meetings and on social media during the run-up to the elections, held on March 2, 2020.

In summary, the MMU, as stated before, is guided by the mandate of the ERC. And in carrying out our monitoring activities in pursuit of that mandate, the Unit was critically involved in the following activities during 2020:

- The recording, monitoring and archiving of in excess of **2500** hours of television programming with political content from 11 television stations situated in Region 4.
- The monitoring and archiving of all the daily and Sunday newspapers – i.e. Guyana Chronicle, Guyana Times, Stabroek News and Kaieteur News – that were produced during the period 01/01/20 – 31/12/20.
- The implementation over an approximately 2-months period (between Jan. 3, 2020 – Feb. 29, 2020) of an external Elections Monitoring Program (EMP) across **7** regions of the country (i.e., Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10), in the lead-up to the country’s general and regional elections held on March 2, 2020. This exercise included the deployment and coordination of **40** Elections Monitors to physically monitor political meetings on behalf of the ERC.
- Provision of original evidence to the ERC in the forms of audio and video files and written statements, submitted by Election Monitors of **19** instances where ethnically offensive language and/or actions was used or indulged in by politicians and/or their supporters at political meetings, during the pre-elections period.
- Submission of media analyses to the ERC supportive of the Unit’s observations of **3** instances where ethnically offensive articles (in violation of the *Racial Hostility Act, Chapter 23:01*) were disseminated through sections of the Print Media – i.e. Stabroek News and Kaieteur News.
- Brought to the attention of the ERC, **170** instances where ethnically offensive comments were posted to the websites and Facebook pages of local media houses and political parties.

Made a total of **165** interventions on behalf of the ERC in the form of ‘Cautionary Statements’ posted to the websites and Facebook (Fb) pages of local media houses and political parties guilty of allowing ethnically offensive comments that were in violation of the *Racial Hostility Act, Chapter 23:01* and *Representation of the People (Amendment) Act (2001)*, to remain for protracted periods on their platforms.

- At the request of the ERC, the Unit played the lead role in collaboration with the Investigative Unit, in compiling a detailed **Dossier** highlighting a list of ethnic offenses committed by politicians, prominent personalities and institutions, since the Commission’s installment in February, 2018 to the end of December, 2020.
- At the request of the ERC, the MMU in collaboration with the Investigative Unit, prepared a **Research Proposal** to aid the Commission in assessing the feasibility of engaging in a larger study of “**The impact on race relations of post-elections racial hostilities and violence observed mainly between Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese in West Coast Berbice.**”

Objectives of the MMU

1. To monitor the local media for adherence to the tenets of the Racial Hostility Act 1964 and Representation of the People (Amendment) Act (2001).
2. To bring to the attention of the Chairman and Commissioners of the ERC, any observed infractions of the Racial Hostility Act (1964) and Representation of the People (Amendment) Act (2001), by the print and broadcast media or by any citizen using a public space to influence public opinion.
3. To evaluate complaints sent to the ERC by members of public and organizations, and offer advice accordingly on the merits/demerits of same.
4. To influence a high level of sensitivity and decorum as it relates to the discussion/propagation of ethnic/race issues in public spaces.
5. To promote the maintenance of the highest professional and ethical standards by local media practitioners in their communication of ethnic/race issues to the general public.
6. To make a measurable input into the realization of a peaceful social environment, by actively contributing to the minimization of incidences of dissemination of racism (in all its forms) through the media and/or in campaign rallies/meetings during elections periods.

Television and Newspapers

Television:

The Unit's monitoring of the programs – limited to News, Talk-shows, Call-in programs, Vox Pox programs, Political parties' sponsored programs and Press briefings - aired on the country's television stations (in Region 4) during 2020, did not result in the identification of any infractions of the *Racial Hostility Act (1964)* or *Representation of the People (Amendment) Act (2001)*.

Newspapers:

The MMU's monitoring of the country's mainstream daily and Sunday newspapers resulted in the identification of three (3) instances of the publication of articles which were deemed as ethnically offensive and referred to the Commission for adjudication. The 3 publications at reference are as follows:

- I. A Kaieteur News column, captioned "**Mercury and the Russians rigged the elections for the PPP**" written by Frederick Kisson and published in the Tuesday, May 19, 2020 edition of the newspaper, which, the Unit found to be racially inciting and inflammatory.
- II. A **Cartoon** published in the Thursday, June 11, 2020 edition of the Stabroek News, which the Unit strongly felt sent a message that was racially divisive.
- III. A **Cartoon** published in the Sunday, October 11, 2020 edition of the Stabroek News, which the Unit consensually felt carried a dominant message that was racially divisive.

Social Media

Overview:

The MMU targets and monitors the official websites and Facebook pages of local media houses and political parties known to be domiciled and operating within the geographical boundaries of Guyana.

Monitoring of social media on behalf of the ERC is done by the MMU in an attempt to curb the increasing use of social media to foment racial divisions in the country and to advise persons posting racially inciting, stereotypical and inflammatory comments to the comments sections of the aforementioned websites and Facebook pages, of the penalties that can be leveraged against them in a competent Court-of-Law, as spelt out in the *Racial Hostility Act, Chapter 23:01* and *Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03*.

Findings:

During 2020, the MMU detected and brought to the attention of the ERC one-hundred and sixty nine (169) instances of ethnically offensive comments posted to the websites and Facebook pages of local media houses and political parties. Of this number, eighty (80) postings were comments found to be racially stereotypical, fifty (50) were comments deemed racially divisive/hateful, thirty-five (35) were racially inciting/inflammatory, and four (4) were religiously divisive [Appendix 4, fig 1]. The Facebook pages of the media houses and political parties where these comments were drawn from by the Unit are as follows: HGP Nightly News, NCN News, Capitol News, News Source Guyana, Demerara Waves Online News, News Room, Kaieteur News, Kaieteur Radio, Guyana Chronicle Online News, INEWS Guyana, Guyana Times, TVG Ch 28, APNU Guyana, APNUAFC tv, and PPP/C. From this lot, twenty-eight (28) ethnically offensive comments were found on the INEWS Fb page, twenty-six (26) on the HGP Nightly News FB page, eighteen (18) on the NCN News Fb page, fifteen (15) on the Guyana Chronicle Fb page, and twelve (12) each on the News Source Guyana and APNU Guyana Fb pages, respectively [Appendix 4, fig 1].

Social Media Analysis:

Research has shown and established beyond doubt that social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.) is the most popular medium of communication used by the majority of the world's population. Guyana is no exception to this fact. The most popular medium of communication used by media houses and political parties in Guyana to disseminate information to the public is Facebook.

Over the past year (2020), for statistical reasons and ease of reference, the ethnically offensive comments uploaded to the Facebook pages of local media houses and political parties, which were flagged by the MMU, were compartmentalized into four (4) distinct categories: (i) racially divisive/hateful, (ii) racially inciting/inflammatory, (iii) racially stereotypical, and (iv) religiously divisive.

The information that the Unit collated with regards to the number and frequency of interventions made during 2020, to interject the ERC's approved 'Cautionary Statements' against ethnically offensive comments, showed that the greater numbers of infractions of the country's Statutory Ethnic Laws (Racial Hostility Act, Chapter 23:01 and Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03) occurred in the post-elections period between July and September, 2020, peaking at its highest in July [Appendix 3, fig. 1]. This observation is unsurprising, yet significant, due to the fact that this same period (July to September) coincided with the immediate pre-, peri- and post-months of the not so smooth changeover in government (on August 02, 2020). Reflectively, it was a period when there was an upsurge in racial and political animosities between the ethnic supporters of the two main political competitors in the elections, and this was reflected, most graphically, in the verbal warfare waged, almost unfettered, between the two groups on Facebook.

Another notable observation that can be drawn from the statistical information gathered from Facebook by the Unit, is that, compared to the mainstream media, where relatively strong editorial controls are in place to filter out ethnically undesirable information from reaching the general public, the comparably less regulated environment of Facebook is a magnet for those in society bent on promoting racial/ethnic divisions.

Interestingly also, the statistics show that this is probably the first time (since the tenure of the Commission began in 2018), that religiously divisive comments were observed in the assortment of ethnically offensive posts identified by the Unit during our monitoring of Facebook. And though the number of occasions when persons were derogated on religious grounds was somewhat small and infrequent (4), it is worth mentioning because, it suggests, that religion is now being targeted as a new vista for confrontation by the racial combatants on social media.

Forecast: Local Government Elections (2021)

Without question, the major event engaged in by the MMU during 2020 was our implementation, on behalf of the Commission, of the externally-based elections monitoring program (EMP) for the country's March 02, 2020, general and regional elections (GRE). The positive outcomes and interrelated results achieved through the program by the ERC were measurable from the perspective that it was the mechanism through which the Commission was able to keep abreast of all elections-related activities in the regions. Moreover, the video, audio and written reports submitted to the MMU by field operatives (Election Monitors) during the pre-elections period, served as the basis for the ERC's interventions into the myriad contentious ethnic issues which inevitably arose on the elections campaign trail.

Looking ahead this year, other elections of a different kind beckons. All things being equal, there is every likelihood of the holding of Local Government Elections (LGE) in the country before the end of 2021. Reminiscently, the last time LGE was held in Guyana was in 2018, and the ERC, in keeping with its constitutional mandate to promote harmony and good relations, had implemented a limited EMP for the elections.

Taking into account the fact that the country has not yet fully recovered from the effects of the ethnic discord spawned during the recent general and regional elections (GRE), the MMU pessimistically predicts that because the LGE is coming so quickly on the heels of the GRE, the same ethnically divisive environment that obtained during those elections will continue into the LGE version. We (the Unit), nevertheless, would be delighted to be proven wrong on this forecast, in the best interest of the nation. If, however, our forecast holds true, the

implementation of an EMP by the ERC during the elections campaign will, as proven before, be pivotal in positioning the Commission to intervene in and mitigate those ethnic issues with the potential to boil over into open ethnic warfare.

Conclusion

Year 2020 was no doubt a busy, compact one, for the ERC, in terms of the wider array of activities the organization engaged in, in comparison to the preceding years. As the media monitoring arm of the Commission, the MMU's activities also concomitantly went up a notch or two in tandem with the organization's increased workload.

Looking back at 2020, like every other department within the ERC, the MMU contributed measurably towards the many successes of the organization in its efforts to foster harmony and good relations amongst all races and ethnicities in Guyana.

During 2020, the Media Monitoring Unit was able to, under the prevailing circumstances, organize and coordinate a limited but successful elections monitoring program on behalf of the Commission which, contributed in no small measure in giving the Commission positive public visibility in a critical national event, where ethnic peace and harmony was under severe threat of unravelling.

Likewise, the Unit's robust monitoring of mainstream and social media supported the Commission's mandate to enforce the Racial Hostility Act, Chapter 23:01 and Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03, against those who were wont to use the media to spread ethnic hate and violence in the country.

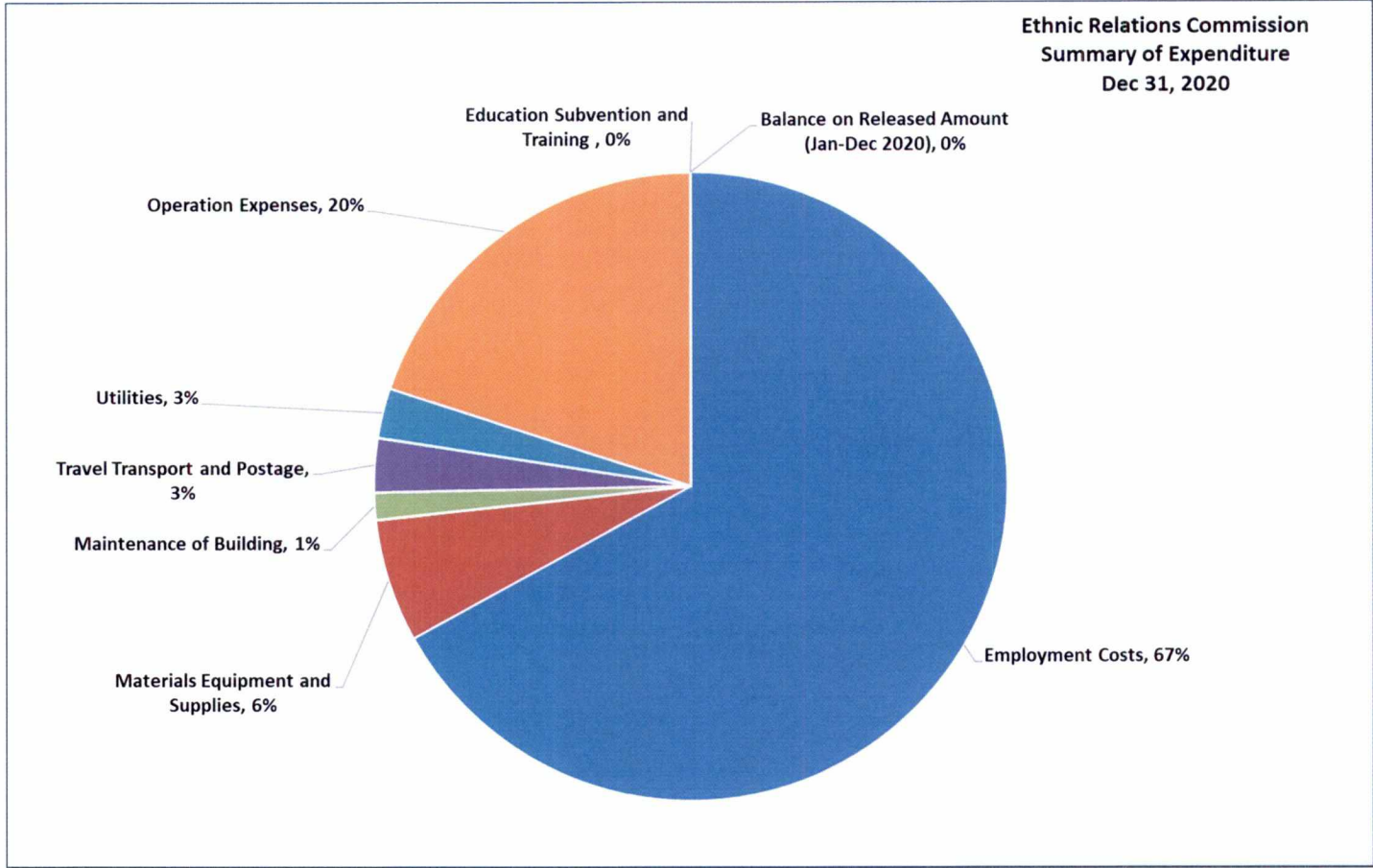
For the New Year (2021), the MMU looks forward to providing quality support to the ERC as it carries out its plans, policies and programs in the national interest. The Unit stands at the ready to provide timely and accurate information to the Commission that positions the body to effectively counter those persons and/or organizations who will attempt to use the media (mainstream and social), or the medium of political meetings, to spread ethnic hate and disunity in the country.

FINANCE UNIT

National Assembly approved the sum of two hundred and seven million, six hundred and sixty-nine thousand dollars (\$207,669,000) as 2020 current expenditure and capital expenditure of Thirteen million one hundred twenty three thousand, four hundred and twenty seven dollars (\$13,123,427) for the Commission.

The Commission expended 100% (\$207,669,000) of its entire allocation for 2020 of which one hundred thirty-nine million and eighty-five thousand, one hundred and five dollars (\$139,085,105) for Employment Cost and sixty-eight million six hundred and thirteen thousand, eight hundred and ninety-five dollars (\$68,613,895) for Other Charges. The Commission expended 100% (\$13,123,427) of its entire capital allocation for 2020.

Please see pie chart below:



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations from the Investigative Unit

To remedy the limitations of the unit, the following is respectfully recommended:

1. Recruit more investigators.
2. The Commission should do PSA's aimed at clarifying what matters fall within the mandate of the ERC.
3. The public should be sensitized of the magnitude of persons that are likely to be affected by hate speech on Facebook. Given that, according to (NapoleonCat, 2020), a **social media** data management and marketing firm which specializes in analyzing and reporting on trends on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other social media websites, "there were 504,400 Facebook users in Guyana in December 2020, which accounted for 63.2% of its entire population".¹
4. Enlist the service of someone competent in Cyber Crime investigation to train the staff of the Unit.
5. Embark on a project to amend the Racial Hostility Act and Representation of the Peoples Act or create a new act "Ethnic Relation Commission Offenses Act" which could specify the following:
 - a) Definition of key terms under the Representation of the People Act, namely racial, ethnic, hatred and violence.
 - b) Meaning of "*may cause* racial or ethnic violence or hatred" and special provisions on the procedural aspects of prosecuting charges of this nature, for example, eliciting evidence from expert witnesses.
 - c) Removal of duplicity in investigations where it is apparent that the words or conduct of a person was made on behalf of a political party.
 - d) Section 139E of the Representation of the People Act needs to state who shall impose the fine of five hundred thousand dollars on a political party which is found culpable.
 - e) Section 139E (1) of the Representation of the People Act needs to state the legal effect of the summon which shall be issued on the leader or general secretary of

¹ Facebook users in Guyana - December 2020. (n.d.). Retrieved February 01, 2021, from <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-guyana/2020/12>

the political party. Summon should also be defined under the interpretation section of the Act.

- f) Both the Representation of the People Act and the Racial Hostility Act are in need of provisions which give the Ethnic Relations Commission the authority to mandate the appearance of persons to meetings to assist with investigations, their non-compliance resulting in a criminal charge of failing to treat with the Ethnic Relations Commission.
- g) Key terms should be defined under the Racial Hostility Act, particularly excite, hostility, ill-will, race and attempt.
- h) The Racial Hostility Act needs to include a provision setting out who imposes the penalty of disqualification from office under section 3.
- i) The Racial Hostility Act under section 2 fails to make it an offence for persons to be guilty of exciting hostility or ill will by their conduct. It only governs the words of the person.
- j) Both the Representation of the People Act and the Racial Hostility Act lack provisions which explicitly empower the Ethnic Relations Commission to institute proceedings and authorize prosecutions.

Recommendations from the Media Monitoring Unit

Reflecting on the MMU's work program during 2020 and the outcomes that were achieved, the Unit, as a Collective, felt that the sub-optimal results in some aspects of our work could be overcome if certain steps are taken to address identified weak areas. Going forward, the Unit offers the following proposals/recommendations for consideration by the Commission, in an effort to improve on the effectiveness of the MMU's work in 2021:

- The administrators/editors in control of media houses and political parties Facebook pages should be held accountable by the ERC for not addressing (editing/removing) ethnically offensive material uploaded to their mediums, the same way that individuals are prosecuted in the courts by the Commission for uploading racially hateful and inciting material to social media. The Racial Hostility Act, Chapter 23:01, states at Section 2 (4): "For the purpose of this section the proprietor, printer, publisher or editor of any newspaper, or the printer of any other printed document, in which any particular matter has been published, shall be presumed himself to have so published that mater unless he

proves that such publication was made without his authority, consent or knowledge and did not arise from want of due care on his part.” The reading and understanding of this section of the Law is very clear. Hence, all should be held to the same standard – meaning, subscribers who violate the rules, as well as the administrators/editors who facilitate their commentary on their Facebook pages. In this regard, the ERC should, as a first step, inform the administrators of the Facebook pages of all media houses and political parties of their responsibilities and obligations under the relevant statutory laws to prevent the use of their mediums to foment ethnic hate, incitement and violence. Thereafter, media houses and political parties found in breach of the Law should be censored accordingly by the Commission. This recommendation, if pursued by the ERC, should go a far way in minimizing the instances of ethnically divisive comments being posted to the Facebook pages of local media houses and political parties, for interminable periods. It would also serve the dual purpose of making the MMU’s interventions on Facebook, on behalf of the ERC, more impacting.

- The Racial Hostility Act, Chapter 23:01 and Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03, clearly and unambiguously prescribe penalties for engaging in acts of racial hatred,
- Incitement and discrimination. In recognition of the new trend emerging on social media, whereby religion has been added to the arsenal of weapons being used by racial combatants on social media and on the hustings, the MMU proposes to the Commission that it seeks Parliament’s approval for the enactment of legislation with attendant penalties to dissuade the weaponizing of religion for the express purpose of spreading ethnic discord in the society.
- In order to keep abreast of the new and advanced technologies driving the use of social media, the MMU recommends to the Commission that, arrangements be put in place during 2021, for Media Monitors be given appropriate training in cyber tracking and user-identification techniques, to supplement current knowledge in those areas. This proposal is intended to build capacity within the Unit to carry out Facebook tracking and identification tasks more efficiently and effectively.

CONCLUSION

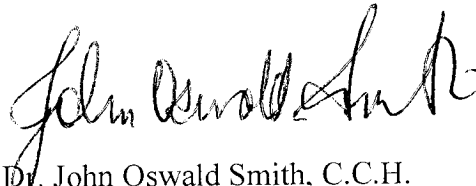
The year 2020 certainly presented a number of external challenges that resulted in the Commission honing its workplan. It is reasonable to deduce that Covid 19 and the political impasse further generated high ethnic tension in the country and the Commission did its best given the circumstances to engage key leaders to stymie and quell ethnic instability at a national level.

Key in the Commissions quest to bring about healing and reconciliation was its thrust to have a virtual national conversation for all to participate and have honest and frank conversations on solutions to mend the apparent ethnic divide and improve race relations among all Guyanese.

The Commission would like to express sincere gratitude to everyone who participated in its programme of activities and provided logistic support to our team to make our regional engagements fruitful and safe. Your commitment to avail yourself to meet with commissioners and staff to discuss ways to collectively achieve a more socially inclusive and cohesive country for all Guyanese is appreciated.

Your Honour,

In accordance with Article 212E (1) of the Constitution of Guyana, the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) hereby submit its 2020 Annual Report for your further action.



General Bishop, Rev. Dr. John Oswald Smith, C.C.H.
Chairman

ANNEX A



Code of Conduct
for
Political Parties
Contesting the
General & Regional Elections March 2020

February 2020

**THE ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR POLITICAL PARTIES
CONTESTING THE GENERAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS 2020**

The Leadership and membership of the *undersigned parties* agree to uphold the provisions of the Constitution of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, with specific reference to the following articles and Acts:-

- 38 G Public Service to be free from political influence,
- 146 Protection of the freedom of expression,
- 147 Protection of freedom of assembly, association and demonstration,
- 149 Protection from discrimination on the grounds of race etc,
- 160 A Political parties prohibited from causing ethnic division,
- The Racial Hostility Act and
- The Representation of the People Act

and recognises that peace and public order, freedom of political campaigning, and compliance with the Guyana Constitution, electoral laws and regulations are essential and of paramount importance to the conduct of free, fair and peaceful elections.

In furtherance of the objectives, we, the leadership and membership of the *parties* declare and affirm:

1. Our Party opposes and rejects the use of violence and intimidation or plans of this nature during the campaign, on election day and after the results are announced, and in doing so:-

- Forbids the use of threats, harassment or tendency to violence that might cause disruption whether at political rallies, meetings, gatherings or elsewhere, or any other form of intimidation, including the use of violence and intimidation while political parties are announcing their activities, holding their meetings, gatherings and rallies.
 - Forbids the use of threatening language, or language which incites people of one group to violence against any Candidate, Agent, member or supporter of any other group
 - Forbids all actions aimed at removing, defacing, besmirching, obscuring, destroying, damaging or altering any flag, banner, poster, notice or other campaign materials of other Political Parties.
 - Forbids the use of intimidating behavior or violence on Election Day to frighten people from going to the polls to vote, or whilst they are in the polling stations or leaving the polling stations.
2. Our Party respects the rights of each Political Party, its Candidates, Agents, members and supporters to express and demonstrate their political views and to conduct lawful, non-violent activities in support of their objectives.
 3. Our Party opposes and rejects any intimidation of media personnel while maintaining our Party's right to respond, in a factual manner, to any obvious and evident media transgressions.
 4. Our Party will insist that its candidate, Agents, members and supporters avoid behavior, including making speeches or statements that promote racial or ethnic

tension or incite people to violence, and to uphold the Racial Hostility Act and the Representation of the People Act.

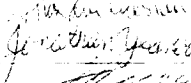
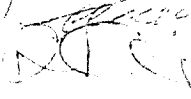
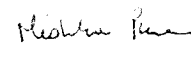

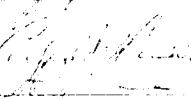
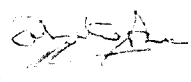
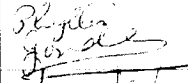
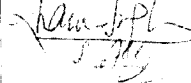
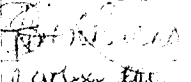

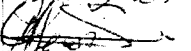
5. Our Party members and supporters will be encouraged by senior party officials, both directly and indirectly, to refrain from any expression or action that may constitute hate speech or any form of racial or ethnic discrimination.
6. Our party will immediately condemn any form of hate speech by their own members or supporters and institute necessary sanctions.
7. Moderators of our party will remove immediately any form of hate speech, whether in shape of posts or comments of social media accounts used by the political party.
8. Our party will, individually and together, issue public service announcements condemning any form of hate speech.

In doing so we shall observe this Code of Conduct and report and bring to the attention of the ***Ethnic Relations Commission*** any such acts.

The Leadership and membership of ***our parties*** agrees that our failure to abide by any of the provisions of this Code of Conduct will render ***our parties*** liable for breach of Agreement and necessary actions and sanctions may be implemented against ***our parties*** by the Ethnic Relations Commission in the said circumstances.

We anticipate in good faith that the ERC in keeping with its constitutional mandate will act with alacrity and investigate with speed and intervene to prevent such acts, protect the citizens and ensure that the 2020 General and Regional Elections are safe, peaceful and free from fear.

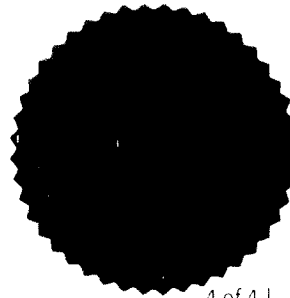
We, the undersigned, on behalf of our political parties have hereto set our hands on this the 13th day of February, 2020, endorsing and affirming the provisions therein:-

Name of Party	Name of Person(s) Signing	Designation	Signature
A New and United Guyana (ANUG)	Mr. Hari N. Ramkarran	Presidential Candidate	
A Partnership for National Unity + Alliance For Change (APNU+AFC)	Mr. Joseph Harmon	General Secretary	
Change Guyana	Ms. Mishka Puran	Prime Ministerial Candidate	
Liberty & Justice Party (LJP)	Mr. Davon Van Veen	General Secretary	
Organisation for the Victory of the People (OVP)	Mr. Gerald A. Perreira	Presidential Candidate	
People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C)	Mr. Zulfikar Mustapha	Executive Secretary	
People's Republic Party (PRP)	Mr. Timothy Norton	Leader of the Party	
The Citizenship Initiative (TCI)	Ms. Rondha Ann-Lam	Presidential Candidate	
The Federal United Party (FED-UP)	Ms. Nyssa Sibdhanny	Executive Member	
The New Movement (TNT)	Mr. Latchman Dindyal	Executive Member	
The United Republic Party (URP)	Dr. Vishnu Bandhu	Presidential Candidate	

In witness of



On behalf of the Ethnic Relations Commission

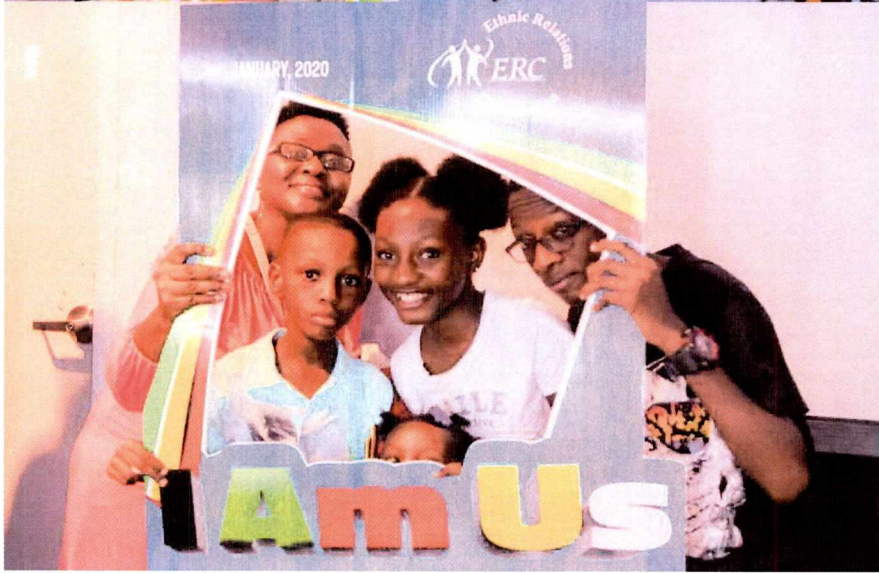
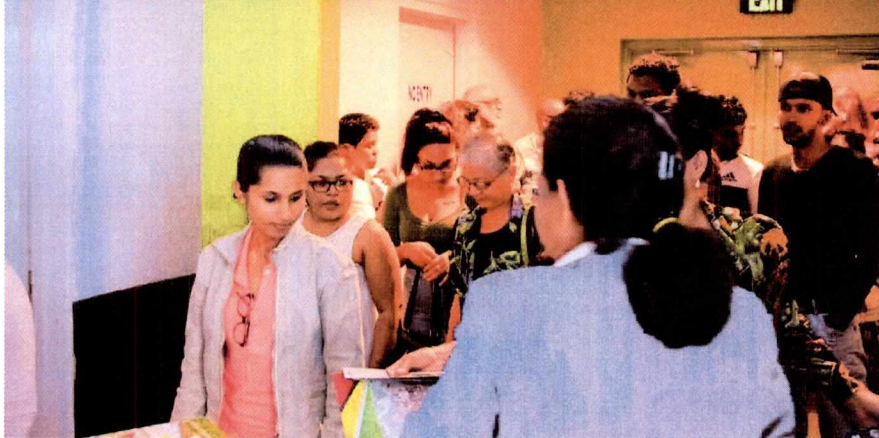
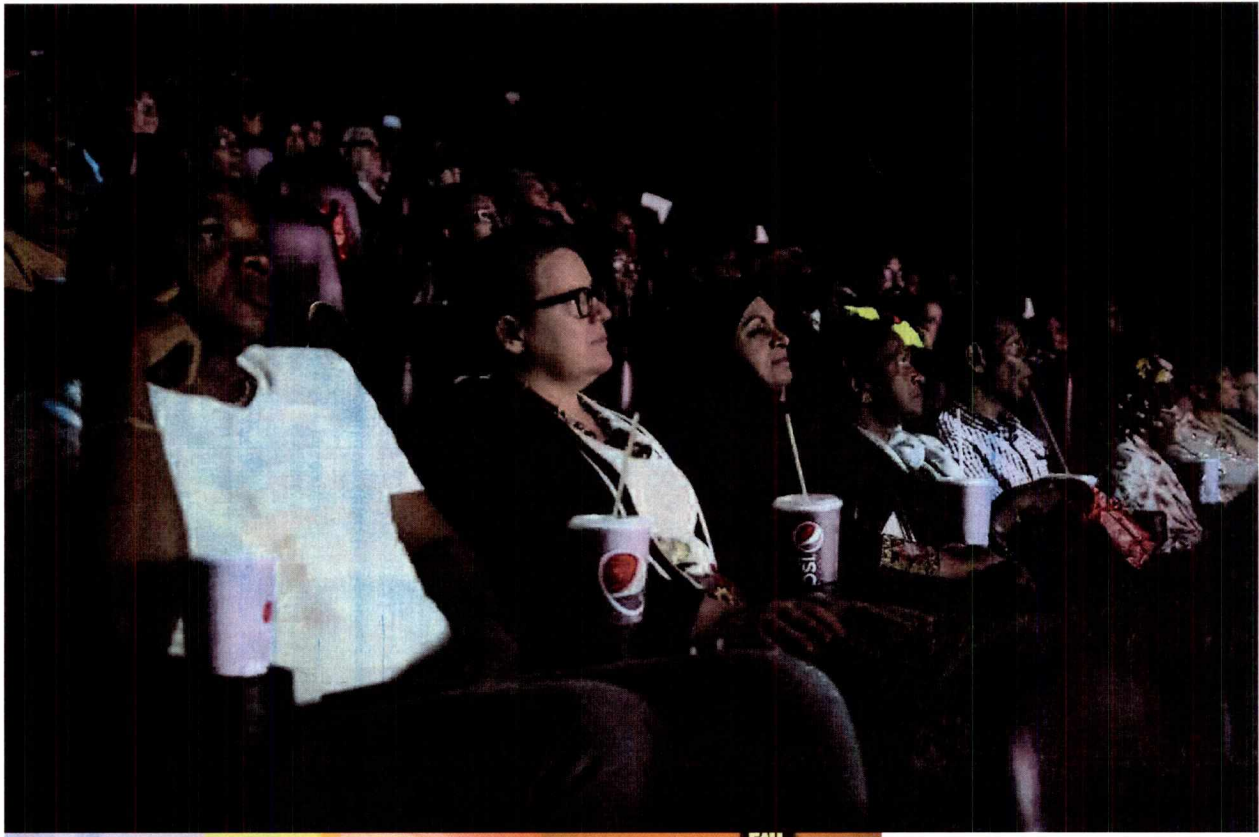


4 of 4 |

ANNEX B – Public Education & Awareness Highlights

Scenes from the launch of “I AM US “ the movie.





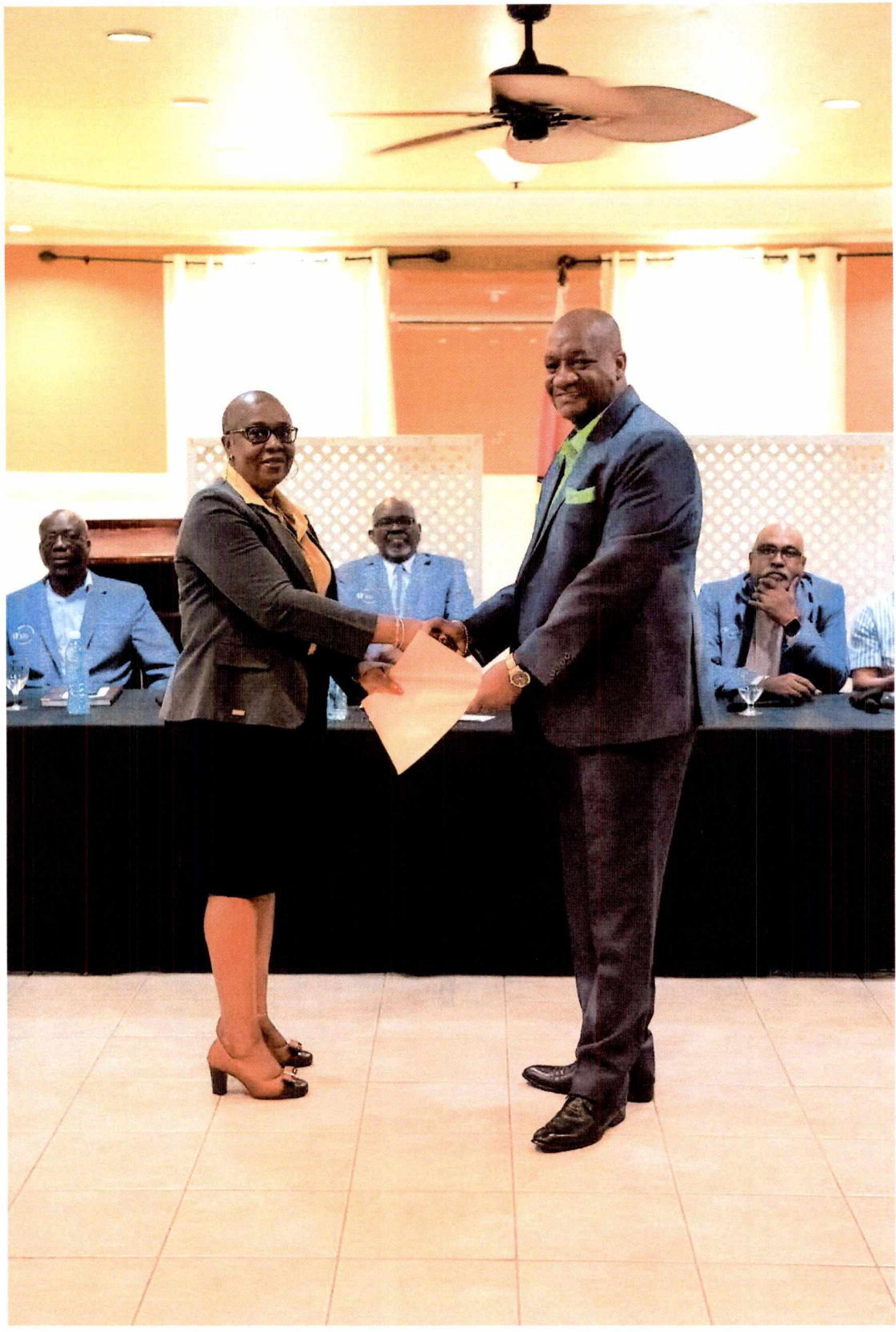
Signing of the Code of Conduct for Political Parties











Highlights of ERC's Virtual National Conversation

Some of the speakers

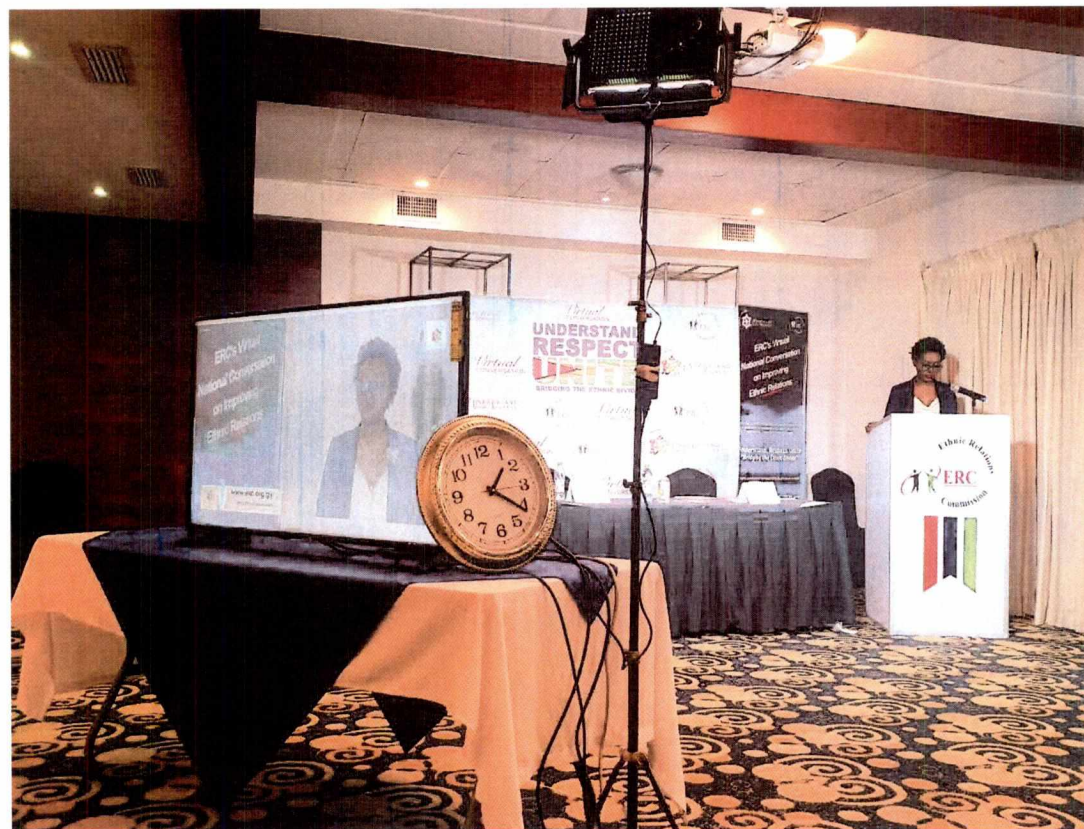
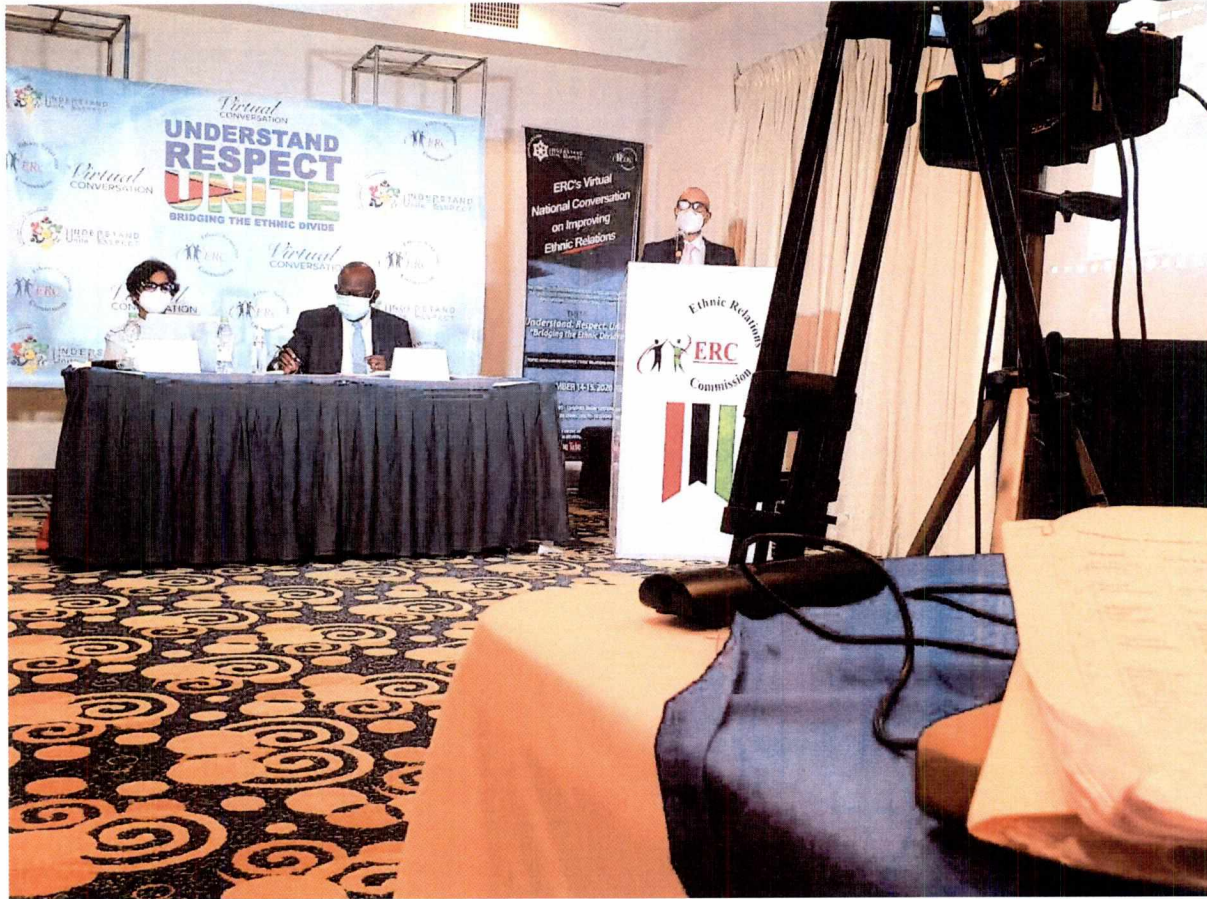


 **Ethnic Relations Commission**
Published by Jen Persaud · December 14, 2020 ·

Meet our Youth Presenters for our National Youth Conversation!
Join us via Zoom and Facebook. Lets us discuss how we can improve ethnic relations in Guyana.



Mr. Nicholas Boyer in his presentation.





Virtual CONVERSATION
SAVE THE DATE
DECEMBER 14 & 15

UNDERSTAND UNITE RESPECT

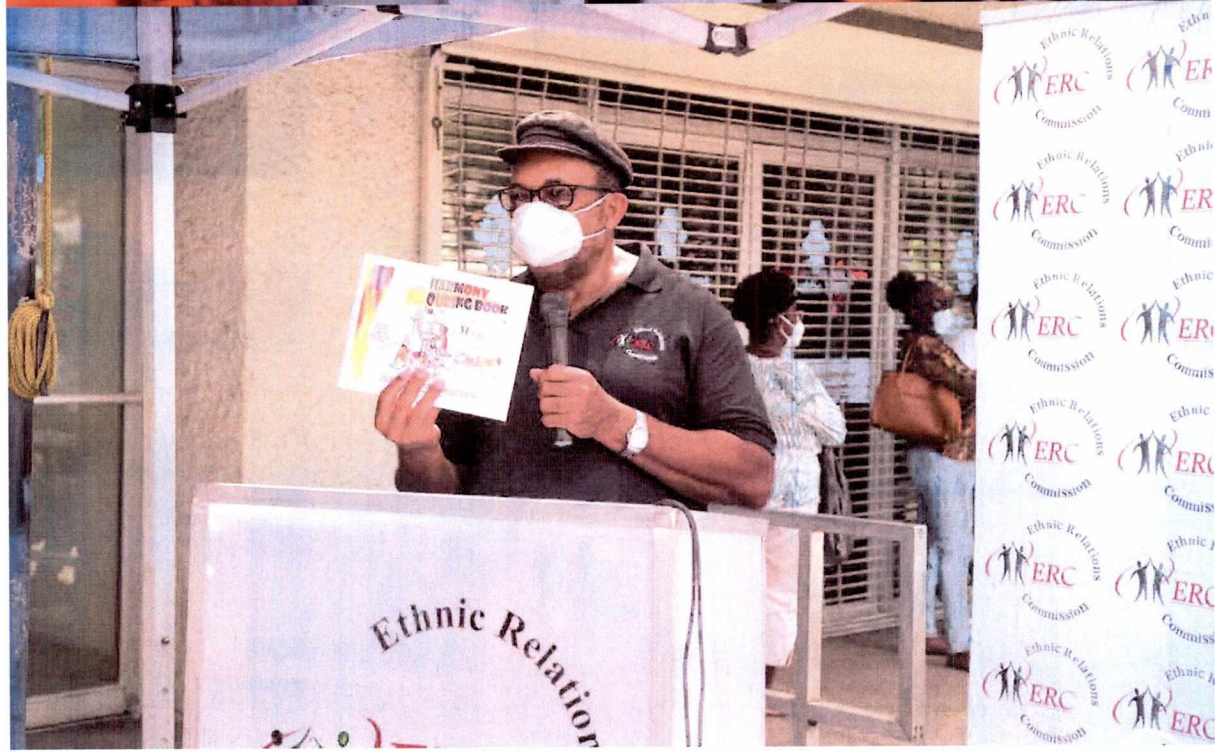
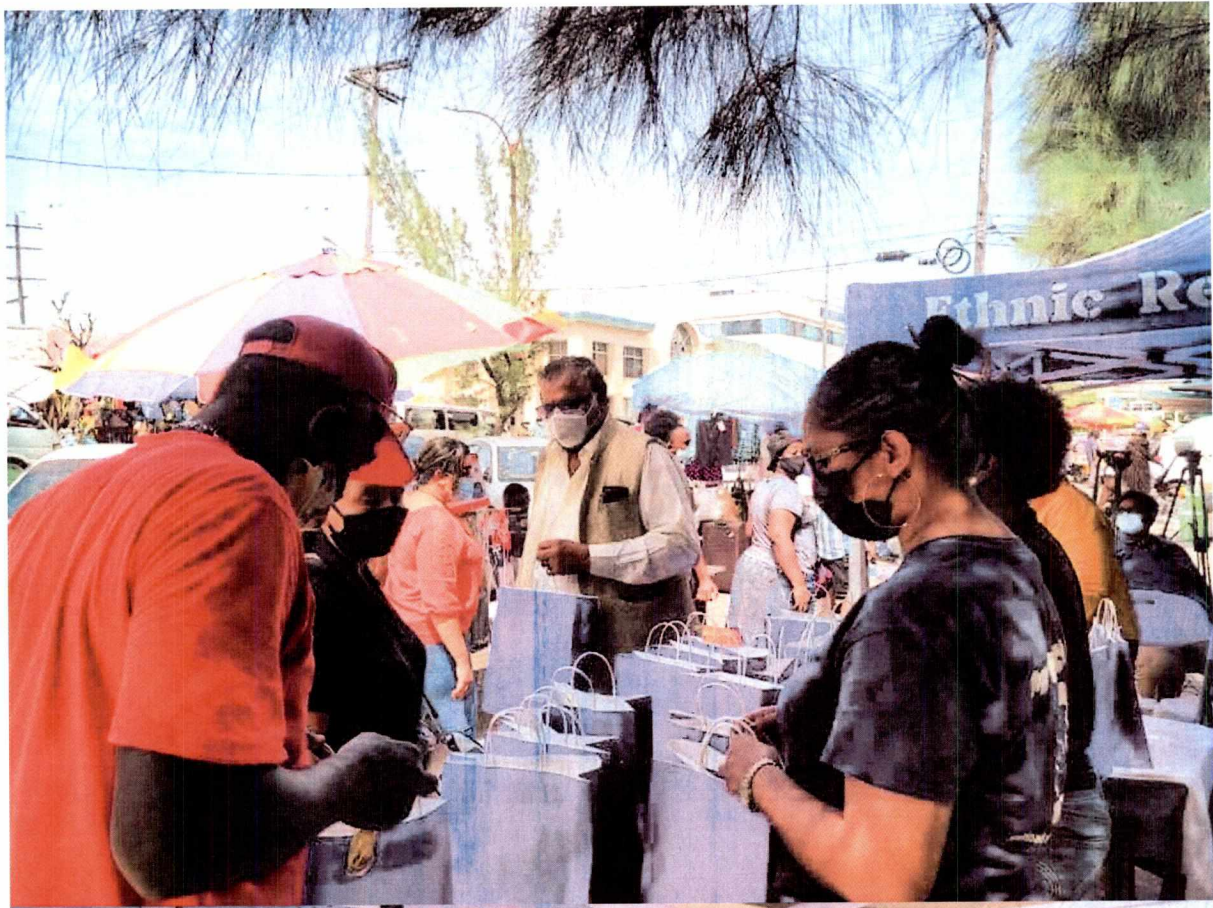
The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), in collaboration with The University of Guyana, (UOG) and The United Nations, (UN) is hosting a Virtual National Conversation on improving ethnic relations in Guyana.

THEME: UNDERSTAND, RESPECT, UNITE
TIME: 9AM - 1PM (MAIN SESSION)
6PM - 8PM (YOUTH SESSION)

LOOK OUT FOR THE LINK & PARTICIPATE VIA: [zoom](#) [f](#) [y](#)

Soft Launch of ERC's Harmony Colouring Book at Republic Bank, Water Street









ETHNIC RELATION COMMISSION 2020 PRESS RELEASES

JANUARY

ERC MOVIE “I AM US” AIMS FOR UNITY AND TOLERANCE DURING ELECTIONS PERIOD

-a must see for Guyanese

The newly produced movie from the play “I Am Us”, by the Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), will be shown at Caribbean Cinemas, Giftland Mall for one week from January 17 to 24, 2020 at 7PM. Guyanese are invited and admission is free. The play was produced by the ERC in 2019 and staged at the National Cultural Centre. The movie, with the same title, was later adopted for cinema audiences.

The movie will be launched a few days before it is open to the public and a number of dignitaries, including political leaders from various parties are invited to attend the launch. The ninety-minute screen version, produced with minor adjustments from the play maintains the common theme; confronting the ‘elephant in the room’ of general elections, notwithstanding the need for peace, tolerance and unity.

The ERC is also treating the venue as a ‘Safe Space’. The Commission hopes that the ‘Safe Space’ would be symbolic of promoting continued tolerance and good relations among Guyanese, despite issues which may be considered contentious, being brought into the open during the movie. Remarks made and situations presented are intended to allow Guyanese to ponder their sense of purpose for a united Guyana.

“I Am Us” represents the hurdles faced by two neighbouring families composed of the two major ethnic groups. Members of both families display qualities of trust and togetherness in everyday life but suspicions and mistrust surface during an upcoming election. The movie also has its share of typical Guyanese humour which audiences would find very entertaining as well.

2020-01-09

ERC GUYANESE MOVIE “I AM US” AT CARIBBEAN CINEMASSET FOR WEDNESDAY LAUNCH

-speaks to tolerance during elections period

The newly produced Guyanese movie “I Am Us”, by the Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), will be shown at Caribbean Cinemas, Giftland Mall for one week from Friday January 17 to 24, 2020 at 7PM. All are invited and admission is free.

The movie will be launched on Wednesday before it is open to the public and a number of dignitaries, including political leaders from various parties are invited to attend the launch. The ERC is also treating the venue as a ‘Safe Space’.

The Commission hopes that the ‘Safe Space’ would be symbolic of promoting continued tolerance and good relations among Guyanese, despite issues which may be considered contentious, being brought into the open on the big screen. Remarks made and situations presented are intended to allow Guyanese to ponder their sense of purpose for a united Guyana.

“I Am Us” represents the hurdles faced by two neighbouring families composed of the two major ethnic groups. Members of both families display qualities of trust and togetherness in everyday life but suspicions and mistrust surface during an upcoming election. The theme of the ninety-minute film confronts the ‘elephant in the room’ of general elections, notwithstanding the need for peace, tolerance and unity.

The movie also has its share of typical Guyanese humour which audiences would find very entertaining. It was produced as a play by the ERC in 2019 and is now adapted for cinema audiences.

2020-01-13

ERC GUYANESE MOVIE “I AM US” AT CARIBBEAN CINEMAS SET FOR WEDNESDAY LAUNCH

-speaks to tolerance during elections period

The newly produced Guyanese movie “I Am Us”, by the Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), will be shown at Caribbean Cinemas, Giftland Mall for one week from Friday January 17 to 24, 2020 at 7PM. All are invited and admission is free.

The movie will be launched on Wednesday before it is open to the public and a number of dignitaries, including political leaders from various parties are invited to attend the launch. The ERC is also treating the venue as a ‘Safe Space’.

The Commission hopes that the ‘Safe Space’ would be symbolic of promoting continued tolerance and good relations among Guyanese, despite issues which may be considered contentious, being brought into the open on the big screen. Remarks made and situations presented are intended to allow Guyanese to ponder their sense of purpose for a united Guyana.

“I Am Us” represents the hurdles faced by two neighbouring families composed of the two major ethnic groups. Members of both families display qualities of trust and togetherness in everyday life but suspicions and mistrust surface during an upcoming election. The theme of the ninety-minute film confronts the ‘elephant in the room’ of general elections, notwithstanding the need for peace, tolerance and unity.

The movie also has its share of typical Guyanese humour which audiences would find very entertaining. It was produced as a play by the ERC in 2019 and is now adapted for cinema audiences.

2020-01-13

PRESS STATEMENT

As the campaigns for the various Political Parties continue in the run-up to the March 02 General and Regional Elections, the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) remains concerned over reported incidents of intimidation and abuse meted out to Party Officials while they were engaged in activities to sensitize on political messages reflective of the Parties they represent.

The Commission is also concerned about the use of language that can be considered as combative and disrespectful to the point of even being threatening in some instances.

The ERC firmly believes that those actions and utterances are counter-productive to the valiant efforts being made to foster unity and harmony. Those have no place in our society and restraint from all sides is urged while tolerance and respect for each other are encouraged.

The call for the upcoming elections to be transparent, free of hate, violence and racial or any other forms of incitement, is firmly reiterated.

The Commission, through its Monitoring Unit, will continue to the best of its ability, to monitor public meetings and related media coverage. It wishes to remind that some actions and utterances can constitute offences under the Representation of the People Act and the Racial Hostility Act. Given what has transpired in some instances in the campaign thus far, the Commission sees the need to re-engage the political leadership with the intent to derive a collective effort for respectful and incident-free elections' periods; pre, polling and post. It therefore calls on all involved to endeavor for positive campaigns which can inspire national harmony and good relations amongst all of our peoples.

The Commission wishes to remind that our freedoms are enshrined and allow each and every Guyanese the democratic right to freely associate and support a Political Party of his/her choice. That must be respected.

The ERC, during interactions with various Political Parties, proposed the signing of a Code of Conduct relevant to the elections period. A draft was shared with the Parties for suggested inputs. The Commission remains optimistic for a public signing in the near future. The Commission also anticipates a similar Code of Conduct from the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM). It is hopeful that upon signing, the content of both would be honoured.

In an effort to encourage tolerance and mutual respect, the Commission continues its sensitization campaign through the media, both traditional and non-traditional. This follows numerous engagements with residents in areas across the ten Regions of Guyana.

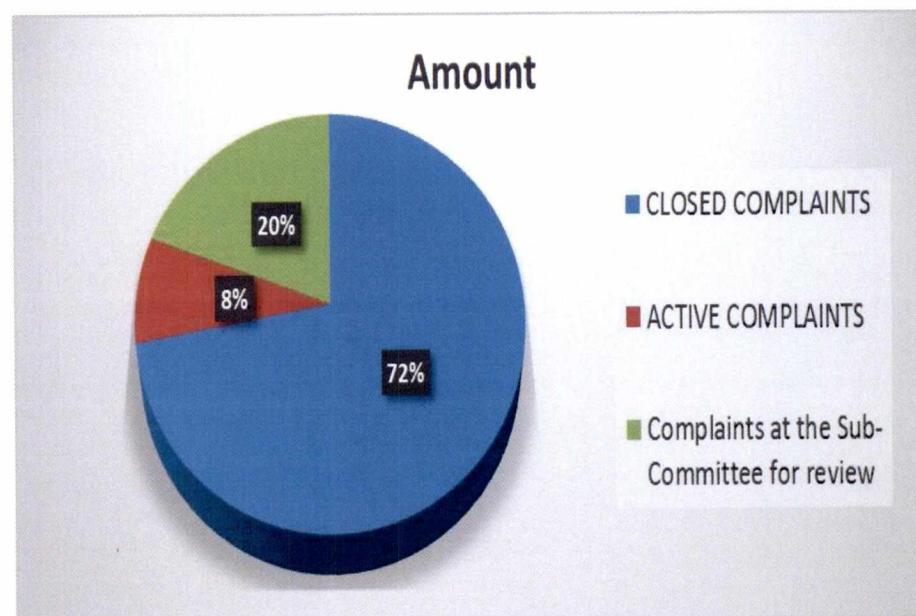
That has been augmented by the conversion of the play, "I Am Us", into a movie which was launched on January 15 with public screenings scheduled from January 17-24 at Caribbean Cinemas, Giftland Mall.

The Commission encourages attendance and seeks the assistance of the media for continual airings of its harmony song, "Let Harmony Come In". It firmly believes that incidents of

harassment and incitement, including what is very noticeable on social media, are most unhelpful to building and sustaining a cohesive nation. All are encouraged to work in the best interest of Guyana and Guyanese, and to ensure that the elections are not mechanisms for division.

The Commission will, in the near future, embark on education initiatives to examine inherent causes which have led to current suspicions and stereotypes and explore possible mitigating measures. It remains convinced that education is the key to help change mindsets for the removal of stereotypes. To this end, the Commission will continue to prioritize educational programs in 2020.

Through its investigative arm, the Commission dealt with sixty-one (61) complaints during the year 2019 of which forty-four (44) have been brought to a closure; twelve (12) to be reviewed and five (5) remain active. The complaints received were of racial/ethnic and religious discrimination.



The Commission remains accessible to members of the general public through all means of communication.

The ERC will continue in its endeavours, through available resources, to deliver its constitutional mandate. With inherent challenges, the realization of that mandate necessitates the collective efforts of all stakeholders. It wishes to commend those who have demonstrated unwavering support and encourage others to join in its efforts.

January 17, 2020

ERC CONDEMNS BEHAVIOUR OF POLITICAL SUPPORTERS ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), condemns the unacceptable conduct of purported supporters of contesting political parties over the past few days, which have resulted in heated confrontations in different parts of the country, such as at Wismar and Non Pariel.

The Commission calls on political leaders to urge their supporters to immediately stop and reject any inclination by their supporters to taunt, confront and intimidate others of opposing sides. The ERC is engaging political leaders on those developments and its proposed **Code of Conduct** as well.

The ERC wishes to remind that under the Laws of Guyana, campaigning by political parties during the elections period is allowed, but wants citizens and supporters to reject outright all attempts at provocation, and instead concentrate on issues being put forward by the candidates.

The ERC will continue to monitor the political campaigns with vigilance and play its role in **promoting harmony, good relations and peace in our society.**

January 31, 2020

FEBRUARY

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN, ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION (ERC) ON THE UPCOMING MARCH 02, 2020 GENERAL & REGIONAL ELECTIONS

My dear brothers and sisters of Guyana, as we head to the polls on March 02, the Ethnic Relations Commission reiterates its call for peaceful, fair and transparent elections. For this to be realized, it will take the collective effort of all of us regardless of preference.

Voting is a democratic right which enshrines choice. As we exercise the right to choose, we must respect the rights of others to do so. In the process, we must also remain cognizant of the need to be tolerant and respectful of each other, now, during and after March 02.

As we traverse what is historically a sensitive period, all are urged to work in the best interest of Guyana and Guyanese and not be engaged in activities, in any shape or form, that are counterproductive to the fostering of harmony and good relations.

The lessons of history serve as a pertinent reminder of the need for us to collectively chart and embark along a path of togetherness in an effort to lessen tension and to safeguard the welfare of all of our people.

All are therefore encouraged to keep public actions free of intimidation and utterances free of hate, racial and all other forms of incitement. During this, and the subsequent period, let's demonstrate to ourselves and others that while we will disagree in the process, it is not a reason for hostility through hate, and elections must not be a process that divide us.

While the ERC is heartened by contesting political Parties that have signed the Code of Conduct, the Commission urges that despite whatever challenges may confront us, the spirit and intent of what was agreed to, is respected by all.

This we believe is crucial not only to the process of peace, but a vital component in being able to mitigate incidents that occurred during the campaign and which have the potential to repeat themselves.

Let us also strive to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood and to ensure that the will of the Guyanese people is respected following the elections.

On behalf of the Commissioners and Staff of the ERC, I extend best wishes to all involved and remind that peace, during and after the process, is in the hands of all of us.

Thank you.

PRESS STATEMENT

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), has concluded its investigation into the complaints made by the Private Sector Commission of Guyana and Captain Gerald Gouveia. The complaints stemmed from a July 24, 2019, letter which was written by Mr. Desmond Trotman to Captain Gouveia, in his capacity as Chairman of the Private Sector Commission.

The Commission appointed a special Sub-Committee on November 8th, 2019 to investigate the said complaints. Spearheaded by Retired Justice Stanley Moore, as Chairman, the Sub-Committee was mandated to “establish the facts of what transpired and why?”

Both parties to the investigation (Captain Gouveia and Mr. Trotman) have arrived at an amicable settlement.

The peaceful settlement of this dispute illustrates that when complaints are made to the ERC, the Commission has the mechanisms and capability of working for the restoring of harmony and peace where discord and disagreement formerly existed.

ERC WRITES POLITICAL PARTIES & MEDIA ENTITIES ON ELECTION RELATED ISSUES , 2020-02-27

The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), as of February 25, 2020, has officially written to a few political Parties contesting the upcoming March 02 General and Regional Elections to cite them for public utterances, behaviors and advertisements deemed unhelpful to the process of promoting harmony and tolerance.

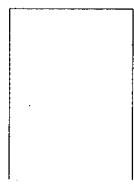
Through its Elections Monitors, whom have so far monitored a high percentage of the public meetings of all the political Parties, it has been observed that the use of ethnically divisive language and the use of religion to disparage, racial and political profiling/stereotyping and disruption, were generally found to be used on various occasions.

From the numerous incidents flagged, twenty-one (21) warranted official responses: eleven (11) to Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon, General Secretary of APNU (for both APNU+AFC) and eight (8) to Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, General Secretary of the PPPC. In addition, two (2) incidents are under active investigation.

The Commission through its Media Monitoring Unit, (MMU), monitored the Facebook Pages of various News Agencies, print media and television programmes. It was found that numerous persons made ethnically offensive comments under the posts made by the various news agencies. The Commission, in response, cautioned those persons for making such comments and has called on the Editors-in-Chief of INEWS, Demerara Waves, HGP TV Nightly News and NCN News to stringently monitor their Facebook Pages so as to ensure ethnically offensive comments are removed in a timely manner.

In addition, A New and United Guyana, (ANUG), has been written to regarding one of its advertisements that was deemed to be unhelpful to ongoing efforts to eliminate inherited racial stereotypes.

In all of the cases that necessitated a response, the Commission reiterated the need for a more responsible approach by all Parties and the need for collective effort to aid the process of fostering national harmony. In January this year, the Commission established a temporary Swift Response Committee, specifically mandated to review the findings of our Elections Monitors and the Media Monitoring Unit. To date the Swift Response Committee dealt with thirty-four incidents. Please see graph below.



□

MARCH

Electoral process free and fair – results must be respected

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), having observed the electoral process in some Polling Stations in parts of Regions 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10, has found it, despite some minor hiccups in a few instances, to be free, fair and transparent.

Overall, voters were able to cast their ballots in an atmosphere of peace while few instances which necessitated the intervention of law enforcement, were timely resolved.

The Commission commends the collective efforts of all involved for ensuring that democracy was safeguarded and prevailed during the electoral process. This is heartening and vital to the promotion of harmony and good relations.

As the country awaits the final results, the Commission remains mindful of prevailing anxieties. It fervently hopes that the results will be announced within the shortest possible time and that it will be respected.

The Commission is also mindful of racially inciting exchanges on social media. Such posts are extremely harmful to the process of building harmony and tolerance which are crucial during this sensitive period.

All are therefore urged to act in a responsible manner and to be reminded of consequences that can be brought to bear through the Racial Hostility and The Representation of the People Acts. The rejection of hatred and intolerance take the collective efforts of all. The Commission encourages all, especially during this period, to do the best we can to ensure that peace and harmony prevail.

A more detailed report will be provided after the completion of the entire process.

Ethnic Relations Commission
March 04, 2020

CREDIBLE ELECTIONS VITAL TO PEACE AND HARMONY

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), wishes to state that the holding of free, fair and transparent elections is a vital tenet of democracy and for the promotion of unity, harmony and good relations. The credibility of the elections is therefore paramount.

The Commission, having observed the voting process in some Polling Stations in 5 Administrative Regions, found it to be free, fair, transparent and conducted in an atmosphere of peace.

However, the declaration of results for Region 4, after an incomplete verification process, has now cast doubts over the credibility of the March 02 General and Regional Elections.

Having delivered a credible voting process, the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) is urged, in the best interest of peace and harmony, to safeguard the integrity of the elections by ensuring that the verification and tabulation process, as reflected in The Representation of the People Act, is followed. Transparency of this process becomes foremost.

The historical lessons and the inevitable consequences over elections, must guide during this sensitive period. All stakeholders therefore have a responsibility to work assiduously to ensure that the prevailing tension does not escalate.

The Commission also urges political Leaders to work in the best interest of the country by endeavouring to diffuse tension and not to encourage behavior that is counterproductive to peace and unity. The need for responsible utterances and actions by all, is reiterated as peace and unity are in our hands.

The Commission will continue to work to the best of its ability to aid the promotion of harmony and good relations especially during this period. All are therefore urged to meaningfully do his/her part.

Ethnic Relations Commission
March 06, 2020

ERC WELCOMES AGREEMENT FOR NATIONAL RECOUNT OF VOTES

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), welcomes the decision by President David Granger and Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, for CARICOM to supervise a full recount of votes cast for the March 02, 2020, General and Regional Elections and to abide by the findings as long as the integrity of the ballot boxes are not compromised.

This, the Commission believes, would bring an amicable end to the current political impasse which has resulted in a non-declaration of credible final results even as two weeks have elapsed since Guyanese went to the polls to choose a government of their choice.

The decision also demonstrates that meaningful and genuine collaboration across the political aisle is achievable and vital to help resolve inherent differences and challenges.

It also has tremendous potential to heal the current unwelcome and prevailing divide among our people. The Commission remains optimistic that the full details of how the recount would be undertaken will be agreeable to all and the conduit to derive desirable credible results.

The Commission takes this opportunity to commend President Granger and Mr. Jagdeo for being able to find common ground to move forward in the best interest of Guyana and Guyanese; CARICOM's Chairperson, Honourable Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, for supporting Guyana during this difficult time, for mediating between our political leaders and for assembling the team supervising the recount and the Chairman of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), Justice (Rt'd) Claudette Singh, for facilitating the process.

The Commission would like to reiterate its call for all Guyanese to act responsibly; to demonstrate tolerance, respect and restraint especially during this period and to heed the messages for togetherness, harmony and good relations.

Ethnic Relations Commission
March 16, 2020

APRIL

ERC URGES COMPASSION TOWARDS ALL ETHNICITIES IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), is making a stirring plea to all to remain peaceful and demonstrate love and compassion toward each other in the current COVID-19 crisis. The Commission wishes to remind that the coronavirus is not restricted to any ethnic group(s) and anyone can be affected.

The ERC recognizes that the March, 2020 elections impasse and the coronavirus pandemic have dealt a double blow to the social, cultural and economic life of every Guyanese. The ERC, being a non-political body established since 2002 with the support of all sides in parliament, has among its functions, to “Encourage and create respect for religious, cultural and other forms of diversity in a plural society”.

As such, the Commission desires that in maintaining national harmony, everyone put their head, heart and hands together in their village, neighbourhood or town to fight the disease. In that regard, the relevant collective actions required of all citizens will hopefully overcome the threats all are facing.

The ERC therefore endorses any initiative which fosters cohesion and understanding as our society grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic in the months ahead. The Commission lauds the actions of many agencies and individuals both in the Public and Private sectors already rendering selfless service to preserve the health and well-being of everyone.

The Commission, mindful of the inundated tasks to manage and safeguard lives, would like to especially commend all medical practitioners on the front line for their unremitting dedication to curb the spread of the pernicious coronavirus.

2020-04-17

MAY

ERC ARRIVAL DAY MESSAGE -100 YEARS SINCE END OF INDENTURESHIP

The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) extends best wishes to all Guyanese on the observance of Arrival Day 2020, marking 100 years of the end of Indentureship. This Day, May 5, commemorates the profound historical period of Indentureship lasting from 1838 until 1920- the year that the British Parliament officially ended the contractual scheme to then British Guiana.

The ERC therefore, wishes to take the opportunity on this centennial milestone to reiterate the need for all to build together upon our gains and to continue robustly the process of fostering unity and harmony. Today, we celebrate the enrichment of diversity that Arrival Day embodies in the shaping of modern Guyana. Arrival Day is most significant for what it represents in the context of the multi-faceted mosaic it created and for which our country is known.

Our hodgepodge of multiculturalism was as a result of the untold sacrifices, desires and steadfastness of our ancestors, to practice and preserve their rich and colourful cultural traditions, having come to this land from different parts of the world at different times in our history.

In doing so individually through the various ethnic groups, sharing and participation in each other's traditions forged our dear nation to become multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural. That is evident as all participate meaningfully in each other's festivities which have transcended religious and ethnic boundaries to become truly national observances.

Over time, that rich, beautiful and vibrant diversity has become our strength and the common bond in the process of becoming one people in this our nation working towards a common destiny. While there have been challenges along the way, our Guyanese brothers and sisters have always found ways to foster togetherness through tolerance and respect. Herein lies the desire of all of our people for harmony and unity to be strengthened and for it to continue to prevail across this land that is home to all.

This is imperative in the interest of our nation and all its peoples so that our diversity must never be made a tool for division but one that will continue to reflect our strength and bonds of togetherness. May 5 also marks the anniversary of the arrival of our East Indian ancestors who reached these shores on that day in 1838 while two days ago on May 3, Portuguese Arrival Day was observed.

The colourful commemorative events across the country will once again serve to bring our people together, allowing opportunities to not only participate, but for the continuation of that important process of educating for a better understanding and appreciation of our cultural traditions. This builds tolerance which is the bedrock of harmony and unity as we strive for one people out of many cultures.

As Guyanese record another milestone amidst the difficult and threatening COVID-19 crisis, the ERC nevertheless emphasizes the importance of continuing to observe all the necessary precautions and regulations. Happy Arrival Day to all Guyanese here and in the Diaspora!

2020-05-04

ERC ENCOURAGES GUYANESE TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING, AS WORK CONTINUES TO PROMOTE HARMONY DESPITE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As cases continue to climb exponentially in the number of individuals tested positive for COVID-19, the Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), enjoins all Guyanese to practice social distancing and only to go out when it is absolutely necessary.

There is no existing playbook to combat this pernicious virus, but what is known is that having fewer gatherings, wearing of face masks, constantly washing of hands and the use of an alcohol based sanitizer daily, would slowdown the spread of the virus.

In spite of the pandemic, the ERC continues work although its office remains closed due to the unprecedented COVID-19 lockdown. The work of the Commission continues virtually, and contact can be made via email to its Investigations Unit at investigate@erc.org.gy or the Public Education and Awareness Unit at peau@erc.org.gy.

The ERC wishes to remind that persons who feel they are being discriminated against based on their ethnicity can still file a complaint to the ERC. Any accompanying evidence would also be useful. Letters with complaints can also be sent to the ERC Office: 66 Peter Rose and Anira Sts. Queenstown, Georgetown. A complaint can also be made by filling out an online form on the ERC website at erc.org.gy or by downloading MY ERC APP to one's mobile device.

The Commission recently undertook initiatives to strengthen awareness and celebration of the Guyanese diversity. The Public Education and Awareness Unit of the ERC recently launched the ERC 'Diversity Challenge' on its Facebook Page and is inviting Guyanese to celebrate their culture by visiting the page and connect especially with friends and family who are of different ethnic backgrounds.

Visitors to the page are encouraged to download and use the ERC's "Let Harmony Come In" song in their videos with the participation of friends and family. The videos can be uploaded with hashtag #ERCDiversityChallenge and in-boxed to the ERC Facebook page to be shared. The 'Diversity Challenge' runs until the first week of June, 2020. More similar events are planned for 2020 and 2021.

Although a great amount of concern exists due to COVID-19 and the elections impasse, the ERC nevertheless urges Guyanese who are spending most of their time at home to take advantage of the 'Diversity Challenge' and celebrate our many cultures. The ERC remains resolute to promoting national harmony among the various ethnic groups and its work involves conflict resolution, public education, investigation and research.

2020-05-15

ERC PROBING RECENT INCIDENTS

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), has launched a probe into a Facebook video posted over the weekend that is laced with racially insensitive remarks towards another ethnicity.

The Commission is particularly concerned that the post can contribute to unnecessary tension rising in the society. The ERC, through its Investigations Unit, is also looking into a recent incident at the Kisson's Furniture Store involving alleged racial profiling of a customer.

The ERC is reminding citizens to desist entirely from making racially motivated remarks which can incite others. In fact, the Commission wishes to point out that persons can be prosecuted for offences under the Racial Hostility and Representation of the People Acts, as well as the country's Cyber Crime Laws. The ERC continues to monitor Facebook and the various social media platforms.

The body is pleading to all Guyanese to exercise tolerance and respect for each other throughout their daily lives.

2020-05-19

JUNE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), has since noted remarks made by one of its Commissioners, - Haji Dr. Roshan Khan, at a press conference held on Monday June 8th at the Arthur Chung Convention Centre; to address matters pertaining to the recount of ballots and final tabulation of votes following the March 2nd Elections.

The Commission would like to categorically state that the views expressed by Commissioner Khan at that forum, were solely his, and not that of the ERC.

Even as the Commission awaits the official declaration of the results by the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), -citizens are urged to exude patience, calm and respect for each other. On Elections Day, the ERC having been granted observer status for several of its Commissioners, participated and witness many Guyanese across the country exercise their franchise to vote for a party of their choice.

As a Commission, we look forward to working with all Guyanese, for the greater good of our nation and its people.

**Ethnic Relations Commission.
June 9, 2020**

LET PEACE PREVAIL AS GECOM PREPARES TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT ANNOUNCEMENT ON MARCH 02 ELECTIONS, June 14, 2020

The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), like all Guyanese, is mindful of the extended period it has taken thus far for the results of the March 02, 2020, General and Regional elections to be declared. The Commission is also mindful of the discontent the wait for the declaration has inevitably precipitated among our people and concerns that eventually led to a national recount of ballots cast.

As a Commission birthed out of political discord and which is constitutionally mandated to foster harmony and good relations, it was extremely heartened when H.E. President David Granger and Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, agreed to the national recount of ballots under the auspices of CARICOM.

Despite challenges, the recount has ended, the obligatory report by the Chief Elections Officer has been submitted and the nation awaits an announcement by the Chairperson of the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM). The Commission therefore wishes to take this opportunity to urge all Guyanese to remain calm and to demonstrate a profound sense of tolerance and respect in view of the significant announcement expected from GECOM.

This crucial call for calm and peace comes within the historical context of what unfortunately transpired during elections; the vitriol, divisive and inciting rhetoric on social media; undesirable public pronouncements by some involved and in keeping with the Commission's own call prior to and immediately after March 02.

The Commission in a press statement on March 04, 2020, which alluded to its initial findings having observed the electoral process in some Polling Stations in parts of Regions, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10, commended the collective efforts of all involved for ensuring that democracy was safeguarded and prevailed during the said process.

In addition, the Commission, having pointed out that overall on elections day voters were able to freely cast their ballots in an atmosphere of peace and that the few instances which necessitated the intervention of law enforcement, were timely resolved, the voting and counting processes observed, were found, despite some minor hiccups, to be free, fair and transparent.

The adherence of those processes to the basic tenets of democracy is vital to the promotion of unity, national harmony and good relations. While anxieties unavoidably prevail over the impending announcement and what it can possibly derive, the Commission calls upon the leaders and members of all political parties, civil society organizations, constitutional bodies and Guyanese in general, to act in a responsible manner in an effort to safeguard the interest of Guyana and all of its citizens.

The ERC also urges that the results, when announced, be respected and reiterates its call for the implementation of a necessary collective effort from all national stakeholders endeavouring to build a cohesive and prosperous nation. All are encouraged to do his/her best to ensure that peace and harmony prevail and that the interest of Guyana and Guyanese is placed foremost.

ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION MEETS WITH “GUYANESE CRITIC” ON RACIAL STATEMENTS MADE.

The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), having received a number of complaints, today met with Mr. Mikhail Rodrigues popularly known as Guyanese Critic regarding statements made by him on 15 June, 2020 during his live Facebook program. Those statements were viewed as insensitive, unethical and anti- Guyanese and caused outrage among the Christian and Black communities. It was an attack on the religious beliefs of the Christian community and insulted the intellectual intelligence of Afro-Guyanese. Such conduct is an affront against the bedrock of a unified Guyana.

Mr. Rodrigues has accepted his wrongdoings and it is in light of this that he offered a public apology. He has also made an undertaking to the Commission to do all that is necessary under his platform to promote amity. One of the mandates of the Commission is to encourage mediation in amicably resolving disputes whenever necessary. One of the purposes for punishment is to foster the rehabilitation of offenders. Restitution is not always of paramount concern, and it is in these circumstances that Mr. Rodrigues has been sternly cautioned that any recurrence of his irresponsible remarks will warrant prosecutions against him by the Commission for his conduct.

The Commission reminds all and sundry that it is a criminal offence under the *Representation of the People Act, Chapter 1:03* and the *Racial Hostility Act, Chapter 23:01* for anyone to incite racial hatred or violence against any person or against any segment of a society. Racial prejudice is not merely a wrongdoing against morality but it is conduct contrary to the laws which were instituted to abolish and eradicate the antiquated, disruptive, divisive weapon of racism. Anyone convicted of an offence under the Representation of the People Act shall be fined a sum of *one hundred thousand dollars together with two years of imprisonment*. Anyone convicted of an offence under the Racial Hostility Act shall be fined the sum of *five hundred thousand dollars and seven years of imprisonment*.

It is imperative that Guyanese understand the seriousness of exciting any form of hate. The Ethnic Relations Commission encourages the understanding and acceptance of diversity in all aspects of national life as we aim to eliminate the issue of racial and religious profanity. Irrespective of the differences in our beliefs, ethos and culture we are and continue to be “**One People, One Nation and One Destiny**”.

June 16, 2020
Ethnic Relations Commission

PRESS RELEASE

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), undeniably supports an articulate and free press which contributes to the good tenets of a democratic nation. It embraces the right to criticise persons in public office; however, that freedom of expression is not an unfettered right. It should not be exercised with a level of disparagement which exceeds criticising the conduct of those in public office and amounts to statements grounded in absolute falsehoods.

The Commission takes umbrage in individuals making libellous statements in their personal bid to generate confusion in the interplay of politics and against the good will of the Commission. Mr. Lenox Shuman on 25 June, 2020 during a live Facebook stream of the Kaieteur Radio show made damning imputations of corruption by the Chairman of the Ethnic Relations Commission and by extension, the Commission in its entirety.

His utterances have been reposted via social media numerous times and have exposed the ERC to hatred, contempt and ridicule. Such an attack against the Commission is defamatory in nature. Any reasonable person hearing the words uttered by Shuman would come to the conclusion that his proclamations have brought the integrity of the Commission into disrepute.

The statements directed towards the Commission are not only an untruth but it is the type of sensationalism which, during this tense election period has had damaging repercussions against the execution of the constitutional mandate of the Commission.

The Commission assures the public that it takes pride in operating in the interest of what is just and fair and it is a reflection of safeguarding the concerns of all Guyanese. Its standard operational procedures exemplify impartiality and transparency.

The Investigative sub-committee of the Commission embodies a mixed panel of professionals representing diversity of race, religion, gender, age and even political affiliation. Decisions made on behalf of the Commission are done collectively by the members of this panel and are not at the discretion of the Chairman of the Commission. Any unwarranted attack against the functions of the Commission is viewed as an attack against the restoration of peace and stability for our people.

Ethnic Relations Commission
June 29, 2020

JULY

ALL ARE URGED TO WORK TO DE-ESCALATE TENSIONS

The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), once again, wishes to lend its voice to the call for peace and responsible behavior by all as the nation awaits the final declaration of the March 02, 2020, General and Regional Elections.

There is no doubt that the historically long period it has taken for the declaration to be made has exacerbated tensions and discontent while unfortunately fostering ethnic strife, especially on social media platforms. There is also no doubt that public utterances, including the building of expectations by some officials and their political subjects, have and continue to contribute to the heightening of tensions and a further widening of unwanted division among our people.

This is not only extremely worrying due to the potential danger it poses as our electoral history so regrettably reminds, but woefully unhelpful to the daunting and crucial task of forging harmony so vital at this juncture. The Commission therefore reiterates the need for all Leaders and stakeholder groups to act in a much needed responsible manner and to ensure those, whom they influence, do likewise. At the same time, it commends those who have and continue to act responsibly.

The Commission will officially write to the Leaders of all Political Parties urging them and their constituents to work towards de-escalating tensions and adherence to law and order. The desire for peace and good relations will take genuine and collective efforts by stakeholder groups and individuals. These efforts would also include acceptance of the elections results when they are declared by the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM).

The agreement by H.E. President David Granger and Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, for a national recount of ballots with the participation of CARICOM, further demonstrates that paths can be found to help resolve our political gridlock.

The Commission, having been birthed out of political discord, values and commend the efforts of all stakeholders who have and continue to work tirelessly in the interest of safeguarding peace and democracy in Guyana. Let us therefore work together in the best interest of our nation, for there can be no option to peace and unity which ultimately reside in our hands. With all hands on board let us promote harmony and good relations.

July 5, 2020

A MESSAGE FROM THE ERC ON THE OCCASION OF EID-UL-ADHA 2020

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), reaffirms its embrace of another observance in our multi-religious society. As our Muslim brothers and sisters observe the sacred occasion of Eid-ul-Adha, enshrined as a national holiday in Guyana, the ERC takes this opportunity to extend warmest greetings to them and to other Guyanese across our nation and those based overseas. We embrace all Guyanese with the salutation “Eid Mubarak”.

The message of Eid-ul-Adha has a positive impact for all humanity as it underscores the qualities of humility, obedience to God and of the selfless sacrifice of Prophet Ibrahim. These are pertinent traits in the quest for the realization of peace, brotherhood and togetherness.

The ERC therefore urges all to reflect on the significance of this occasion and to work towards heeding its universal message which is most beneficial to the advancement of all humanity.

To achieve a particular goal, it would take commitment, hard work and sacrifice. As we work together as a nation to achieve the goal of national harmony and good relations, it will necessitate all to recommit to this effort for the good of our nation so that our motto of “One People, One Nation, One Destiny” can be truly observed.

The commitment to the cause, as exemplified by Prophet Ibrahim, signified through the observance of Eid-ul-Adha, remains a beacon of inspiration, to guide and motivate each and every one of us in this crucial endeavour of building and promoting national harmony. The lesson of sacrifice and toil as exemplified above is one which must inspire us all as Guyanese.

Eid Mubarak from the ERC.

Ethnic Relations Commission
July 30, 2020

ERC EMANCIPATION MESSAGE-2020

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), extends Emancipation greetings to all Guyanese on the 182nd anniversary marking the end of slavery. The ERC notes that with each commemoration of Emancipation, the Afro-Guyanese community must add a new memory and understanding of their own experience in the social world we share with our fellow humans.

Learning experiences are and will not always be pleasant, but the ancestral 'will' to transcend have always enabled us to endure and to meet the challenges cast before us without losing the virtues of our nature. We must not shrink from any confrontation, nor be embittered into losing faith in ourselves when challenged to endure. Our ancestors found resolve and courage in the pits of misery, that slavery from inception, through its rebellions to the abolition of chattel slavery to the struggle to find self as we were remade as colonials, arguably the most extreme extension of slavery.

But individually we were and are severed from Africa, but collectively Africa resides in our soul and guides us. We are the primary foundations upon which Guyana was built, taking nothing away from the contributions of others, yet it must not be diluted that slavery gave the planters access to the talents, rain forest clearing and drainage ideas as well as hygiene applications from the subjugated. After emancipation it was recognised that both planters and Africans ate basically localised African foods.

Those slave ancestors not only carried out plantation duties but also shaped their plantation lives as best to that of their historical memory. In commemorating Emancipation 2020, we must invite our neighbours to learn and appreciate as we appreciate their contributions, of our earned entitlement to living space, freedoms and integrity in this our homeland, to whom we have paid our toll from its foundation. Nevertheless, the Guyanese nation continues to thrive on a unique diversity arising from past occurrences of struggle and sacrifice. Happy Emancipation anniversary to all!

Ethnic Relations Commission
July 31, 2020

AUGUST

ERC CONGRATULATES PRESIDENT ALI AND GOVERNMENT

The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) wishes to congratulate Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali on his election as President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

The Commission also congratulates the Prime Minister and all the Ministers who have been sworn in to serve in government and takes this opportunity to extend best wishes for success to President Ali and his team.

As the new government embarks on its tasks of governance, the Commission commends the peaceful transition that is ongoing and urges that healing and reconciliation by all stakeholders be foremost as we endeavour together for the realization of the intent of our National Motto.

The Commission looks forward to engaging His Excellency President Ali on matters of building unity and harmony among our people.

Once again, our best wishes to President Ali and his government.

Ethnic Relations Commission
August 18, 2020

ADVISORY TO PERSONS OF INTEREST TO VISIT ERC OFFICE

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), is requesting the individuals below to visit its office at **10:00 am on Wednesday, August 26, 2020** to discuss pending matters with regard to racially insensitive comments.

These persons are asked to visit our office at **66 Peter Rose & Anira Streets, Queenstown, Georgetown.**

1. Lucra Adams
2. Renay Nestor
3. Sukie Persaud
4. Afraz Mohamed
5. Sharmilla Dhanraj
6. Hemwattie Dookhie
7. Lashona Chester
8. Arehanna Narine
9. Marcelle Hamer
10. Dawn Henry

The Commission also requests the undermentioned individuals who were previously asked to visit its main office to do so **on Tuesday, August 25, 2020 at 10:00 am:**

1. Gifford Marshall
2. Dennis Emanuel
3. Chaitram Goberdhan
4. Balmikie Lallbeharry

The ERC Investigative Unit can be contacted on 231-6281/231-6265 for further information.

End.

SEPTEMBER

Press Release

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), has been diligently conducting investigations into complaints received and has been adopting measures to bring amicable resolutions to racial and ethnic issues in the execution of its constitutional mandate.

The Commission, through its Investigative Sub-Committee arm, has conducted mediation sessions touching and concerning adversities surrounding racism in the work force and racial conflicts in land occupation and land allocation. A mediation exercise was completed at the Fort Wellington Dental Department, WCB, where accusations were made of racial partiality in the performance of professional duties and discriminatory discipline of staff on the basis of race. During the mediation, the health officials gave an undertaking to work in unison and emotional apologies were made.

The Commission, through that exercise has made recommendations for departmental changes which include effective systems of record keeping and human and social development of staff through counselling and training.

A team recently mediated in the community of Mon Repos, ECD, where land conflict evolved into racial tensions. In addition to the mediation session, the Commission has been working in conjunction with the Lands and Surveys Commission to settle allegations of land encroachment, a matter in which the ERC expects an imminent resolution.

Racial allegations have also been made surrounding the unlawful repossession and allocation of land under the control of a co-operative society. The investigative team of the Commission worked closely with the Co-operative Development and Societies Department in addressing the concerns of the members. This matter is currently still under investigation as the Commission awaits the submission of important documents in the case.

Anonymous complaints have been made to the Commission involving state entities. In particular, an anonymous complaint was made citing racially prejudiced promotion practices of the Guyana Police Force. However, during the course of the investigations, that matter has since resolved itself. An anonymous complaint was also made against the recruitment practices of the Bureau of Statistics.

Nevertheless, though the Commission is committed to treating certain information as confidential, there has been little progress in that investigation as persons are not coming forward with information.

A majority percentage (87.2%) of the complaints received by the ERC regard incidents on social media, more specifically Facebook with a total of 89 complaints out of 102. The Commission's capacity to productively investigate those complaints is limited by factors such as the use of fake profiles to make racially insensitive posts or comments and in the case of active profiles, there are challenges such as private user profiles or the unavailability of the accused person's legal

name, address or contact information, or the accused residing out of Guyana, making jurisdiction an issue.

As a result of those limitations, the Commission has adopted two courses. First, it has published the posts and faces of persons whom complaints have been made against through social media in the “Persons of Interest” initiative. This has generated positive feedback with the public’s assistance and in some cases the co-operation of the accused.

Individuals such as Chaitram Goberdhan aka Bounty, Lucra Adams, Lashana Chester, Mollyann Moonsammy, Marcel Haymer and Tiffany Greene have contacted the Commission. The practice of publishing persons of interest will be done periodically and the Commission is relying on the public’s assistance in identifying offenders.

Secondly, the Commission met with the Criminal Investigations Department, Cyber Crimes Unit and the two agencies are on a productive path of working together. Some of the complaints received by the Commission do not offend against the Racial Hostility Act nor the Representation of the People Act but instead are criminal offences to be investigated by the police. Those complaints have been referred to the police for necessary action. Eight Facebook incidents fall in that category (7.8%).

One complaint of an incident in the real world fell under the jurisdiction of the police and evoked summary court proceedings (0.98%). Furthermore, one complaint (0.98%) falls outside of the ambit of the ERC but is a matter to be investigated by the Women and Gender Equality Commission.

The Commission has also investigated complaints made against public officials, for instance, the Mayor of Bartica is currently under investigation. Since the publication of his name in the “Persons of Interest”, he has undertaken to co-operate with us.

Despite the many impediments, some beyond the control of the ERC, the Commission has been tirelessly working to promote harmony and good relations in our ten administrative regions.

Ethnic Relations Commission
2020-09-02

ERC CONDEMNS SENSELESS KILLINGS OF TEENS AT COTTON TREE, WCB

-calls for swift action by the Police

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), strongly condemns the senseless killings of the two teens, Joel Henry and Isaiah Henry at Cotton Tree, West Coast Berbice over the weekend and calls for swift action by the police to apprehend those responsible. The Commission is pleading with Guyanese, especially those residing in the West Coast Berbice and nearby communities to remain calm and allow the Police to do their work.

The ERC remains firm that, first and foremost, the law must take its course. The Commission therefore, appeals to Guyanese to desist from any activity which can contribute to unnecessary tension as it is hopeful that those responsible will be brought to justice.

The Commission also strongly urges leaders, both nationally and at the community levels, to demonstrate responsible behaviour and to not use the pain of this tragedy to heighten racial tension. The ERC extends condolences to the relatives and friends of the young men whose lives were cut short in a heinous manner.

The ERC remains committed entirely, which it is fully empowered to do, to taking whatever course of action it deems necessary to assist in the de-escalation of tensions and the mending of fractured relations among citizens. The ERC reiterates that investigations by the Police must first take precedence before the ERC acts to defuse any unwanted developments resulting from the tragic occurrences a few days ago.

Ethnic Relations Commission
2020-09-07

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CALLS FOR CALM

It has been two days since we learned of the horrific murders of Isaiah Henry and Joel Henry, and the mutilation of their bodies which were discovered in the backdam of Cotton Tree village, West Coast Berbice. Young men whose lives were cut down in their prime. Sleep has fled as we think and pray for their parents, siblings, neighbors, and yes, this hapless nation.

As preachers, we are driven by the counsel of Lemuel's mother: "Open your mouth for the speechless ... And plead the cause of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:8, 9) Those are words of wisdom that are relevant to all clothed with authority.

While still numb and angry, with the shocking happenings under the sun in one of our pleasant, peaceful villages over the last weekend, we take refuge in the fact that above the sun, the voices of their blood cry out to God from the ground. (Genesis 4:10) In that Court, their painful cries have been heard, and God will respond.

His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, along with others, has commiserated with the bereaved families and has urged the relevant officials "to deploy all needed resources to bring the perpetrators to justice."

In this painful, fluctuating drama that is presently unfolding, the nation can benefit from the clear insight of Isaiah's father. Mr. Gladson Henry, in all of his grief, was quoted as saying, "This is not about race or religion or political things. I am talking on my own behalf. This is not about all these things, but this is for justice for my son's innocent life."

We, therefore unreservedly join in the condemnation of this dastardly act and all other acts of violence. May God help our skillful crime sleuths in their investigations, resulting in convictions of those responsible for this heinous act.

As a result of this tragedy, may we, as a nation find the courage to begin a serious conversation on healing the divisions here, with the view of building shalom communities across this land.

We call upon all churches to join in a season of prayer and fasting for our nation, the Co-operative Republic of Guyana.

Bishop John. O Smith
General Bishop & Members of the Executive Presbytery
Assemblies of God, Guyana
2020-09-08

ERC CALLS ON JOINT SERVICES TO RE-ESTABLISH LAW AND ORDER ALONG EAST COAST AND WEST BERBICE

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), cognizant of the challenges and complexities that resulted in protest actions which erupted following the deaths of Isaiah and Joel Henry, Haresh Singh and Prittupaul Hargobin, and having recognized the ongoing efforts of law enforcement to bring the situation under control, is calling on the Joint Services to ensure the East Coast and West Berbice corridors are sanitized, blockades removed and law and order restored.

The Commission congratulates the Joint Services for exercising considerable restraint while encountering rising adversity in its efforts to restore normalcy. However, the ERC remains deeply concerned at the atrocities being committed during those protests which have been unhelpful to efforts of improving race relations in Guyana.

The Commission notes that, worthy of praise are the public appeals made by both President Dr. Irfaan Ali and Ms. Volda Lawrence, Chairman of the PNCR and, even the father of one of the victims against the spiraling cycle of violence and destruction which have claimed more lives.

The ERC believes the efforts of the Joint Services can reassure citizens of their safety and wellbeing while serving to reduce tensions and hindrances to the Police conducting investigations. The Commission also calls on the hardworking men and women in uniform to urgently conduct more effective patrols along the affected roadways including aerial reconnaissance of the situation on the ground.

The Commission empathizes with the grieving families in their calls for justice and reiterates that it will take the necessary course of action, within the confines of its constitutional mandate, to assist in the de-escalation of tensions. The body also remains committed to taking whatever course of action it deems necessary to promote ethnic harmony and good relations throughout Guyana.

The ERC, being a non-political body, reminds all to demonstrate tolerance and appreciation towards their fellow citizens, regardless of ethnic background in this very challenging period.

2020-09-10

DISCLAIMER

THE ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION, ERC, WISHES TO DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS MADE BY ERC COMMISSIONER HAJJI DR. ROSHAN KHAN SR. AND REPORTED TO THE ERC THAT DO NOT COINCIDE WITH ITS MANDATE TO PROMOTE "HARMONY AND GOOD RELATIONS". THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THE POSTS ARE NOT THOSE EXPECTED OF AN ERC COMMISSIONER AND THEREFORE CONTRADICT THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ERC.

ETHNIC RELATIONS COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 11, 2020

PRESS RELEASE

The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), fully supports the call by H.E. Dr. Irfaan Ali, President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, for persons caught spewing race hate and hostility on social media, to face the full brunt of the law.

The ERC welcomes this since it believes its own efforts will be augmented. Over time, the Commission has been grappling with the ominous prevalence of race hate and incitement on various social media platforms.

With numerous complaints received and instances captured by its Media Monitoring Unit, many online news establishments and persons were written to with some summoned through the “Persons of Interest” initiative and confronted. The findings and actions taken, were shared with the media.

Those efforts continue despite the many related challenges of fake profiles in some instances and difficulty in reaching others even with solicitation of the public’s help. The Commission is cognizant these efforts are not adequate to deal with the magnitude of this worrying situation.

The Commission remains very concerned over the proliferation of race hate and incitement on social media and believes that President Ali’s announcement is therefore most timely and invaluable to improve race relations among our people.

The Commission is available and stands ready in support wherever it can.

Ethnic Relations Commission
September 12, 2020

ERC VISITS WEST COAST BERBICE FAMILIES

ERC Chairman, General Bishop, Reverend John Oswald Smith, Commissioners and staff on Thursday, September 17, 2020, visited the grieving families of the Henry cousins, Isaiah and Joel and Hareesh Singh, offering prayers and words of comfort to parents and guardians of the slain youths.

The team visited the homes, still overwhelmed by complete sadness as parents and relatives repeated their on-going plea for justice to be served. The murdered young men all lived a short distance away from each other in the closely-knit community.

The ERC team witnessed first-hand the Henry families are of mixed ancestry and relatives are from both major ethnic groups. The adult relatives were vocal and expressed shock that the murders were being promoted as crimes of race hate. They suggested that residents in the community are not pre-occupied with racial intolerance.

During the visit, relatives informed the team that the Police were still in the backlands of the community conducting investigations. The ERC Chairman told the grieving families to remain hopeful of the outcome of the investigations.

The ERC, as a non-political body, remains entirely committed to fostering peace and unity in the Guyanese multi-ethnic society, while the recent tragedies have brought to the fore the importance of tolerance and understanding among all.

September 22, 2020

OCTOBER

A MESSAGE FROM THE ERC ON THE OCCASION OF YOUMAN NABI 2020

Let's all be inspired by the pertinent lessons

The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) extends greetings to all Guyanese, particularly the Muslim community, in observance of Youman Nabi; the birth and death anniversary of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

The ERC notes, that the public holiday, reflects the embedded Guyanese tradition of nationwide recognition of auspicious observances within the major religions. It overwhelmingly supports the nurturing and continued advancement of the religious diversity which exists in our multi-faceted society.

The Commission also urges that the significance of Youman Nabi be reflected upon, through its pertinent messages for all humanity. The observance of this auspicious occasion will serve to reinforce, among Muslims and the wider world, the teachings of the Holy Prophet which, centuries after, remain relevant today and continue to be an inspirational guide to all.

The Holy Quran refers to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) as a mercy to mankind. Love and respect for each other and the practice of Islam's major tenets leading ultimately to spiritual elevation, are among the teachings of the Holy Prophet to reform mankind's behaviour and the acceptance of God and his commandments.

The ERC firmly believes that in heeding those lessons, mankind will be better positioned to free itself from traits that serve to hinder unity and harmony. The ERC reminds all as well, to take the necessary steps to remain safe from COVID-19 during this national observance.

October 28,2020

NOVEMBER

ERC URGES ALL GUYANESE TO EMBRACE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEEPAVALI

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), extends Deepavali greetings to all Guyanese, especially the Hindu community and reminds all that the festival of lights serves as a profound source of inspiration for the eventual triumph of light over darkness.

Other important lessons of Deepavali provide guidance for all, as Guyanese continue to work assiduously toward the national goal of strengthening the bonds of friendship. It is through this that national harmony can be achieved so that our people can confront challenges together to remove the dark veil of division.

The traditional motorcades and their inherent beauty, along with that of thousands of flickering Diyas are much anticipated every year. However, the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has prevented the spectacular motorcades from being held. The ERC is confident that despite those unavoidable challenges, the true spirit of Diwali will not be deterred.

In the midst of the pandemic, the ERC cautions everyone to exercise utmost care and for all to stay safe during the observances.

The traditional national observance, through its significance, is replete with messages of togetherness. The Commission, therefore, urges that Guyanese endeavour so that particular influence can be built upon for the promotion of harmony, unity and good relations among all in this multi-faceted society.

The ERC believes that those messages bode well for the advancement of the Guyanese nation, its people and humanity at large.

Shubh Deepavali to all from the Ethnic Relations Commission!

2020-11-13

**ERC TO LAUNCH NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON ETHNIC RELATIONS IN
DECEMBER**

*-in collaboration with UN & UG,
-President, Opposition Leader invited*

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), in collaboration with the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator and the University of Guyana (UG), will begin a National Conversation on Ethnic Relations on December 14 and 15, 2020.

The general intent is to have frank and open discussions to capture diverse views, on factors that impede ethnic harmony and recommendations for the compilation of a report, to be submitted to the National Assembly and relevant stakeholders for implementation.

The conversation will be launched with a general discussion on “**How can we improve ethnic relations in Guyana**”. The fully virtual forum, unavoidable due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, is intended to facilitate presenters drawn from Guyanese residing here and abroad and will reflect diversity.

Both, H.E. President Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali and Leader of the Opposition, Joseph Harmon, are invited to address the opening segment which will also include presentations by General Bishop, Reverend Dr. John Smith, Chairman of the ERC, Ms. Mikiko Tanaka, UN Resident Coordinator and UG Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Paloma Mohamed-Martin.

From 6-8pm on the first day, a special segment will be held to facilitate the views and recommendations of young people. This is vital to this process especially since they represent the largest bloc of our population. Guyanese are invited to participate and the links to join, will be provided in advance.

The Commission also intends to live stream the event with some aspects for broadcast on National Television. The ERC hopes that the varying points of view of presenters and participants, can serve in some measure, as a blueprint for possible solutions on the related challenges that confront our people in this multi-faceted society.

Ethnic Relations Commission
2020-11-17

DECEMBER

ERC CHAIRMAN URGES GUYANESE TO TAKE PART IN NATIONAL CONVERSATION

Chairman of The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), General Bishop, Reverend Dr. John O. Smith is appealing to Guyanese at home and in the diaspora to participate and join the National Conversation on improving ethnic relations, the first ever in Guyana, on December 14 and 15. The main sessions will run from 9:00hrs to 13:00hrs each day. A youth forum, representing the largest bloc of the population, will run from 18:00 to 20:30hrs on the first day. Animated exchanges are expected during that segment.

Reverend Smith strongly believes that the original event will set the tone for more planned conversations in the near future to examine the barriers to ethnic harmony in multi-ethnic Guyana. Moreover, Guyanese lawmakers and stakeholders will receive reviews and reports to galvanise action as the conversations continue. A second “National Conversation” is expected in January and more during 2021.

Guyanese presenters, residing here and abroad and reflecting diversity will be a main component of the conversation. Guyanese following the event are invited to ask questions or give suggestions to address their burning concerns after each presentation. The conversation will be launched with a general discussion on **“How can we improve ethnic relations in Guyana?”**. ***Guyanese who are unable to join the conversation can inbox the ERC on FaceBook, Instagram and LinkedIn with their suggestions on the topic before Monday, December 14.***

The National Conversation is taking place virtually, unavoidable due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It is anticipated that hundreds of concerned persons will join or make contributions by following the event on various social media platforms.

The President and Opposition leader are invited to give keynote addresses. Ms. Mikiko Tanaka, UN Resident Coordinator and Dr. Paloma Mohamed-Martin, UG Vice-Chancellor will also give brief remarks at the forum.

The ERC, in collaboration with the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator and the University of Guyana is hosting the first episode which will also be broadcast on television during the opening day.

Overall, the ERC hopes that the varying points of view of presenters and participants, can serve in some measure, as a blueprint for possible solutions. A cultural presentation, showcasing Guyana’s different cultures will conclude the two-day conversation.

2020-12-03

SOCIAL MEDIA LINK AVAILABLE FOR ERC NATIONAL CONVERSATION

-Guyanese urged to participate

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), is urging Guyanese social media users to access the links from its FaceBook page to follow and participate in the inaugural National Conversation on improving ethnic relations in Guyana. The zoom link for participants to register in advance can be accessed at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/91018122000>

The link can also be accessed by visiting the NEWSSOURCE and Gordon Moseley's FaceBook pages. The two-day event, the first of its kind in Guyana, runs from 9:00 to 13:00 HRS on December 14 and 15. From 6 to 8:30pm on the first day, a special segment will be held to facilitate the views and recommendations of young people.

Additionally, television viewers can watch the programme on TVG Channel 28, HBTV Channel 9 and HGPTV Channel 67. Radio listeners can tune in to Newstalk Radio 103.1FM which will live stream the conversation on both days.

The conversation will be launched with a general discussion on **“How can we improve ethnic relations in Guyana”**. The fully virtual forum, unavoidable due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, is intended to facilitate presenters drawn from Guyanese residing here and abroad and will reflect diversity.

The ERC hopes that the varying points of view of presenters and participants, can serve in some measure, as a blueprint for possible solutions on the related challenges that confront Guyanese of all ethnicities.

The Commission is collaborating with the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator and the University of Guyana in hosting the premier event.

Ethnic Relations Commission
2020-12-12

**ERC INVESTIGATING DANGEROUS SOCIAL MEDIA POST ALLEGEDLY
ATTRIBUTED TO CATHY HUGHES**

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), has immediately commenced an investigation, having been made aware of a social media post calling for an undesirable and dangerous action which can potentially impact negatively on ethnic relations. The post purportedly emanated from former Minister of Communications and current Member of Parliament for the APNU/AFC coalition, Mrs. Cathy Hughes.

As part of the process, Mrs. Hughes was asked to provide an explanation. She disassociated herself from the post in question and indicated that her social media comments on another matter were doctored to derive the post that led to much concern.

The Commission will continue its investigation to first ascertain the authenticity of the post and then decide on any action that may be deemed necessary.

Having only yesterday (December 15) concluded the first round of a national conversation on how ethnic relations can be improved, the Commission reiterates that any form of incitement or race hate, has no place in our society and encourages all to refrain and be responsible when making public comments.

Ethnic Relations Commission
December 16, 2020

ERC COMMENCES LEGAL ACTION AGAINST DEFAULTERS

The Ethnic Relations Commission, (ERC), has commenced legal action against three individuals who had separately committed offences capable of resulting in racial or ethnic violence or hatred among the Guyanese people. The Commission, through its lawyer Mr. Stanley Moore, SC filed the complaints in the Georgetown Magistrates Court earlier this month.

The three defendants- John Gobin, Steve Anthony Barakat and Lashona Chester were arraigned before city Magistrate Rhondel Weever on December 9. Based on the specific nature of their conduct and words, the charges against the defendants included causing ethnic/racial violence or hatred and exciting hostility or ill-will on the basis of race.

Gobin pleaded guilty and was fined \$20,000. The Magistrate warned him not to repeat the offence or publish any similar material in the future. Barakat pleaded not guilty and was placed on \$30,000 bail. He was represented by Attorney -at-Law Latchmie Rahamat and his matter was adjourned to January 20, 2021 for trial.

The complaint against Lashona Chester could not be served despite vigorous attempts to locate her. The Magistrate ordered that steps be taken to summon her again and adjourned Chester's matter to January 20, 2021 as well.

2020-12-31

END.

ANNEX D - 2020 ELECTIONS REPORT

Ethnic Relations Commission
Media Monitoring Unit
Elections Report (2020)
Period: Jan. 3, 2020 – Feb. 29, 2020

Summary

Following the public announcement of the holding of General and Regional Elections on March 02, 2020, the ERC in pursuit of its constitutional mandate [ref. Constitution (Amendment) (No.2) Act 2000] to promote harmony and good relations between and amongst the country's citizens, officially launched a dedicated elections monitoring program (EMP) over an approximately 8 weeks period between **January 03, 2020 to February 29, 2020**. It was initiated primarily to ensure that electioneering activities engaged in by the contesting political parties in the run-up to the elections was done within the parameters of the country's ethnic Laws as spelt out in the Racial Hostility Act (Cap 23:01) and the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act No. 1 of 2000.

Notably, the Constitution (Amendment) (No.2) Act 2000 at 212D (c) gives the ERC the power to: "make recommendations on penalties, including prevention of any political party or any person from participating in elections for a specified period, to be imposed for any breach of the provisions of this Constitution **or** any law dealing with ethnicity."

In a bold attempt to operationalize the constitutional authority vested in the organization to influence conformity to the country's ethnic Laws by all citizens, the ERC implemented its elections monitoring program as a mechanism to minimize in the least, or eliminate at the most, ethnic tensions, which, sadly, tend to rise up and proliferate throughout the country during elections periods.

The ERC's elections monitoring program was done on two (2) levels – i.e. elections monitoring (field exercise) and media monitoring (in-house). The elections monitoring aspect of the program was specifically designed to gather information from political meetings – in the forms of posters, handbills, flyers, audio-recordings of speeches, etc. – and to evaluate same for conformity to the

aforementioned extant ethnic Laws of the country. On the other hand, the media monitoring portfolio encompassed the monitoring and analysis of the traditional broadcast media (television), print media (newspaper), on-line radio stations, and social media, for similar adherence.

In order to accomplish its main objective of promoting harmony and good relations during the period leading up to the elections, the ERC through its Media Monitoring Unit (MMU) trained and deployed forty **(40)** Elections Monitors (EMs) to gather and supply information on the environments at political meetings relative to the content of political speeches delivered and literature distributed, and crowd reactions/behaviors, so that the Commission could be kept abreast of what was happening on the ground, and where to make timely interventions to de-escalate political and ethnic tensions. By the end of their stint (on Feb. 29, 2020), the EMs had monitored on behalf of the Commission some **425** meetings, spread across 7 of the 10 regions of the country.

Administratively, the ERC's entire elections monitoring program was coordinated by an internal sub-committee established by the Commission, called the **Swift Response Committee (SRC)**. The SRC came into being on Feb. 3, 2020, and was chaired by Commissioner Neaz Subhan, and included Commissioners Barrington Braithwaite and Roshan Khan, Mr. Remington Eastman (Head, Media Monitoring Unit), Mr. Lloyd Smith (Head, Investigative Unit), Mr. Renee Chester (Head, Public Education and Awareness Unit), Mr. Aidan Sparman (Senior Investigative Officer) and Ms Kimberly Yearwood (Legal Officer). During the approximately 4 weeks of its sojourn (from Feb. 3, 2020 to Feb. 28, 2020) the SRC continuously met as a group to discuss and act swiftly on reports that came to it from the MMU for adjudication. On a daily basis, the MMU compiled reports on matters to be addressed by the SRC. These reports were culled from the daily field reports the Unit received from the ERC's election monitors, and its own monitoring of the print, broadcast and social media.

In a nutshell, the results achieved from the Commission's implementation of its elections monitoring program are as follows: at the level of monitoring of the political meetings, the EMs identified **16** instances where ethnically offensive comments were made by speakers; **3** instances

where inflammatory language was used; and **4** instances where political meetings were disrupted/truncated due to politically partisan behavior from the spectators. And at the level of its media monitoring operations, the MMU, on behalf of the ERC, made **12** interventions on the websites and Facebook pages of prominent media houses and one (1) political party to dissuade bloggers from posting ethnically offensive comments. Moreover, based on the information it was provided, the SRC made **18** interventions on behalf of the Commission by way of letters dispatched to political parties and on-line media houses found not to be applying editorial restraint over ethnically offensive comments posted by contributors to their websites and Facebook pages.

2.0 Elections Monitoring Program (Field exercise)

The field exercise aspect of the Commission's Elections Monitoring Program (EMP) was underpinned by the training and deployment of Election Monitors (EMs) across the country during the pre-elections period to achieve the following objectives:

- To gather first-hand information of what is being communicated to citizens by politicians offering themselves for election to the country's parliament and regional councils.
- To provide the ERC with the necessary documented evidence and witness validation that would allow the organization to leverage its constitutional authority against those who may seek to use ethnicity/race as a means of inciting and/or exciting audiences in order to achieve political power.
- To influence through their presence, self-regulation (or self-control) in speeches made by politicians at political rallies/meetings etc. [In other words, the Election Monitor's presence is intended to induce a high level of decorum and responsibility by politicians as it relates to the way they treat with ethnic/race issues].

In total, three (**3**) training workshops were held (between Dec. 7, 2019 and Jan. 25, 2020) for potential Election Monitors, out of which fifty-three (**53**) persons were trained by the MMU to perform the duties associated with the position. However, due to attrition, by the end of the pre-election period (i.e. Feb. 29, 2020) only **40** persons were actually still working as Election Monitors. During the training process, Election Monitors were given knowledge of the ERC's constitutional functions and authority and further sensitized to the tenets of the country's ethnic Laws and what to look for in speeches, literature and behaviors at political meetings.

Although it was initially proposed by the MMU to monitor political meetings throughout the entire country, due to financial and logistical reasons, the field exercise component of the EMP was limited to just 7 of the country's 10 regions – i.e. Regions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 10. Operationally, for administrative purposes and to establish clear lines of supervision and the direction of information flows, each region was supervised by a Lead Monitor, who, in turn, reported to the Head of the MMU (or Lead Elections Coordinator). The Head of the MMU provided all pertinent information received from the Lead Monitors to the SRC for discussion/adjudication [see Appendix 1].

2.1 EMP (field exercise) – Findings

As stated before, the ERC's election monitors were marshalled in 7 of the country's 10 regions and managed to monitor exactly 425 meetings over an approximately two (2) months period. During the course of their monitoring activities on behalf of the Commission, the EMs provided information to the Commission identifying **19** instances where ethnically offensive language was either used or similar actions indulged in at political meetings by politicians and/or their supporters. From the audio recordings and written reports sent to the Commission by the EMs as corroborating evidence of their observations, it showed that the language used or actions indulged in by some politicians (and/or their supporters) fell into one of the following categories: inflammatory; racially divisive/inciting; religiously divisive; and, ethnic stereotyping/profiling. For the record, there were **3** reported instances where, what can be logically considered as inflammatory language, was used as a means of mobilizing political support by speakers at meetings; **7** reported instances of the usage of racially divisive/inciting language; **4** instances where the language used was religiously divisive; and, **5** instances where politicians and/or their supporters used language or indulged in behaviors that amounted to racial profiling/stereotyping. In addition to the foregoing, there were **4** reported incidents where political meetings were disrupted, with one (1) being aborted due to hostile crowd behavior.

2.1.1 EMP (field exercise) - Challenges

There were a few challenges encountered in the implementation of the field component of the program that, to some extent, negatively affected maximum output of some deliverables. In this regard, some of the constricting issues that readily come to mind are:

- **Audio recordings quality** – It was anticipated that the EMs would have been outfitted by the ERC with digital recorders to record the speeches delivered at meetings. However, due to an internal office snafu this did not happen. The result is that EMs had to use their mobile phones to do recordings. Most of the recordings submitted to the MMU by the EMs were of a good quality, but, in many instances, the recordings were also of a poor play-back quality due to the high levels of peripheral noises (such as vehicles passing) that intruded and drowned out the speeches being recorded. If digital recorders were used instead, this drawback would have been eliminated because of a feature called the “Noise Cut” that comes with the device, which, when engaged, filters out intrusive sounds from the recording being made.
- **Attrition** – In preparation for the March 2, 2020 general and regional elections, fifty-three (53) persons were trained by the MMU to perform the roles of EMs on behalf of the ERC. However, over the 4 weeks duration of the exercise, 13 persons (representing approx. **25%** of those trained) discontinued their participation. This high drop-out rate amongst the EMs was due to many factors such as sickness, migration and conflict of interest situations that arose between some persons’ working hours and the timings of meetings. Quite noticeable however, was that the greater portion of those that left (8 persons) did so even before the exercise got fully on stream (from Jan. 18, 2020) due to disinterest occasioned by the relatively late roll-out of the program.
- **Monitor bias** – There were a few occasions when Lead Monitors reported to the Lead Elections Coordinator that EMs outrightly refused to be assigned to, or offered lame excuses for their refusals to cover meetings held by either the APNU+AFC or the PPP/C, resulting in some scheduled meetings going unmonitored. Instances of this happening weren’t numerous, but warrants mention because it impacted negatively on the overall

number of meetings that could have been done during the period of the exercise. From the information provided by the Lead Monitors, it would seem that the refusals by EMs to cover certain meetings arose from feelings of racial insecurity in going into areas dominated by another ethnic group not of one's own race; and, the assumption (by some EMs) that their presence at political meetings of certain parties may be interpreted by their kith and kin in a negative way.

2.1.2 EMP (field exercise) – Achievements

Despite the many challenges encountered during the implementation phase of the field exercise component of the EMP, there were also some positive outcomes (or achievements) that served to somewhat mitigate the earlier identified negative developments which threatened to overwhelm at times. In this regard, three (3) outcomes merit mention, since they all center on the objectives the exercise was designed to achieve.

Relative to the exercise's first objective: **“to gather first-hand information...”** Forty (40) EMs were able to monitor 425 meetings on behalf of the ERC. On average, this worked out to each EM monitoring approximately 11 meetings during the period of the exercise, which, though not spectacular in terms of numbers, allowed the ERC to gain first-hand information on just about **75%** of the meetings held in some of the regions where monitoring activities were carried out.

In connection with the second objective: **“to provide the ERC with the necessary documented evidence...”** The records show that through the efforts of the EMs, the ERC was supplied on a daily basis with timely, verbatim information of what was being said and done on the campaign trail. This direct channeling of pertinent information positioned the Commission to respond swiftly and in measured ways to situations (most times of a racial/ethnic nature) that required interventions to maintain harmony and good relations amongst the country's citizens. Hard evidence of these interventions can be gauged from the number of cautionary/advisory letters dispatched at the behest of the SRC to political parties, relating to incidents that took place at their meetings.

Last, but not least, with reference to the third objective: **“to influence through their presence, self-regulation...”** The MMU has in its possession audio recordings of political meetings where

speakers can clearly be heard advising those present that they (the speakers) have to be careful what they say, since they suspect that the ERC is monitoring the meeting. For the MMU, this represented tangible and indisputable evidence that the presence of our EMs at some meetings induced appreciable levels of self-control in what was communicated to audiences by politicians in their speeches. Also, it served to show without doubt, that the EMs, through their presence, positively influenced the tone and content of the public discourses engaged in by the contesting political parties.

2.1.3 EMP (field exercise): Observations

Coming out from the field exercise component of the ERC's elections monitoring program, the MMU made two (2) notable observations:

First, a casual trawl of the reports and audio recordings submitted by the EMs revealed that this is perhaps the first time since the ERC began doing elections monitoring (in 2011) that the ethnic characteristic of religion has been so pervasively used on the campaign trail as a tool for political mobilization. Though by comparison, race, true to form, dominated the public discourses of the two (2) main political formations (APNU+AFC and PPP/C) which contested the elections, this is the first time, in the elections monitoring history of the ERC that politicians have openly used religion to criticize and disparage political opponents in attempts at swaying voters to their cause.

Second, this is definitely the first time since the ERC began doing these exercises that EMs have reported being singled out at meetings by speakers or spectators as being "spies" and/or belonging to "the other side", simply because, being of a different race, they stood out conspicuously from the rest of the crowd. This kind of subtle racial profiling which some of the EMs were subject to, led understandably to feelings, on their part, of uneasiness and vulnerability, and brought to the fore, in a very real way, the predominance of the racial factor in the elections contest. However, a caveat is in order here: this observation is limited to the two (2) main big parties (APNU+AFC and PPP/C), since there were no such similar reports from our EMs who attended the meetings of the smaller political parties.

3.0 Report: Media Monitoring

The media monitoring part of the EMP was done by staff of the MMU and focused mainly, but not solely, on elections-related content disseminated to the general public through television, on-line radio, newspapers, and social media, to ensure that all information communicated via these channels conformed to the tenets of the Racial Hostility Act (Cap 23:01) and the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act No. 1 of 2000.

3.1 Television and On-Line Radio

For the duration of the pre-elections season starting with the first political rally held on Jan. 3, 2020, the MMU prioritized the monitoring of those programs streamed on live television that had elections-related content such as: newscasts, talk-shows, political-party sponsored discussion programs, re-plays of political meetings/rallies, Call-in programs, etc.. In excess of **1500** hours of television programming with elections related material taken from **11** television stations scattered across Region 4, were monitored by staff of the MMU, but nothing ethnically offensive was found in the content. Ditto for the on-line radio channels – limited to Kaieteur Radio, Demerawaves News-Talk-Radio, Benschop Radio, and HJ Boom FM.

3.2 Print Media (Newspapers)

The MMU's robust monitoring of the print media (newspapers) – Stabroek News, Kaieteur News, Guyana Chronicle and Guyana Times – did not turn up any violations of the aforementioned Statutes. However, the Unit's monitoring activities did result in an elections-related ethnic issue with the potential for escalation, which was highlighted in the letter column of the Guyana Chronicle newspaper ("**Dark ages political culture should be condemned**" GC **07-02-2020**), being referred to the SRC. Based on the SRC's recommendation, an in-depth investigation was carried out into the matter by the ERC's Investigations Unit and a report was submitted to the Commission.

3.3 Social Media

Outside of the major rallies held almost exclusively by the main political parties in the run-up to the March 2, 2020 general and regional elections, the major arena resorted to by the two (2) big

parties and their supporters, and the smaller parties, to proselytize the electorate to their cause was social media, or more precisely, **Facebook**.

In anticipation that social media would be aggressively utilized by all the political parties contesting the elections, the MMU set about keeping an 'eagle-eye' on what was being disseminated from the websites and Facebook (Fb) pages of the established local media houses and all the political parties contesting the elections.

In the course of monitoring the social media landscape, the MMU zeroed-in on **13** instances where ethnically offensive material was found on the Facebook pages of **6** media houses and **2** political parties. Generally, the ethnically offensive material took the forms of racially divisive/inciting and/or inflammatory comments being posted to the pages of the media houses and political parties. Normally, the MMU allowed up to one (1) week for these comments to be removed, failing which, the Unit posted 'Cautionary Messages' to the Fb pages advising the contributors who made the comments that it was an offense under the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act No. 1 of 2000, and further advising the media house or political party where the comments were posted, that it was their responsibility to edit or completely remove such comments whenever they appear on their pages. In the execution of this exercise, the MMU posted **12** cautionary messages to the Fb pages of the following media houses and one (1) political party: HGP Nightly News (2), NCN News (2), Demerarawaves (2), INews Guyana (3), Guyana Chronicle (1), Guyana Times (1), APNU+AFC (1). In addition, ethnically offensive material in the form of an elections campaign advertisement that was racially stereotypical was put up by the A New and United Guyana (ANUG) party on their Fb page. This matter was brought to the attention of the SRC and an advisory/cautionary **letter** was recommended to be sent to the party on the issue by the ERC.

4.0 Conclusion

The Elections Monitoring Program – comprising elections monitoring and media monitoring - embarked on by the ERC during the just concluded elections, proved to be a worthwhile exercise, since it provided the Commission with valid, timely information which helped it during the pre-elections period to make informed decisions on issues with negative ethnic implications.

Some of these issues, if left unresolved, had the potential to escalate at the national level into open ethnic conflict. In so doing, the ERC demonstrably performed its constitutional mandate to promote harmony and good relations amongst the country's citizens.

Additionally, from an ethnic perspective, the EMP field-exercise elicited valuable information which the ERC may do well to incorporate into its future Strategic Plans to address the country's ethnic issues. For example, the observation made earlier about the exploitation of religion by some politicians for political gain, as was done during the elections campaigning, is perhaps a novelty in this country's elections annals which, should be seen for what it really is: a future flashpoint for ethnic conflict. In fact, it should be cause for concern by the ERC that a pattern was traced from the EMs reports which clearly showed that religion is now overtly being injected by irresponsible politicians into the boiling brew of racial division and animosity that envelopes the nation (especially during elections periods). Indeed, as much as the reports submitted to the MMU by the EMs have, after being objectively analyzed, served as the basis for alerting the ERC to the insidious manipulation of religion during the elections campaigning, they (the reports) also serendipitously revealed a potentially new area for ethnic conflict in the country that is being exploitatively stoked by politicians.

Finally, the elections monitoring program implemented by the ERC for the March 2, 2020 general and regional elections was successful in many regards, but the greatest success of the exercise is that its timely implementation specifically to garner information that would allow the Commission to objectively respond to electoral matters from informed positions, also fortuitously served to re-establish into the consciousness of the nation, the pivotal role of the ERC as a neutral arbiter of ethnic issues in Guyana.

5.0 Recommendations

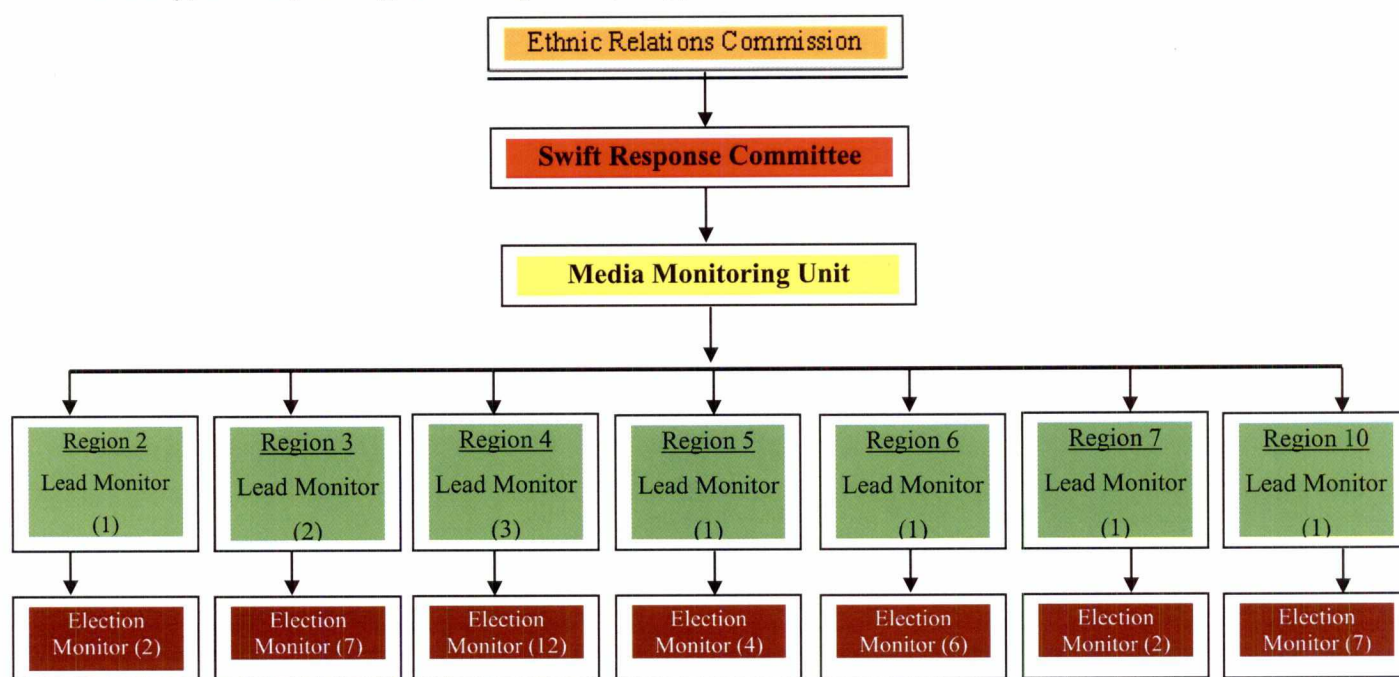
(1) With an eye to Local Government Elections due to be held sometime this year, particular reference is made to the random acts of racial profiling/stereotyping reported by our EMs who covered meetings of the two (2) major political parties during the just concluded elections. In order to lessen the prevalence, or altogether prevent instances of this happening again in future elections, the MMU **recommends** to the Commission that in future whenever they are assigned

to do official elections monitoring duties on behalf of the ERC, our EMs are outfitted beforehand with appropriate attire (such as jerseys), which clearly identifies them as ERC Election Monitors. The MMU believes that this recommendation, if implemented, will go a long way in allaying suspicions by politicians and their supporters of the presence and intent of our EMs, especially in politically/racially-charged meeting environments where, because of their race, they are conspicuous.

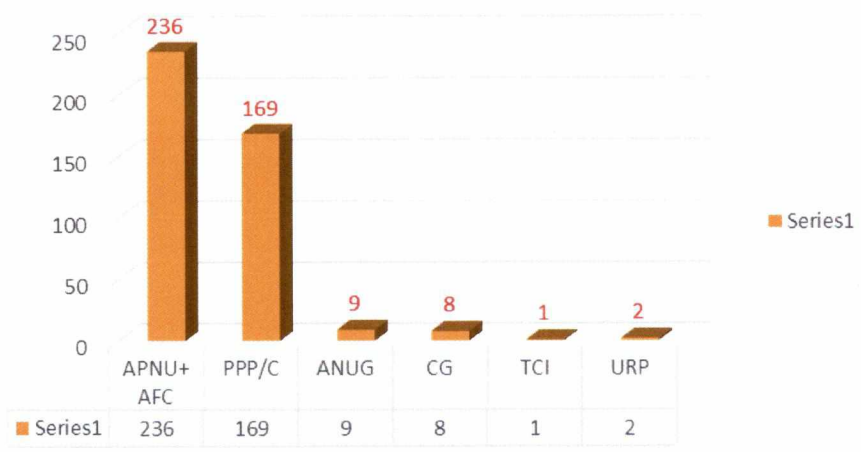
(2) From the ERC's previous engagements in elections monitoring, it has been recognized that the cooperation of the Guyana Police Force (GPF) is a sine qua non for successful outcomes to be achieved, since they provide the Secretariat with the Schedules of political meetings and, of late, provided security for our EMs in the performance of their duties. However, during the just concluded elections, a kink emerged in the usually open lines of communication between the Commission and the GPF. This had to do with senior Police Officers in charge of some districts refusing to assist our Lead Monitors (LMs) in accessing Schedules of political meetings to be held in areas under their command, even though the LMs produced official letters from the ERC which identified them and requested the Police's assistance in furnishing the bearer with the requisite information. The Officers' refusals were on the grounds that they were never informed by their hierarchy of any arrangements between the ERC and the GPF. This happened in Leguan and Essequibo. It is against this background that the MMU **recommends** to the Commission that for future elections, a Liaison Officer is identified by each organization (ERC and GPF) through whom information can be channeled in respect to any issues that may arise during the implementation of the EMP. If such an arrangement was in place during the just concluded elections, the problems experienced in Leguan and Essequibo would have been easily resolved via a telephone call.

(3) The just concluded elections period brought out in a very stark way the deep animus that exists between the two (2) major races (Africans and Indians) in the country. Not unexpectedly, this antipathy between the two races was vented in unrestrained ways on social media. In recognition of the maximal role social media played and continues to play as the first choice for news and information by a large section of the population, it is imperative that by the time the next elections are held in another 5 years, the ERC establishes a stronger deterring presence on

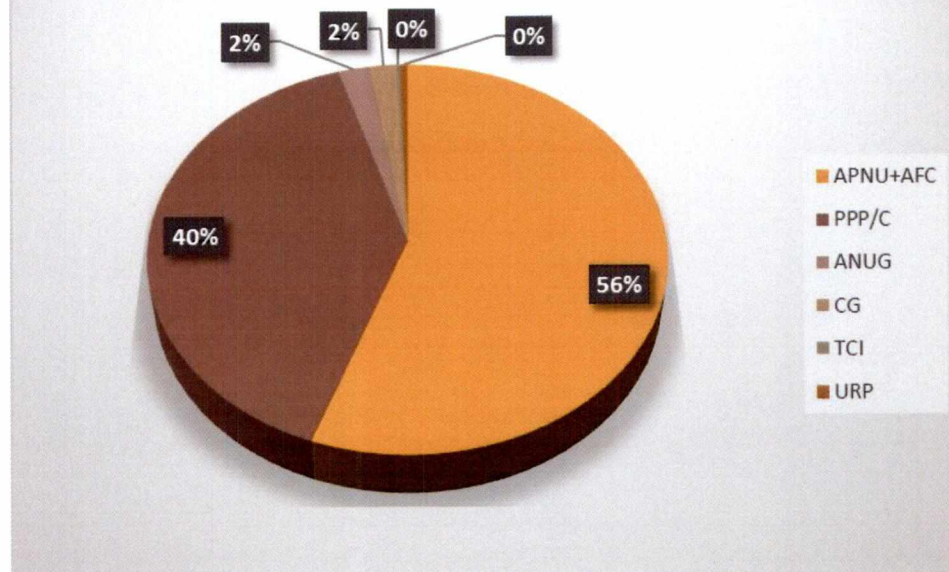
social media. The Constitution (Amendment) (No. 2) Act No. 11 of 2000 [212D (w)] predisposes the ERC to “make recommendations on penalties...to be imposed for any breach...of any law dealing with ethnicity” This elections has pellucidly shown how social media can be harnessed in real time to execute non-physical racial warfare. To effectively counter the viral spread of racism via social media platforms, the MMU **recommends** that the Commission considers as a matter of priority, making recommendations to the National Assembly for legislation to be enacted specifically targeting the use of social media to promote racism and other forms of ethnic bigotry. The legislation should be crafted in such a way that it constitutionally empowers the ERC to hold media houses, political parties and other social organizations accountable for managing the content of comments posted to their websites and Fb pages. Whenever organizations are found guilty of leaving ethnically offensive comments on their social media platforms for specified periods of time without editorial intervention, the legislation should further empower the Commission to leverage hefty fines against those organizations found to be in violation of the legislation. The MMU sincerely believes that this recommendation if fructified can go a long way in containing the use of social media to promote ethnic divisions in the country, not only during elections periods, but, year-round.



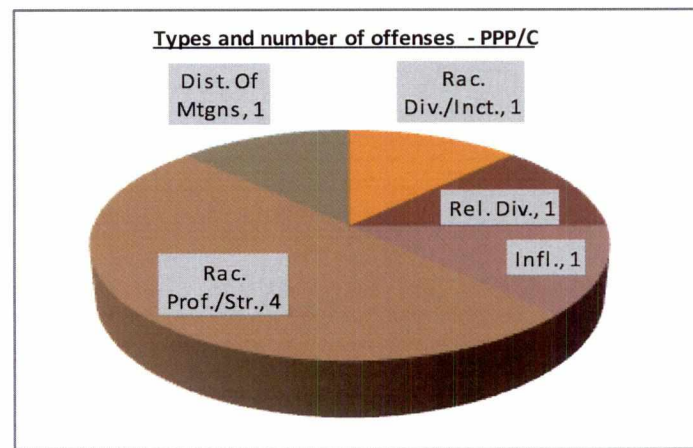
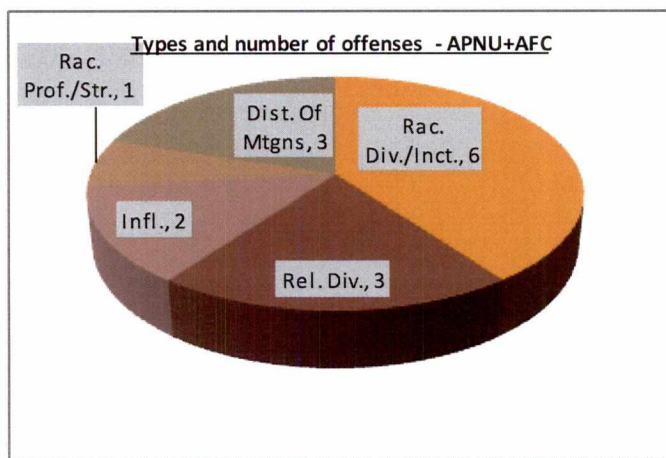
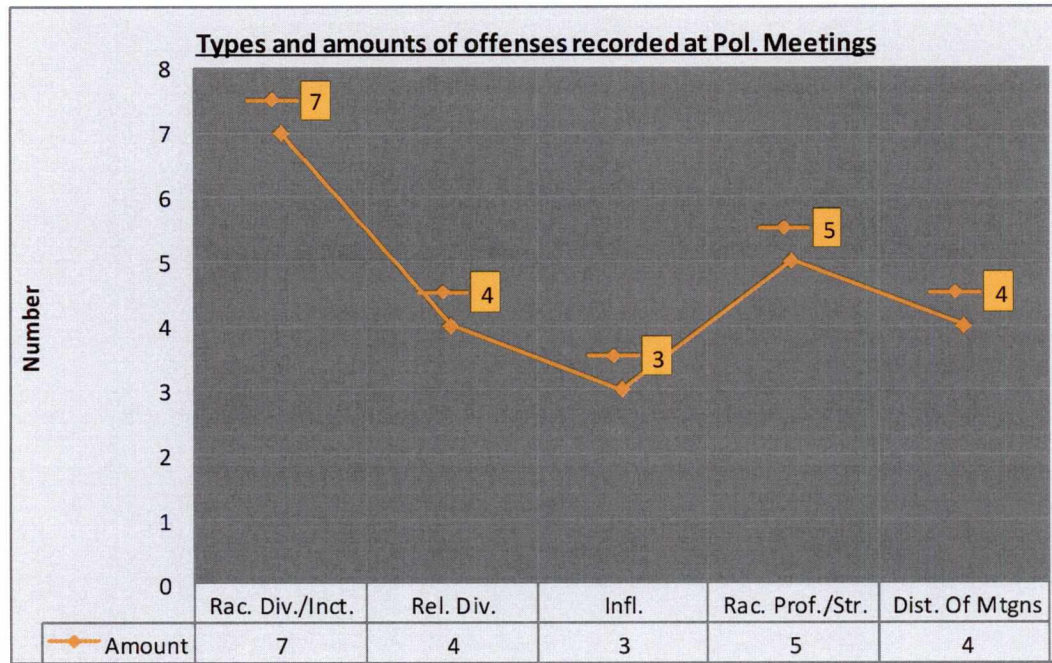
No. of Meetings monitored for each Pol. Party



% of Meetings monitored for each Pol. Party



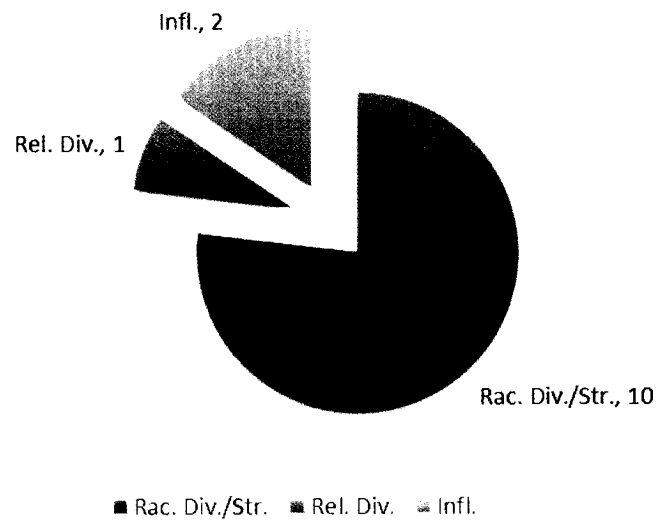
Appendix 4



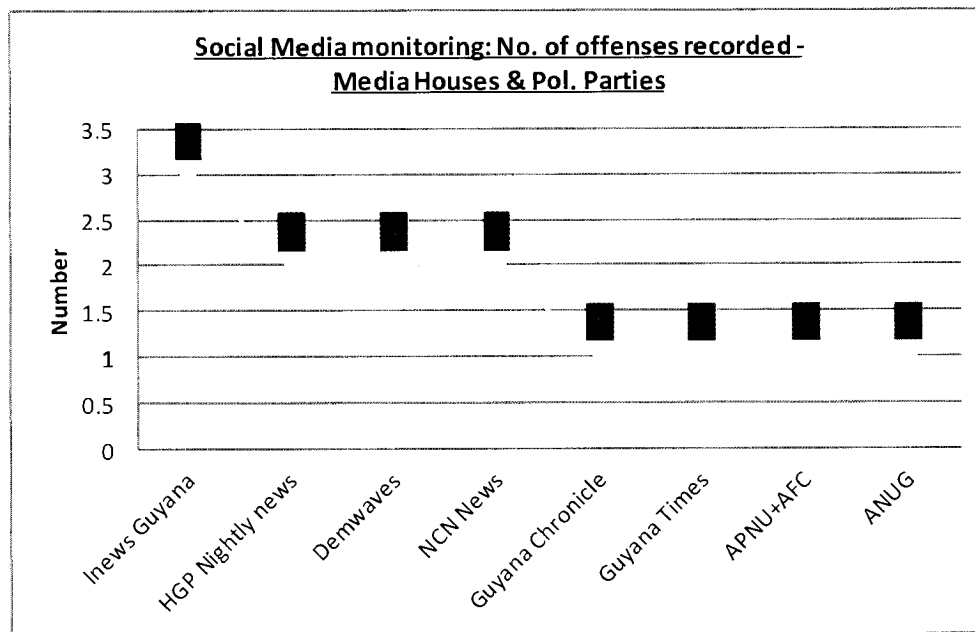
NB: The following abbreviations are used in the above diagrams to define language and/or behaviors recorded and reported by Election Monitors.
 Rac. Div/Inct. – Racially divisive/inciting
 Rel. Div. – Religiously divisive
 Infl. – Inflammatory
 Rac. Prof/Str. – Racial profiling/stereotyping
 Dist of Mtgns. – Disruptions/Break-up of meetings

Appendix 5

Types and number of offenses recorded from Social Media



Rac.Div/Str. – Racially divisive/stereotypical
 Rel. Div. – Religiously divisive
 Infl. - Inflammatory





66 Peter Rose and Anira Streets, Queenstown
Georgetown, GUYANA
Tel: 231-6265, 231-6281, 231-6481, Tel/Fax: 231-6246
Email: ethnic.relations@yahoo.com
Website: www.erc.org.gy

February 12, 2020

Hon. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo
General Secretary
People's Progressive Party
Freedom House
41 Robb Street, Lacytown
GEORGETOWN

Dear Dr. Jagdeo,

RE: PROMOTING HARMONY AND GOOD RELATIONS AMONG THE CITIZENRY

The Ethnic Relations Commission as an impartial and independent body established under article 212A of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Chapter 1:01 is mandated by law to foster a sense of security among all Guyanese by encouraging and promoting the understanding, acceptance and tolerance of diversity in all aspects of political, social, economic and cultural life. This includes the elimination of all forms of political hostility and discrimination and the strict prohibition of conduct and statements which cause or may cause hatred, violence or ill-will among the citizenry on the grounds of race or ethnicity using politics as a divisive mechanism.

The Swift Response Committee of the Commission is vigorously monitoring the conduct of the current general and regional elections campaign with the aim to foster harmony and good relations. It is our civil responsibility as Guyanese to respect not only the rule of law but the right of others to peacefully exist in a diverse society. The public incitement of any form of abhorrence or violence is contrary to the fabric of a unified society and attracts grave sanctions under the law. You are therefore respectfully reminded to bring to the attention of the speakers of your party the need to be cautious of what their words convey to the people and the damaging influence they can have on the public. The Commission urges you to be an emissary of peace, especially during this very tense election season and asks that the Party refrains from advancing, disseminating or communicating any idea which can cause racial or ethnic division.

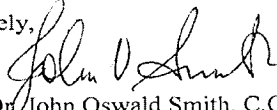
The Commission wishes to bring to your attention Bishop Juan Edghill's introduction of Ms. Eurica Forde at the launch of the PPP/C Campaign at the Kitty Market Square on the 5th day of January, 2020. Bishop Edghill was recorded by our Election monitors as using race to excite the crowd. Edghill is recorded as saying "...this young woman is a medical doctor for six years. You know what that means, she is one of Jagdeo Scholars. She is one of those 1000 plus young people that was sent to Cuba when we didn't look at colour, race or religion. You just had to be

bright. We send you to Cuba to give you a future. She is Afro Guyanese. Yes, she black. I say she Black. The PNC aint own black people....they ain't own no blackman...they ain't own the black people in Georgetown. People getting conscious and coming to the PPP".

The Commission finds the use of such language inappropriate and asks that party speakers at meetings be urged to use more responsible, professional language to their audience. The Commission cannot effectively function without your support. You have the ears of the Guyanese people and we ask that you use your platform to stress the need for unity and peace among our people.

Best regards,

Sincerely,



Rev. Dr. John Oswald Smith, C.C.H.
Chairman

c.c Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon
General Secretary
A Partnership for National Unity + AFC



66 Peter Rose and Anira Streets, Queenstown
Georgetown, GUYANA
Tel: 231-6265, 231-6281, 231-6481, Tel/Fax: 231-6246
Email: ethnic.relations@yahoo.com
Website: www.erc.org.gy

February 12, 2020

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon
General Secretary
A Partnership for National Unity + AFC
216-217 Lamaha Street
North Cummingsburg
GEORGETOWN

Dear Mr. Harmon,

RE: PROMOTING HARMONY AND GOOD RELATIONS AMONG THE CITIZENRY

The Ethnic Relations Commission as an impartial and independent body established under article 212A of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Chapter 1:01 is mandated by law to foster a sense of security among all Guyanese by encouraging and promoting the understanding, acceptance and tolerance of diversity in all aspects of political, social, economic and cultural life. This includes the elimination of all forms of political hostility and discrimination and the strict prohibition of conduct and statements which cause or may cause hatred, violence or ill-will among the citizenry on the grounds of race or ethnicity using politics as a divisive mechanism.

The Swift Response Committee of the Commission is vigorously monitoring the conduct of the current general and regional elections campaign with the aim to foster harmony and good relations. It is our civil responsibility as Guyanese to respect not only the rule of law but the right of others to peacefully exist in a diverse society. The public incitement of any form of abhorrence or violence is contrary to the fabric of a unified society and attracts grave sanctions under the law. You are therefore respectfully reminded to be cautious of your words and conduct in public and the damaging influence they may have on those who have received them. The Commission urges you to be an emissary of peace, especially during this very tense election season and asks that the Party refrains from advancing, disseminating or communicating any idea which can cause racial or ethnic division.

The Commission wishes to bring to your attention the viral recording on Facebook and social media of what appears to be a group of APNU/AFC supporters disrupting a PPP/C meeting at Linden on 30 January, 2020. Persons were observed beating buckets, dragging cans on the streets and issuing indecent language at the speakers. A fire cracker was also thrown some distance away from Mr. Sam Hinds while he was addressing the crowd forcing him to be escorted by

security. The Commission asks that you remind your supporters of their role to respect the right of peaceful assembly of other political parties and to refrain from conducting themselves in a disorderly manner in public.

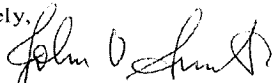
A second incident which was monitored by the Commission involves Mr. Tacoma Ogunseye who on 17 January, 2020 at an APNU/AFC Meeting at East Ruimveldt, Black Circle, while addressing the crowd, used words to the effect "As I speak to you brothers and sisters, if you are to look at the Guyanese economy, African and Amerindian probably own only 10% of the economy. The 90% of the economy is owned by Indian and Portuguese and people outside the African community and that is a lopsided arrangement.....we got nothing, 300 years of slavery and colonialism and nothing free the African got...". The Commission finds the use of such language inappropriate and asks that party speakers at meetings be urged to use more responsible, professional language to their audience. It is our recommendation that speakers use an all-inclusive tone and not present themselves as acting in the interest of one or two ethnic groupings while neglecting the others.

A third incident which the Commission found worrying were the remarks of Mr. Harmon at Buxton, East Coast Demerara on 08 January, 2020 where he stated to a cheering crowd "It is really a contemptuous act on the part of the PPP that says 'look once you put up a black face deh, Black people are going to vote for you'...No way, no way, no way, I say no way...." Historically race has been associated with politics in Guyana and we as public figures have a duty to eliminate that stereotype, not to feed into it.

The Commission cannot effectively function without your support. You have the ears of the Guyanese people and we ask that you use your platform to stress the need for unity and peace among our people.

Best regards,

Sincerely,



Rev. Dr. John Oswald Smith, C.C.H.
Chairman

c.c Hon. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo
General Secretary
People's Progressive Party



108

66 Peter Rose and Anira Streets, Queenstown
Georgetown, GUYANA
Tel: 231-6265, 231-6281, 231-6481, Tel/Fax: 231-6246
Email: ethnic.relations@yahoo.com
Website: www.erc.org.gy

February 20, 2020

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon
General Secretary
A Partnership for National Unity + AFC
216-217 Lamaha Street
North Cummingsburg
GEORGETOWN

Dear Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Harmon,

PROMOTING HARMONY AND GOOD RELATIONS AMONG THE CITIZENRY

The Ethnic Relations Commission as an impartial and independent body established under article 212A of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Chapter 1:01 is mandated by law to foster a sense of security among all Guyanese by encouraging and promoting the understanding, acceptance and tolerance of diversity in all aspects of political, social, economic and cultural life. This includes the elimination of all forms of political hostility and discrimination and the strict prohibition of conduct and statements which cause or may cause hatred, violence or ill-will among the citizenry on the grounds of race or ethnicity using politics as a divisive mechanism.

The Swift Response Committee of the Commission is vigorously monitoring the conduct of the current General and Regional Election campaign with the aim to foster harmony and good relations. It is everyone's civil responsibility as Guyanese to respect not only the rule of law but the right of others to peacefully exist in a diverse society. The public incitement of any form of ill-will or violence is contrary to the fabric of a unified society and attracts grave sanctions under the law.

You are therefore respectfully reminded to bring to the attention of the speakers of your party the need to be cautious of what their words convey to the people and the damaging influence they can have on the public. The Commission urges you to be an emissary of peace, especially during this very tense election season and asks that the Party refrains from advancing, disseminating or communicating any idea which can cause racial or ethnic division.

In keeping with its mandate, the Commission hereby brings to your attention the following incidents:

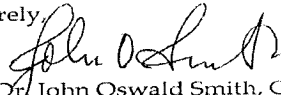
- It was reported by one of the Commission's Election Monitors that at a PPP/C meeting held on January 8, 2020 at Central Mahaicony was noisily interrupted by APNU/AFC supporters.
- At the APNU/AFC meeting held on February 10, 2020 at Belle West Masjid Street, Canal No. 2, West Bank Demerara, the Elections Monitor observed that your party's speaker, Pandit Deodat Tillack made insensitive comments that have the potential to divide the populace along religious lines. His words were "Speaking to the Hindu community, how do you feel as a Hindu to know that in 2011, at GuyExpo, the man, Irfraud Ali in the company of his friends at the Hindu booth, opened a beer and threw it on the image of Maha Lakshmi, the personification of wealth, threw it on the image of Maha Lakshmi. How do you feel? Aren't you ashamed to be supporting such an individual? No wonder you are suffering because you are supporting the wickedness. In 2013, when our beloved Pandits, one of his relatives went to the man's home under the influence and acted out of character, and when he was admonished what happened to that Pandit, what happened to him? Just imagine if the man was simply a Minister and he allowed his family and friends to do these things to Hindus just imagine...Aren't you ashamed to be supporting such an individual and placing your 'X' next to be PPP/C and the cup, the cup done bend up...".
- Pursuant to a complaint to the Commission of a Facebook post titled "Late Night Gaff" hosted by APNU /AFC members Minister Tabitha Sarabo-Halley and her husband, Clayton Halley, the Commission has since perused the said posted video and observed that Mr. Halley mentioned "If you look at what happens at election time, there is a branding, a serious branding campaign that the opposition takes on during election time and that is so to keep their base in order, which the largest support group for them is Indo-Guyanese...And in order to keep them in tact they throw a lot of branding on Afro-Guyanese. When you hear a lot about thugs...hooligans... and then at the bottom house meetings they drive fear into them to telling them that they gon come and beat them up...all sorts of things going to happen if they go into power...So what they do indirectly they would drive fear in their own supporters as it relate to Afro-Guyanese, and therein lies the major issue because it then becomes difficult for me as an Afro-Guyanese, even if I decide to walk through an Indo community and talk to people just to share information, it becomes a battle because they already got this branding in their minds...".

The Ethnic Relations Commission hereby advises that in keeping with Guyana being a secular state, statements which have the potential to create tensions between different religions should be avoided as much as possible. Also, the words spoken by Mr. Halley have the potential to create racial division and should be avoided at all times.

The Commission appreciates your continued support in promoting harmony and good relations.

Best regards,

Sincerely,



Rev. Dr. John Oswald Smith, C.C.H.
Chairman

Cc: Hon. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo
General Secretary
People's Progressive Party



66 Peter Rose and Anira Streets, Queenstown
Georgetown, GUYANA
Tel: 231-6265, 231-6281, 231-6481, Tel/Fax: 231-6246
Email: ethnic.relations@yahoo.com
Website: www.erc.org.gy

February 27, 2020

Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon
General Secretary
A Partnership for National Unity + AFC
216-217 Lamaha Street
North Cummingsburg
GEORGETOWN

Dear Mr. Harmon,

PROMOTING HARMONY AND GOOD RELATIONS AMONG THE CITIZENRY

The Ethnic Relations Commission as an impartial and independent body established under article 212A of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Chapter 1:01 is mandated by law to foster a sense of security among all Guyanese by encouraging and promoting the understanding, acceptance and tolerance of diversity in all aspects of political, social, economic and cultural life. This includes the elimination of all forms of political hostility and discrimination and the strict prohibition of conduct and statements which cause or may cause hatred, violence or ill-will among the citizenry on the grounds of race or ethnicity using politics as a divisive mechanism.

The Swift Response Committee of the Commission is vigorously monitoring the conduct of the current General and Regional Election campaign with the aim to foster harmony and good relations. It is our civil responsibility as Guyanese to respect not only the rule of law but the right of others to peacefully exist in a diverse society. The public incitement of any form of ill-will or violence is contrary to the fabric of a unified society and attracts grave sanctions under the law. You are therefore respectfully reminded to bring to the attention of the speakers of your party the need to be cautious of what their words convey to the people and the damaging influence they can have on the public. The Commission urges you to be an emissary of peace, especially during this very tense election season and asks that the Party refrains from advancing, disseminating or communicating any idea which can cause racial or ethnic division.

In keeping with our mandate, the Commission hereby brings to your attention the following incidents:

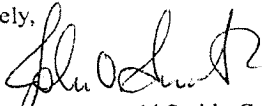
- At an APNU/AFC meeting held at the junction of Middle and Church Streets McDoom on 12 February, 2020 during his address to the gathering Mr. Seivewright Benjamin remarked “...Before I close I want to say that I have been looking at the statistics and one of the things that it reveals is that black people from 1985 up to 2015 have been voting at an average...and at its highest peak was in 2015 when it was 78%, that is unacceptable because we giving other people a chance to kill us...so we have to bring out everybody on March 2nd vote for the hand and the key...”
- At the APNU/AFC meeting held on February 13, 2020 at Manawarin Creek, Essequibo Coast, our Election Monitor observed that your party’s speaker, Mr. Naitram stated to the crowd of supporters in his speech “..I know on de coast they had a programme where they give old age people free electricity and free water but how many of you how many of your parent benefitted out of that programme? It was done because the coastland which is dominated by Indo- Guyanese those were the ones who benefitted from it. You the residents of this community never benefitted out of that programme. Did you benefit from that programme? No! Because they did not have you at heart, the residents of the hinterland communities...”
- Mr. Tacoma Ogunseye in his address to the crowd at an APNU/AFC meeting held on 10 February, 2020 at the Health Centre between B and C Field Sophia stated “Anyone looking at the Guyanese economy as it stands today and I have been making this point over and over and they haven’t challenged me. At present Africans and Amerindians only control together, the African stakes and the Amerindian stakes in the economy is 10%. It therefore means that 90% of the economy is outside our hands, it is controlled either by Indians, Portuguese and now we have the Chinese. This is a structural injustice and a lot of this happened historically but it got worse under the 23 years of the PPP deliberate policy of economic apartheid in which they set out systematically to impoverish African communities because they vote for the PNC and because they vote for the APNU/AFC and so forth. So it was deliberate policy that impoverished us.” He went on further to say “...You remember when they get in in 1992; in Guyana we had little capacity to build roads. The first thing the PPP did, they went to Trinidad, recruit their Indian friends and the first contractors that began to build roads in Guyana was Indian Trinidadians working with local Indians and three years after that you don’t see Trinidadians. They have empowered their own people and their friends and a lot of the road contracts are done by non-African people – non-Amerindian people...”

The Commission urges party members and executives to respect the signed Code of Conduct and to refrain from using any language which has the potential to cause division or violence on the ground of race. Please be reminded of the penalty clause in the Code of Conduct. The Commission finds that the use of divisive language is not only inappropriate but contrary to our laws and asks that party speakers at meetings be urged to use more responsible, professional language to their audience.

The Commission appreciates your continued support in promoting harmony and good relations.

Best regards,

Sincerely,



Rev. Dr. John Oswald Smith, C.C.H.

Chairman

Cc: Hon. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo

General Secretary

People's Progressive Party



66 Peter Rose and Anira Streets, Queenstown
Georgetown, GUYANA
Tel: 231-6265, 231-6281, 231-6481, Tel/Fax: 231-6246
Email: ethnic.relations@yahoo.com
Website: www.erc.org.gy

February 20, 2020

Hon. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo
General Secretary
People's Progressive Party
Freedom House
41 Robb Street, Lacytown
GEORGETOWN

Dear Dr. Jagdeo,

PROMOTING HARMONY AND GOOD RELATIONS AMONG THE CITIZENRY

The Ethnic Relations Commission as an impartial and independent body established under article 212A of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Chapter 1:01 is mandated by law to foster a sense of security among all Guyanese by encouraging and promoting the understanding, acceptance and tolerance of diversity in all aspects of political, social, economic and cultural life. This includes the elimination of all forms of political hostility and discrimination and the strict prohibition of conduct and statements which cause or may cause hatred, violence or ill-will among the citizenry on the grounds of race or ethnicity using politics as a divisive mechanism.

The Swift Response Committee of the Commission is vigorously monitoring the conduct of the current General and Regional Election campaign with the aim to foster harmony and good relations. It is everyone's civil responsibility as Guyanese to respect not only the rule of law but the right of others to peacefully exist in a diverse society. The public incitement of any form of ill-will or violence is contrary to the fabric of a unified society and attracts grave sanctions under the law.

You are therefore respectfully reminded to bring to the attention of the speakers of your party the need to be cautious of what their words convey to the people and the damaging influence they can have on the public. The Commission urges you to be an emissary of peace, especially during this very tense election season and asks that the Party refrains from advancing, disseminating or communicating any idea which can cause racial or ethnic division.

In keeping with its mandate, the Commission hereby brings to your attention the following incident:

- At a PPP/C meeting held on 10 February, 2020 at Kuru Kururu Market Square, one of the PPP/C speakers, Ms. Joan Da Silva, in her address to the crowd, was recorded by our election monitor as saying "...but I can speak to you. I had a vision and I speak on behalf of what God said to me, and I is not a false prophet you know. Hear what I tell you. God spoke to me about that election. Hear what he said to me. APNU did not win the election. He said they did not win the election but listen to this conversation na man. He said I permitted them to be in office. He further said I permitted them to be in office because blood was going to fill the land. You understand what I just said? Blood was going to fill the land. It means that APNU was prepared to kill everybody that look like they supporting PPP. Innocent blood was going to fill the land and God in his infinite wisdom said No. Mercy says no."

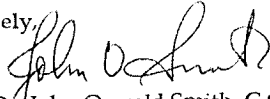
Ms. Da Silva went on further to say "I want to say to Kuru Kururu people this is a Christian Community. I never see Christian punish so much. Granger seh he is a Christian. He needs to become a Christian because let me tell you something, if you was gonna kill innocent people, you na Christian, you're not no Christian, you is a murderer. And ah telling you, the PPP is the party that cares for everybody..."

The Ethnic Relations Commission believes that the statements made by Ms. Da Silva have the potential to cause unrest in the religious community since they can be easily viewed as offensive to Christianity. They are inflammatory and are the kind of remarks that should be strongly and unequivocally condemned by your Party leaders and executives.

The Commission appreciates your continued support in promoting harmony and good relations.

Best regards,

Sincerely,



Rev. Dr. John Oswald Smith, C.C.H.
Chairman

Cc: Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon
General Secretary
A Partnership for National Unity + AFC



110

66 Peter Rose and Anira Streets, Queenstown
Georgetown, GUYANA
Tel: 231-6265, 231-6281, 231-6481, Tel/Fax: 231-6246
Email: ethnic.relations@yahoo.com
Website: www.erc.org.gy

February 27, 2020

Hon. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo
General Secretary
People's Progressive Party
Freedom House
41 Robb Street, Lacytown
GEORGETOWN

Dear Dr. Jagdeo,

PROMOTING HARMONY AND GOOD RELATIONS AMONG THE CITIZENRY

The Ethnic Relations Commission as an impartial and independent body established under article 212A of the Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Chapter 1:01 is mandated by law to foster a sense of security among all Guyanese by encouraging and promoting the understanding, acceptance and tolerance of diversity in all aspects of political, social, economic and cultural life. This includes the elimination of all forms of political hostility and discrimination and the strict prohibition of conduct and statements which cause or may cause hatred, violence or ill-will among the citizenry on the grounds of race or ethnicity using politics as a divisive mechanism.

The Swift Response Committee of the Commission is vigorously monitoring the conduct of the current General and Regional Election campaign with the aim to foster harmony and good relations. It is our civil responsibility as Guyanese to respect not only the rule of law but the right of others to peacefully exist in a diverse society. The public incitement of any form of ill-will or violence is contrary to the fabric of a unified society and attracts grave sanctions under the law. You are therefore respectfully reminded to bring to the attention of the speakers of your party the need to be cautious of what their words convey to the people and the damaging influence they can have on the public. The Commission urges you to be an emissary of peace, especially during this very tense election season and asks that the Party refrains from advancing, disseminating or communicating any idea which can cause racial or ethnic division.

In keeping with our mandate, the Commission hereby brings to your attention the following incidents:

- In her address to the crowd at PPP/C election campaign meeting held at Tapacuma Amerindian Village, Essequibo Coast, on 12 February, 2020, Ms. Yvonne Pearson was recorded by the ERC's election monitor as saying "... I just wish to draw to your attention two things. It's a good thing that you really don't live near the river and so boat is not something you depend on everyday but think about our brothers and sisters in the Pomeroon in Region One where they still use boats...they brought something to parliament and Ms Texiera said to me I believe Dharam Seeraj and a couple of us had

to speak on it when I look at the document comrade I see sloop I say oh buck man ain't got sloop..."

- At a PPP/C meeting held at Red Man Square, Good Hope, East Coast Demerara on 17 February, 2020 the ERC monitor introduced herself to Mr. Anil Nandlall before the meeting had commenced. Nonetheless, Ms. Sonia Parag, who was one of the speakers at the meetings was recorded as addressing the crowd with the following words "Brothers and Sisters from Good Hope and I heard there's somebody here from Buxton too, Goodnight."

The Commission finds that the use of divisive language is not only inappropriate but contrary to our laws and asks that party speakers at meetings be urged to use more responsible, professional language to their audience. We ask that party leaders and executives honour their obligations under the signed Code of Conduct and be reminded of the penalty clause in the said Agreement. With regard to the meeting at Good Hope, the Commission strongly believes that in the context of the meeting, the ERC monitor who is of Afro Guyanese heritage, felt a sense of meanness since there was unnecessary and immediate attention directed to her from sections of the crowd. Hence, the Commission advises against the use of statements at meetings which are likely to be negatively received by party supporters.

The Commission appreciates your continued support in promoting harmony and good relations.

Best regards,

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. John Oswald Smith, C.C.H.
Chairman

Cc: Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Joseph Harmon
General Secretary
A Partnership for National Unity - APC

ANNEX E-

ERC's Harmony Colouring Book



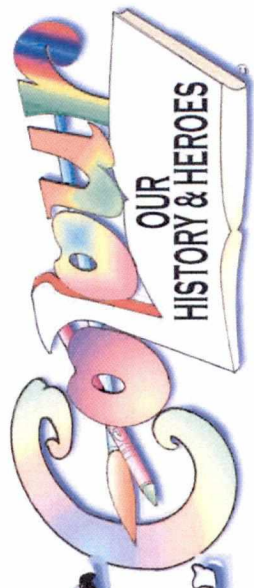
COLOURING BOOK

HARMONY

#1



COLOUR
YOUR WAY
THROUGH
OUR DYNAMIC
HISTORY!



PROMOTING HARMONY & GOOD RELATIONS



From the Chairman's Desk

To you, our citizens to whom our duty lies, the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) is constitutionally tasked with a mandate to remedy as capable as our expertise and the laws entrusted to our usage would permit, our inherited Ethnic contentions.

Our mandate revolves around the bleak spectre haunting our differences, where fears real and unreal compete to divide us.

The Commission recognises that handling complaints alone cannot affect deep seated myths and fears; we must do more. We must pool our unique resources to understand the root of our ethnic and racial contentions, thus we must engage all Guyanese; in this particular case, our younger people; our impressionable minds.

This Harmony Colouring Book is composed of Guyanese achievers who have endeavoured with their life's works to enrich our dear nation. All our ethnic groups are included with brief biographical index.

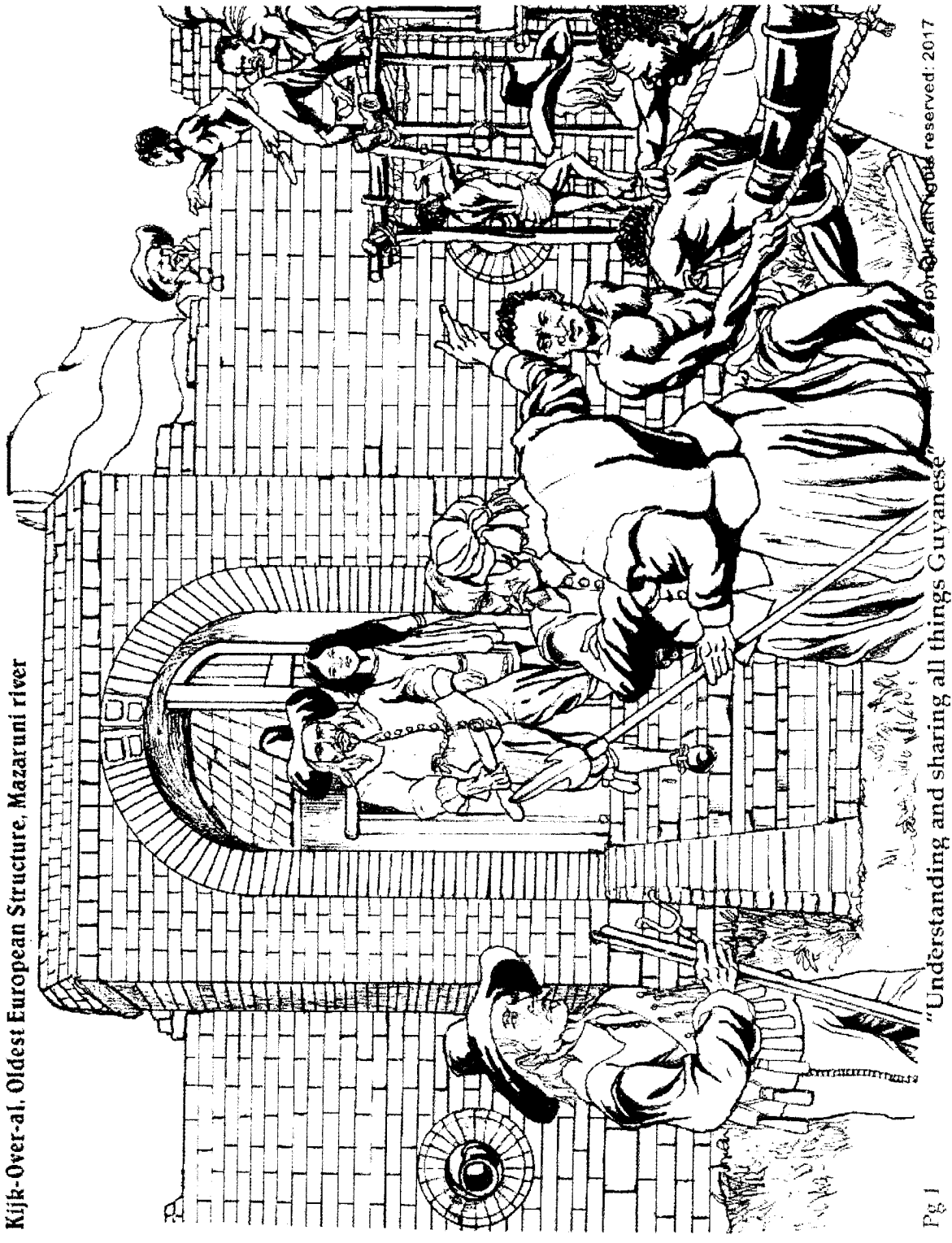
Since no such product presently exists, the ERC intends to initiate with this first Art Edutainment social studies project, an interest, involvement and a conscious realisation that the mandate of the Commission is a national duty for all Guyanese.

This begins with the young and not so young who will be engrossed in colouring those citizens presented in the twenty-six pages herein. It is the Commission fervent hope the realisation will demonstrate that their diverse ethnic roots did not prevent them from embracing the wellbeing of the nation collectively.

As Chairman, I present the Commission's **HARMONY COLOURING BOOK**, intended to entertain, to teach and to renew a deeper understanding of our motto "One People, One Nation, One Destiny".

Rev. Dr. John Oswald Smith, C.C.H.

Kijk-Over-al. Oldest European Structure, Mazaruni river



Pg 1

Copyright reserved: 2017



Pg. 2

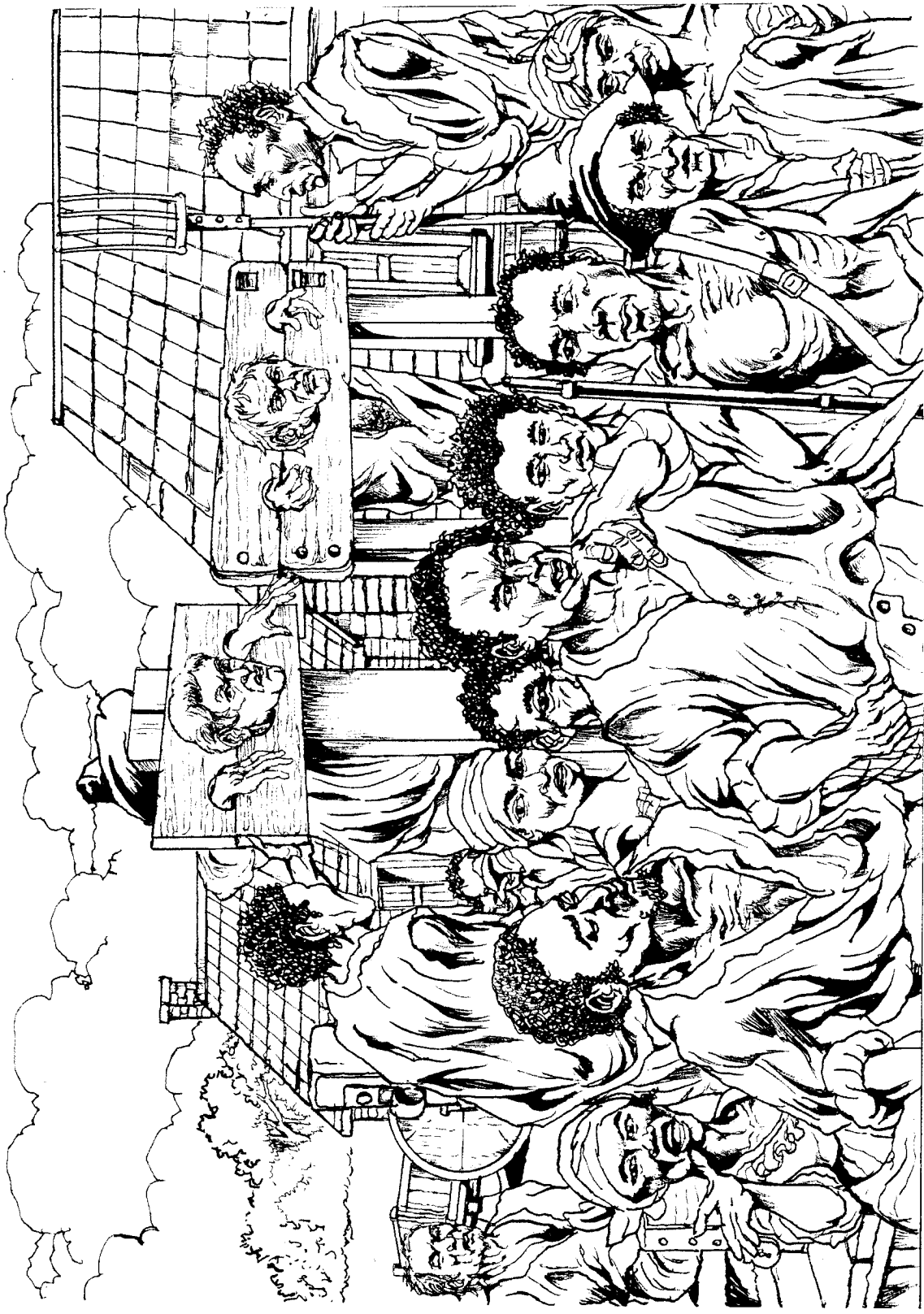
"Promoting Harmony through knowledge"

KOFI at Magdalenenburg 1763 Slave revolution



Pg.3 " Knowledge creates understanding"

1823 East Coast slave insurrection - Protest:



Pg. 4 "Promoting harmony through Knowledge"

The digging of the Lamaha Canal from 1829



Pg. 5 "No one can escape, and no one is of lesser significance"

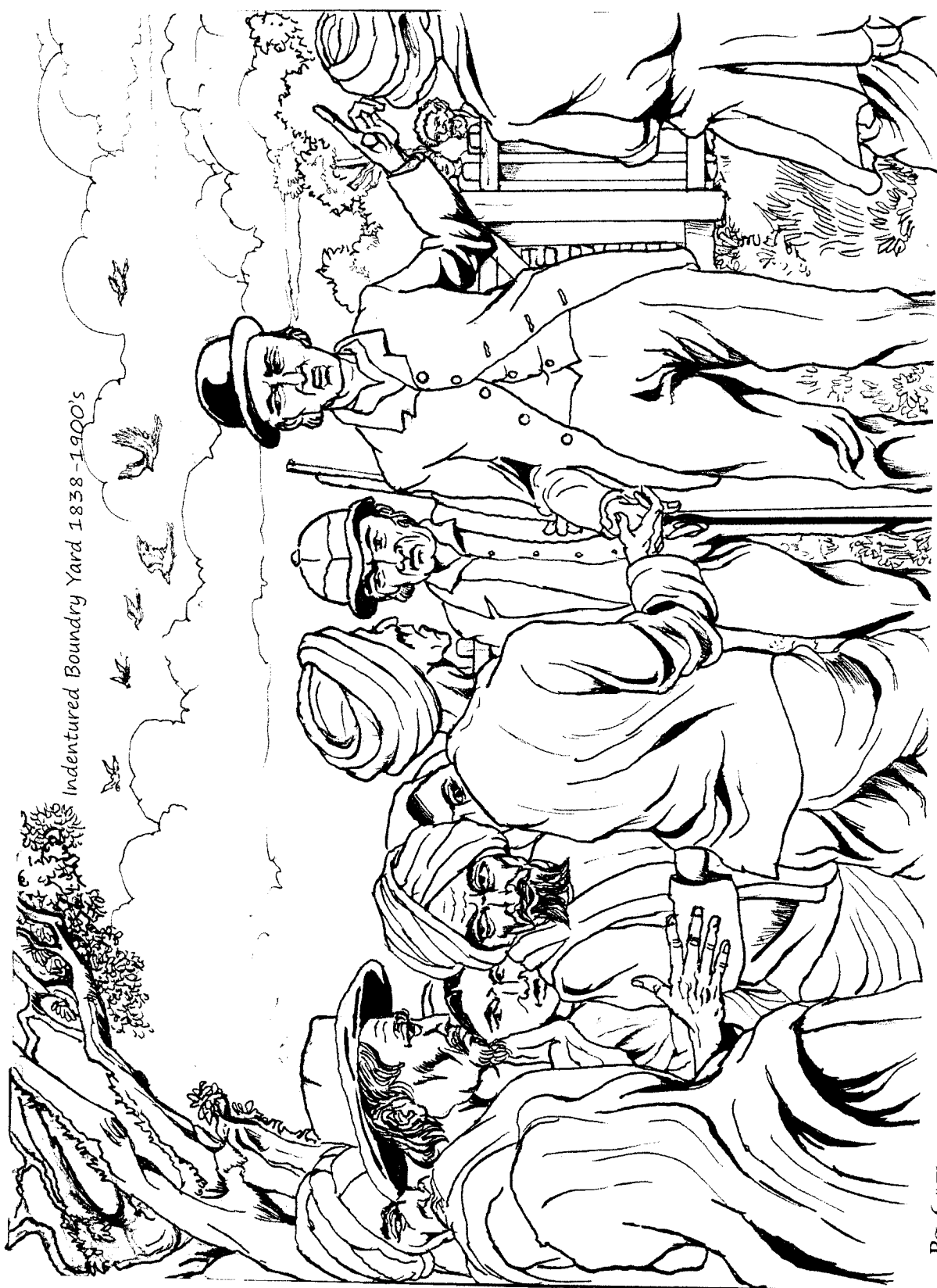


Fig. 6 "The enlightened, seeks to understand, to make the world a better place"

Angel Gabriel Riots 1856



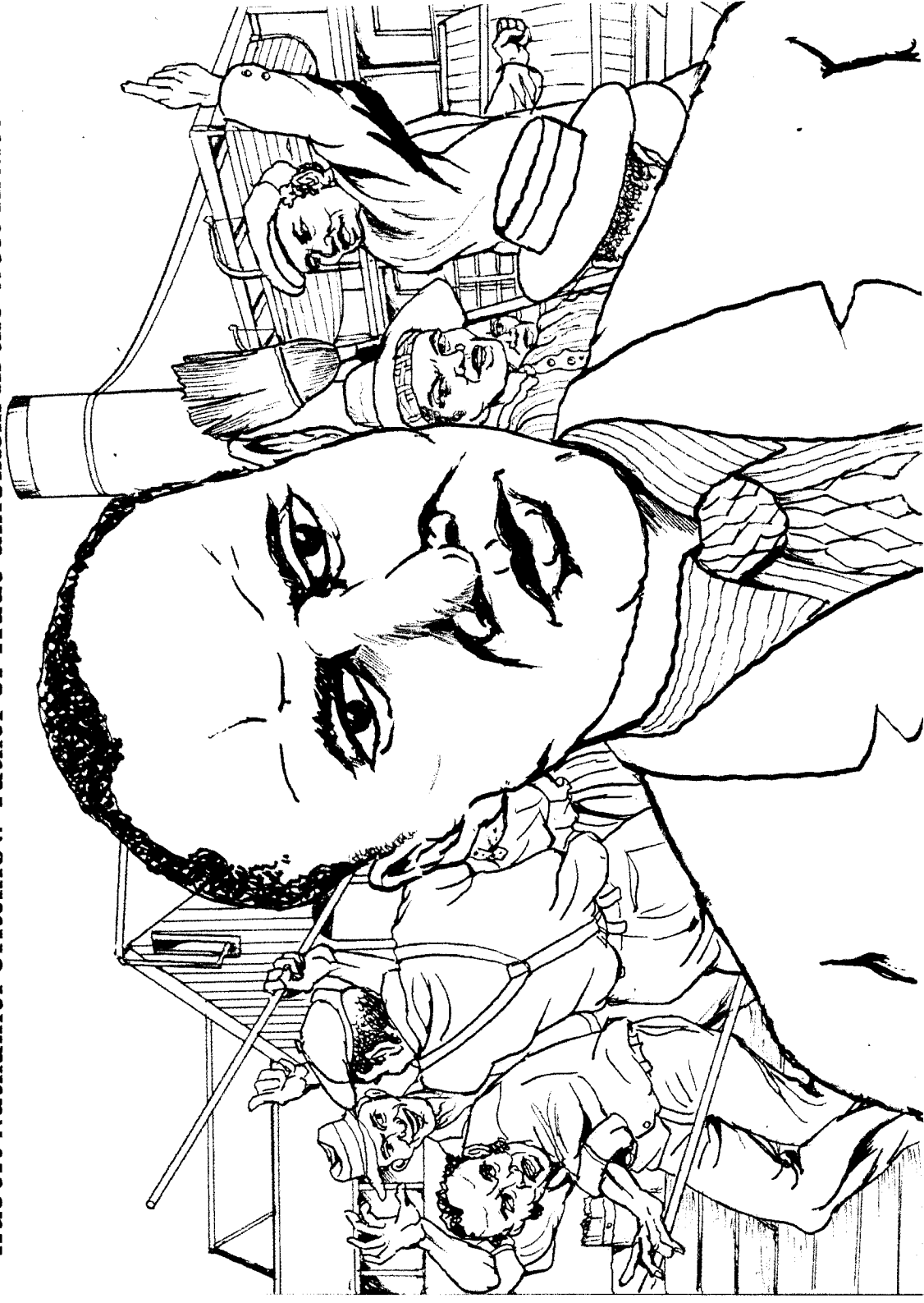
Fig.7 "Both bondsmen and Free laid their bones on our shores, and from them are we"

When The Gold Bush saved the Villages 1880's onward



Fig. 8 To Know, is a true blessing against the tempest and howling winds of life"

Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow-Father of Trade Unionism in the West Indies



Pg. 9 "Team Guyana, knowledge for unity and harmony"

GERTIE WOOD, foremost Feminist and Women's rights voice of BG, 20th century



Pg. 10

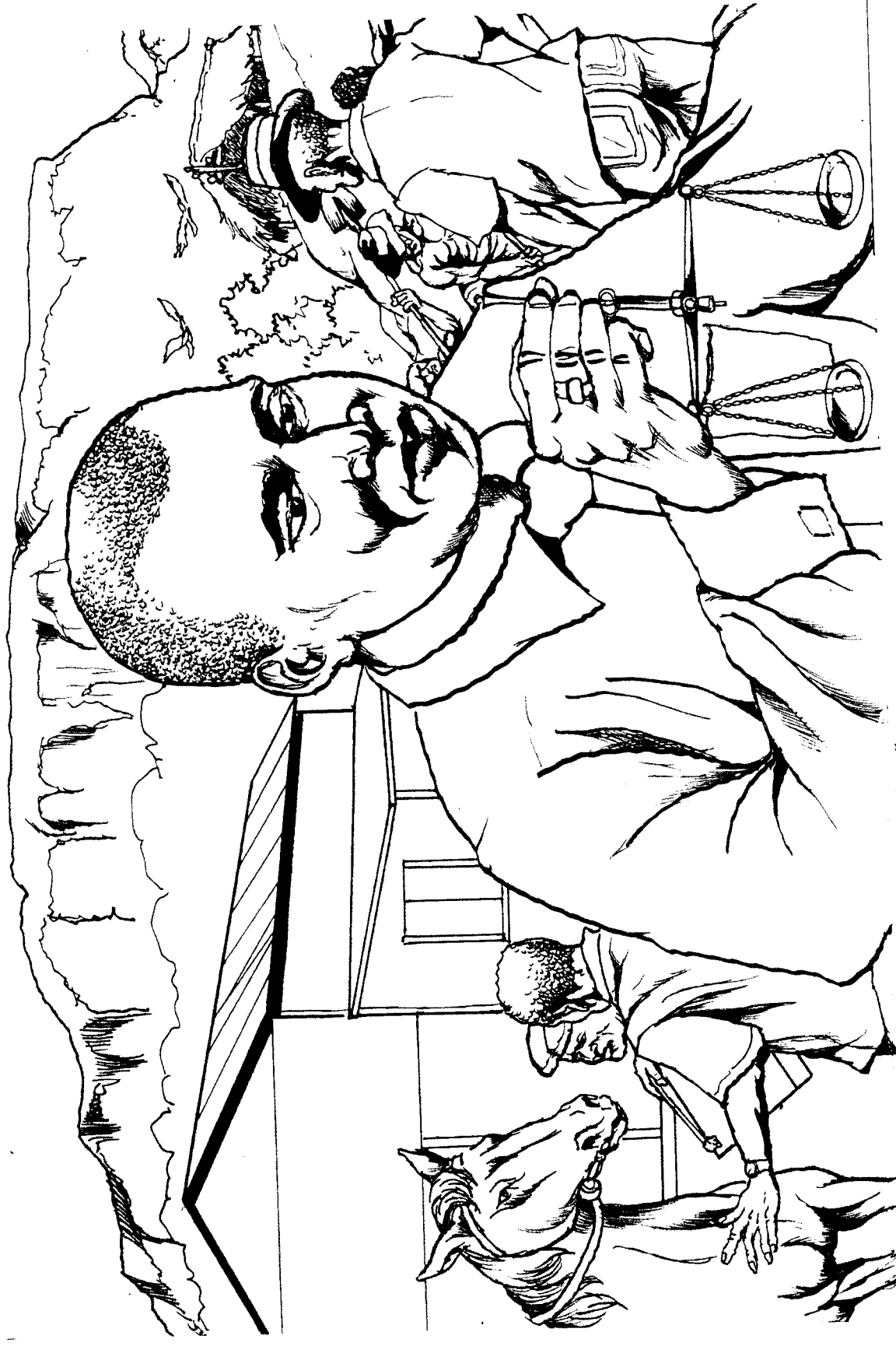
"Guyana, many cultures, one country"

STEPHEN CAMPBELL 1st Amerindian Catholic priest and political representative



Pg. 11 GO ERC "Expand the knowledge for better understanding towards Harmony"

FREDERICK MAHAICA, Legendary Pork Knocker and humanitarian



Pg. 12 "TEAM ERC Promoting our nation builders"

HARRY SARAN RAMSAROOP Founder of the Dharm Shala



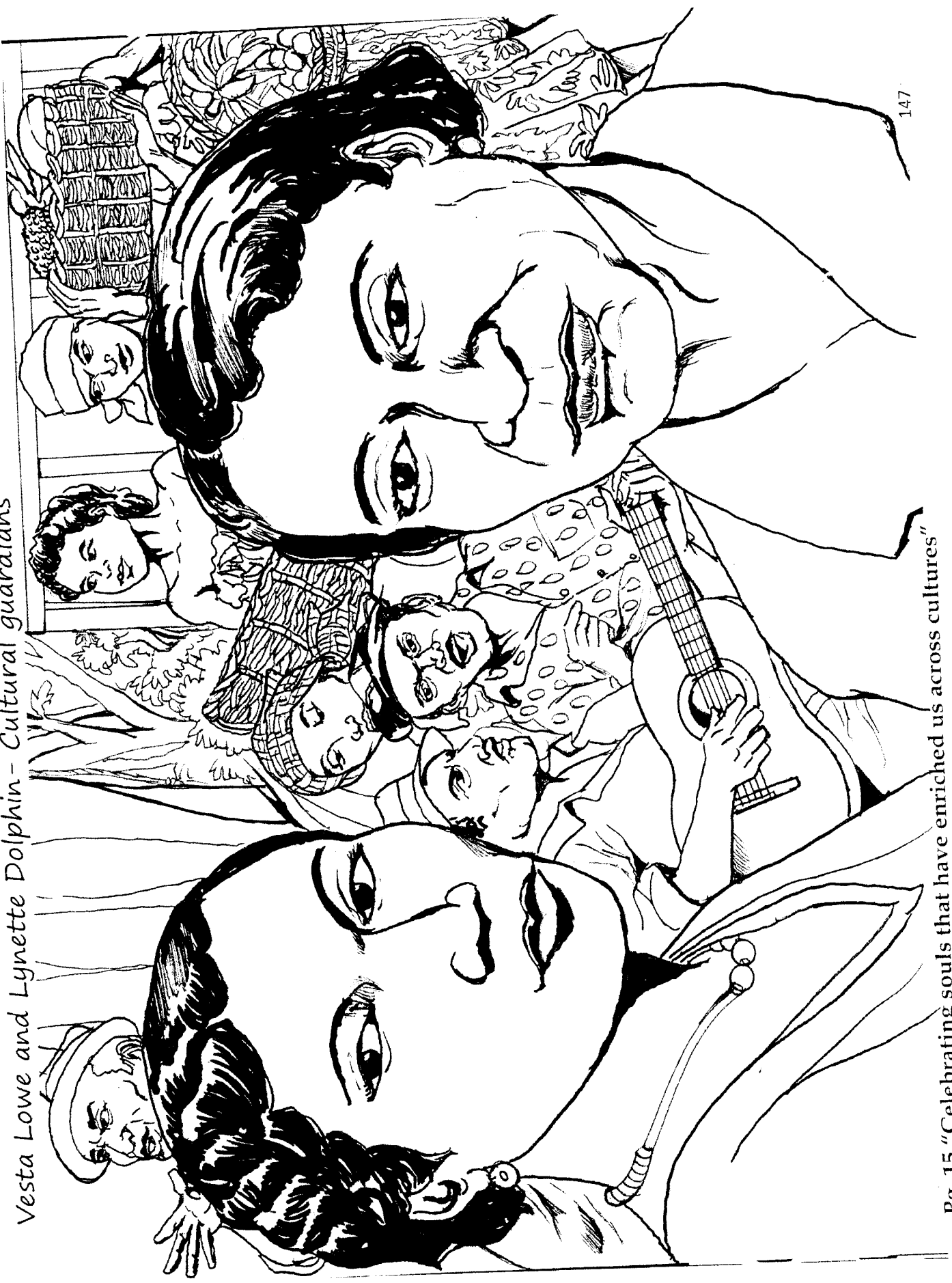
Fig. 13 ERC "Recognising the greatness of the human spirit"

GEORGE GIGLIOLI warrior against Malaria



Pg. 14 " Knowledge uplifts the human spirit towards respect and harmony"

Vesta Lowe and Lynette Dolphin - Cultural guardians



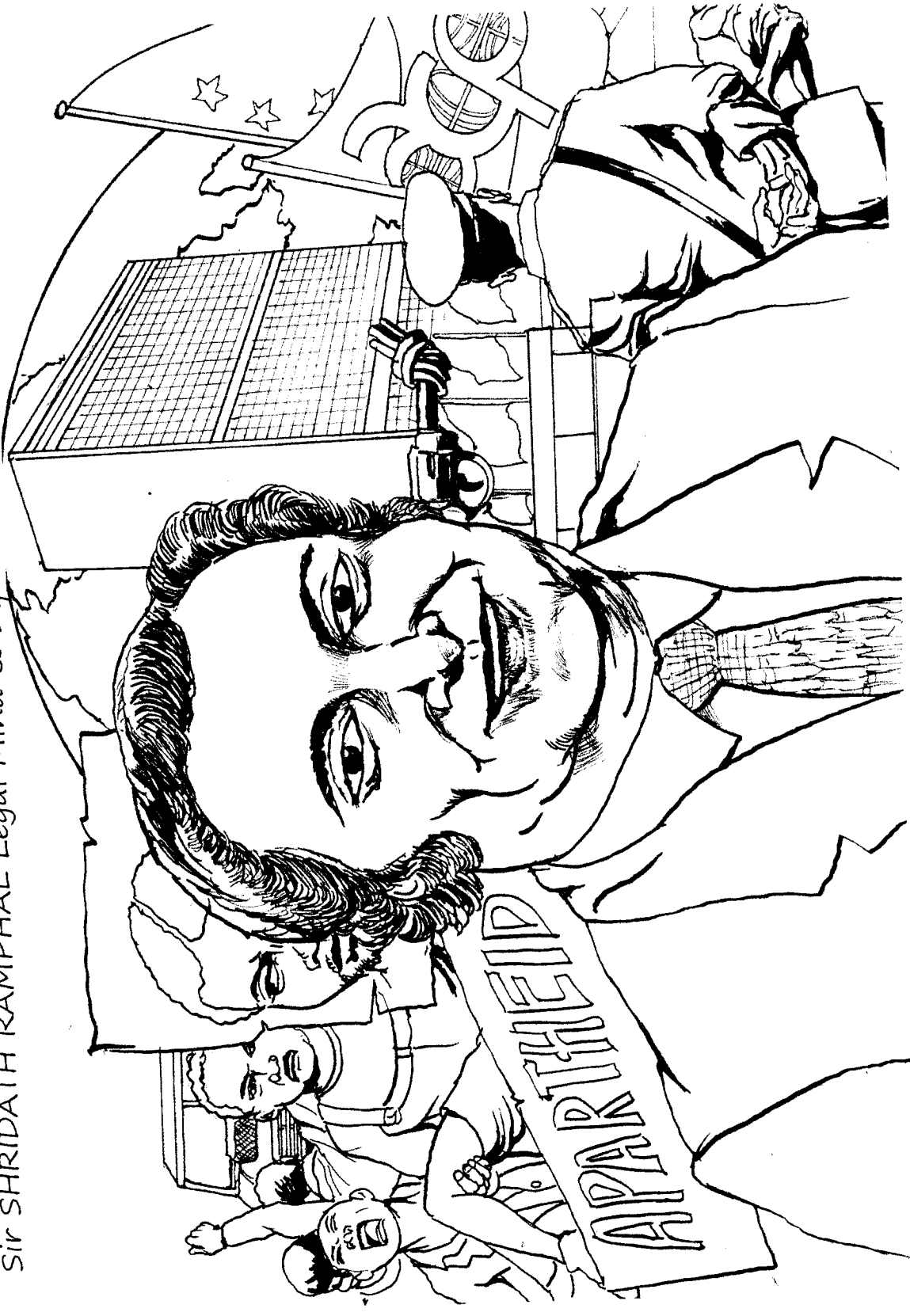
Pg. 15 "Celebrating souls that have enriched us across cultures"

ARTHUR CHUNG First President of the Republic of Guyana



Pg. 16 TEAM GUYANA " Knowledge for unity and Harmony"

Sir SHRIDATH RAMPHAL Legal Mind & Diplomat Extraordinary



Pg. 17 " TEAM ERC- " Many cultures , One nation,One Destiny

MARTIN CARTER National and International Poet



Fig. 18 "Justice empowers Unity and Harmony"

SISTER THERASA LA ROSE



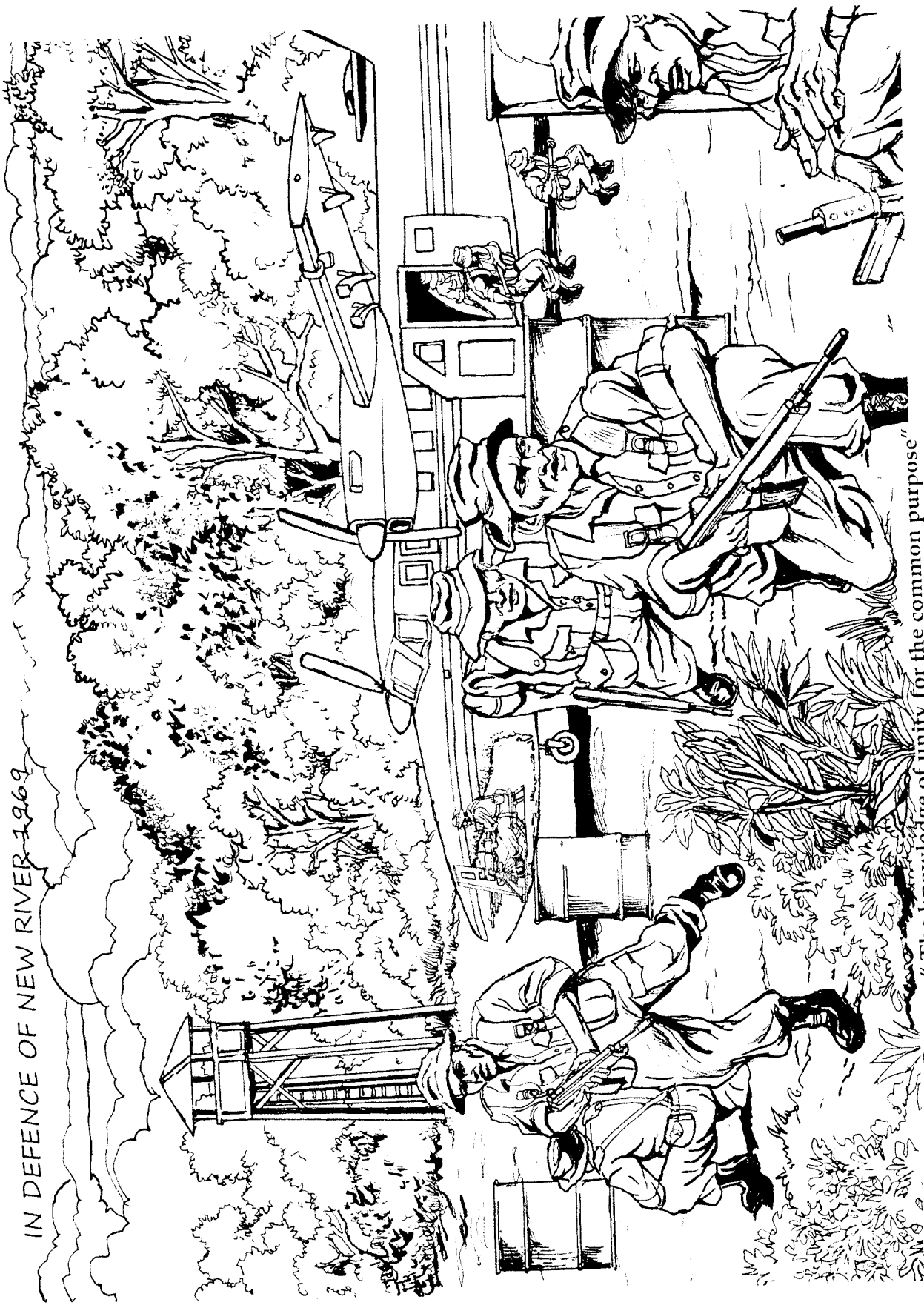
Fig. 19 " The dedication to humanity, is the greatest gift"

Sir DAVID ROSE First Governor General of Independent Guyana



Pg. 20 " From many cultures, One Nation"

IN DEFENCE OF NEW RIVER 1969



Pg. 21 " Team Guyana " The knowledge of unity for the common purpose"



Pg.22 " GO ERC Expand the thinking for greater understanding and unity"

THE RUPUNUNI TREASON 1969



Pg. 23 Team ERC "Knowing your history for greater understanding towards the common purpose"

Dr. DENIS WILLIAMS Artist, Writer , Archaeologist, Innovator



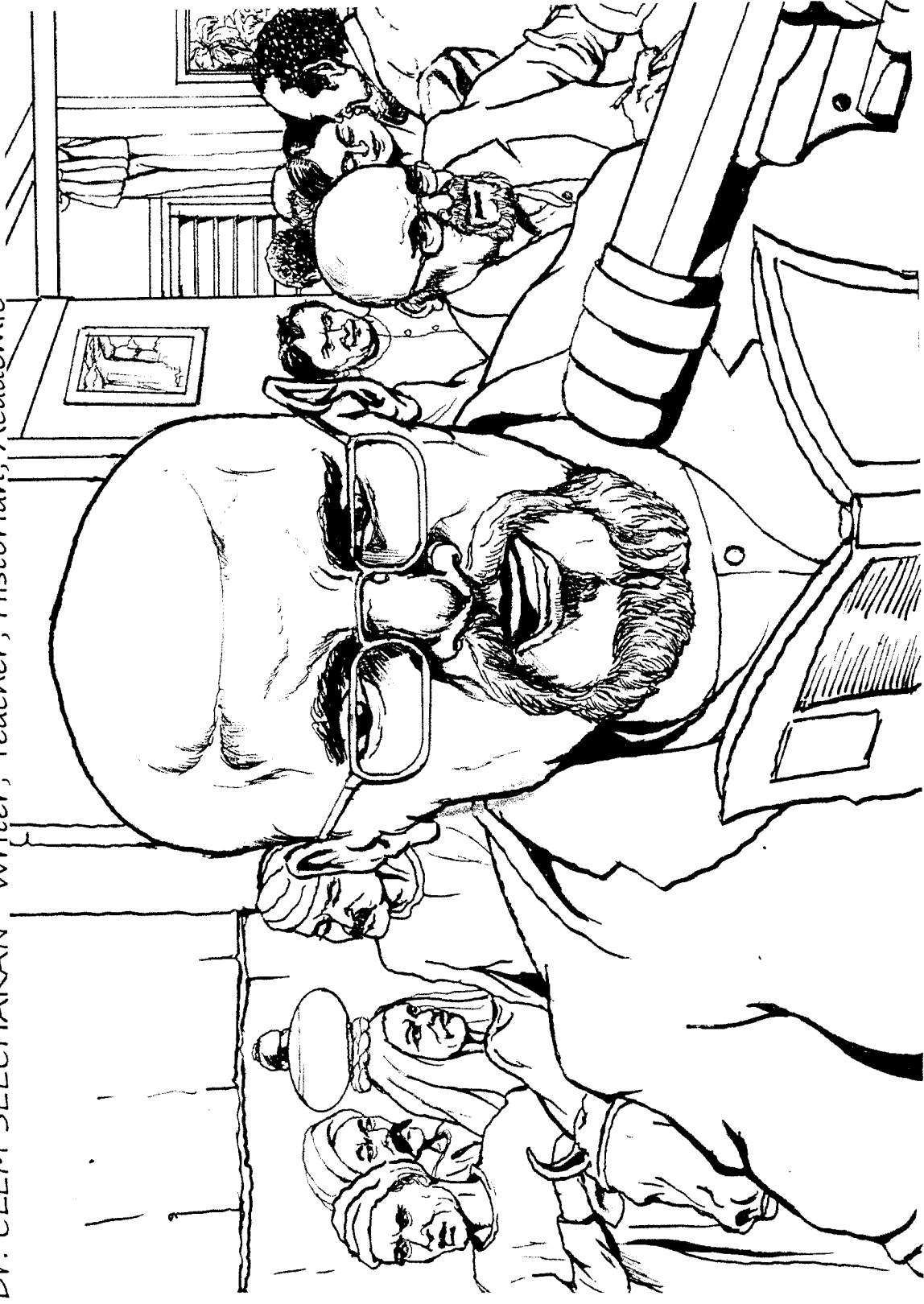
Pg. 24 ERC " Many Cultures, one country"

DESREY FOX - Academic, Cultural Activist, trailblazer



Fig. 25 "Harmony and Unity rests upon the foundations of respect and justice"

Dr. CLEM SEECHARAN -Writer, Teacher, Historian, Academic



Pg. 26 "Expanding Knowledge towards respect and Harmony"



Kijk-Over-All

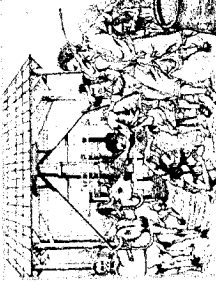
179-01
The first European Settlement, 1620's

The small fort built by the Dutch on an island in the Mazaruni river in the 1620's was the first European structure in Guyana. It was and is still called Kijk-Over-All 'See over all' as the seat of Government synonymous with the plantations and small village developed along the coast of the Mazaruni to produce the needed product of sugar. The support labour that worked on the Fort were African, on the plantation were both African and Amerindian tribes folk enslaved by the Dutch. But the arrival of French pirates would alter Dutch plans, the pirates demanded ransom and the Dutch moved further up into the Demerara river to establish a new trading capital and relocate their plantations. The ruins of Kijk-over-all is now a national monument.

Old Bartica

179-02

Like Kijk-Over-All, the present Town of Bartica saw its early beginnings together. They were both products of the same Dutch plans and founded on forced Amerindian and African labour. In the early 1600's, four plantations - Vryheid, Duineberg, Fortuin and Poelwyck were committed to producing Sugar. But in 1708 French pirates seized the settlements and demanded ransom, the Africans and Amerindians were unwilling to defend their master's property or be presented as part of the ransom, they fled into the forests, this concluded the Dutch efforts there. The space was left to the Africans and Amerindians until 1823 when the Church Missionary Society built their mission there. With the rise of the 'Gold rush' Bartica became the official township over seeing the Essequibo, Mazaruni and Cuyuni rivers.



Kofi our National Hero

179-03

KOFI is said to have arrived in this country as a baby, into the slave community of Berbice and grew up witnessing the horrors of slavery, but he was always wise with an inborn vision that won him respect among the leaders of the various tribes that were brought into slavery to Berbice, he led the slave insurrection in 1763 and was appointed the leader. Kofi did not follow the usual pattern to burn plantations and enter the forest into maroon existence, he stopped his fellow revolutionaries from burning plantation property, as their labour and talents had built it, he was creating the first independent Guyanese state in 1763, while still communicating with the ousted Dutch Governor he was trying to have access to Demerara, to liberate those plantations and have access to much needed supplies. When he took the colony of Berbice it was not in a progressive state, disease and European conflicts resulted in trade decline, many of his followers could not see his vision and betrayed his plans by imprudent actions.



1823 East Coast Insurrection

179-04

Britain abolished the trafficking of slaves in 1808 and lessened certain types of punishment in their parliament, but this was not easily accepted in the colonies. The 1823 insurrection came into being as the result of a rumour that existed, that were strengthened by Jack Gladstone by whispers from Susanna the mother of his children living with Hamilton a plantation manager. Jack was the son of Quamina, Deacon of Bethel Chapel at Le-Resouvenir the very chapel Rev. John Smith would inherit. Believing that they were free and that the planters were withholding their freedom, they conducted the first 'Peaceful Insurrection' in the world of W.I slavery upon execution the planters were not murdered but placed in shackles. But they misunderstood the white fears of rebellion, with Haiti still haunting their minds, the retaliations were severe, and were condemned by anti-slavery groups in London. Both Quamina and John Smith were collateral damage but were not conspirators.



Lamaha Canal

179-05

The digging of the Lamaha Canal is another feat of tremendous effort conducted by enslaved Africans in the enabling of the modern Capital and coast of Guyana to exist. The initiative is attributed to Dr. M. McTurk who had landed upon a lake in the forested lands adjoining old Georgetown, as part of the militia searching for escaped slaves and European deserters. The digging of the Canal's construction began after the 29, October 1829, the plantation slaves allotted to conduct the work on the canal were required to remain there until the completion of the feat. There are no known records of loss of life and hardships endured, except to recognise the usefulness of the Lamaha Canal and its reservoir's service to modern G/Town. Pipes to homes were not supplied to city residents until 1885.



Data index Pg.02

Boundary Yard Pg. 06

The indentured Boundary Yard was a mechanism of control, to prevent labourers from finding out rates on other plantations and engaging the free villages.

To the plantocracy they were best kept at variance with the Creole villages, and having exchanges that would lead to strikes and migration, learning the Creole views on rights, the boundary yard pass system was also effective for control with instituted fines, financial deductions for those who dared venture out without passes



When the Gold Bush Saved the Villages Pg. 08

African villages came under taxation with assurances of drainage works by the colonial

administration to facilitate their livelihoods, from emancipation they were gripped in conflict with the planters who were forced to pay a working wage, after strikes and protests they began to rely on their own means of survival. But instead of conduct the agreed drainage, the Governor used their taxes to help finance indentureship to help the planters who constituted the administrative core of the colony administration. The villages experienced floods, lost of produce and homes. It was only after the opening of the Gold fields and the need for labour that a positive alternative emerged, though the technical aspects of the plantation work was still in their hands, machinery, shovel work etc. But the gold fields were a real salvation, they started as labour for the 'Pajama managers' mainly Lawyers who wouldn't don a warishi for nothing and became claim owners, the legendary 'Pork Knockers' are the foundation of Guyana's present mining industry.



Angel Gabriel Riots Pg. 07

John Sayers Orr was born in British Guiana in the early 1800's to a Scottish Planter and an African mother. John was an international activist against the Catholic religious and control thrust. He came home to Guiana in the midst of Governor Wodehouse and the planters plot to force Africans back to the plantation, by destroying their business achievements and transferring their developments to the Portuguese. With his symbolic trumpet he rallied the protesting disenfranchised populations to rise up against the perceived [Buffer] Catholic oppressors and the 1856 riots commenced across the country. John was arrested and spitefully sentenced for what was alive before he came. The official release is that he died from dysentery, while in prison in BG in 1858. The Governor levied taxes against the entire African population to pay back the Portuguese in 1857 but protests from the anti-slavery Society and others in London forced it to be withdrawn in 1858. Similar strikes had occurred in other British colonies.



Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow Pg. 09

Father of Trade Unionism in the Caribbean

Hubert Critchlow was born in Georgetown on the 18, December 1884, in a colony far from family friendly. It took long hours of work to earn barely enough, his father died when he was 13 years old, he became a man, entering the work force of the crowded and competitive water front to help with his family. The wards of Georgetown was crowded and congested, especially Charlestown. Alouystown and Werk-en-Rust. Hubert was known for his athletic skills, he was nicknamed Skibby and was a stick-fighting champion. The 1905 riots were powerful protests across the colony, and a 21 year old Critchlow was involved, it was driven by terrible hardships, when the ordinance for trade unions was passed in 1917, he founded the British Guiana Labour Union in 1922 and hosted the first West Indian Labour Conference in Georgetown in 1926. Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow was the herald of the political parties and labour unions that followed in his giant shadow across the British West Indies.



Gertie Wood Pg. 10

Leading Feminist of early modern Guyana

In the 1930's Gertie Wood was a sole voice for women and girls in British Guyana. She was a social worker, woman rights activist, accomplished concert Artist and politician. Her battle was against the Victorian value system that relegated women to remain at home, in a man's world. For a period in 1812 and 1848 women were allowed to vote, that ended in 1849. But was restored in 1928. Gertie Wood was president of the 'Circle of Sunshine workers' founded in 1931. Gertie ran for the Board Ward seat in the snap municipal elections of Georgetown, though she was not successful. The Chronicle praised her as the only candidate to come out with a definite programme. She hosted the 2nd Inter Colonial Conference of Women Social Workers in G/Town in 1936. Gertie also extended those interests to involve Indo-Guianese women's organizations of the day.



Stephen Campbell

1st Amerindian Catholic Priest and Political representative of the Amerindian people



Stephen Campbell was born on at Moruca and is said to be descended from the Chaima tribe who had fled the Orinoco during the period of the Venezuelan war of independence, and was subsequently absorbed by the Arawaks who resided in that area. His patriarchal grandfather was James Campbell, a Scottish adventurer. Stephen was born on the 26, December 1897. 26, December, that is the catholic feast of St Stephen, thus two weeks later he was baptised as Stephen Esterban Campbell. Campbell worked with the Amerindian community through the Church, but later became the first Amerindian political advocate and defeated his rivals in the North-West District in 1957. Campbell then took up a position in the legislature. Stephen Campbell became the fore runner of Amerindian representation.

Frederick Mahaica

1898-1912
Frederick Mahaica was born on the 30, April, 1922 at the village of Perseverence, Mahaicony district E.C.D



like many rural youth in Afro-Guyanese villages, after school he journeyed to the Gold Fields, initially with his father, then found work with a Canadian firm prospecting for quartz. While in the employment of this company he did not hesitate to read books on Geology and became a silent student of the company library. But it was an old Pork Knocker who on his way to camp with a sack of quartz, encouraged him to smash some of the quartz which upon doing so, revealed gold. Mahaica went into mining from a learned view, and his shout at 'Fair Play Creek' at Kurupung echoed across Guyana. Mahaica demanded certain responsibilities from his village work men to elevate their homes, from thatch roofs to zinc and facing, that regular monies were sent home to families. He made donations to Mahaicony proceeded on ambitious projects, that despite errors made. He lifted the stature of the Pork Knocker to an incredible new image of respectability.

Garry Saran

1899-1915
Ramsaroop Of The Dharm Shala



The Dharm Shala was founded in 1923 by Pandit Ramsaroop Maraj who was born on 3, November 1889 at Friendship Wakenaam, the family moved to Allboustown in 1893. After much struggle the building was officially opened on 30th August 1926. To provide sanctuary to the social helpless and abandoned. Ministers from different denominations participated in the spiritual upkeep of the residents. This institution was well received by all colonial and post independent authorities. With the passing of the founder in 1950, his son Harry and his daughters to date, took up the mantle of his father's passion. His dedication has allowed this refuge for our helpless to have a home, when all else has failed.

George Giglioli

1897-1972
Dr George Giglioli self taught physician and Artist (Sculpture) was born in Naples February 19, 1897,



he recalled the moment when along with his father meet professor Ficalbi at 18 yrs old, at the university in Pisa, when asked what he wished to study, he said Natural History, he was advised to study medicine it would allow him to travel. After WW1 he arrived in British Guiana and was employed at Dem. Bauxite Co. Ltd. And became the chief Medical officer. With WW2 he was interned as an Axis citizen, until 1942. His greatest contribution was his appointment as government Malariaologists in 1945, his efforts did erase the scourge of Malaria and its related illnesses across Guyana saving tens of thousands of lives, is etched in our medical history. In his independence 1966 declaration, Dr Giglioli reported the rise in populations and decrease in deaths in areas that were cleared of malaria

Vesta Lowe & Lynette Dolphin

1899-1915
Vesta Lowe was born in 1919 [possibly in Berbice] A multidimensional Cultural and Education activist who pioneered the preservation of our folk songs from the coasts and the hinterland. One of the earliest graduates from the Teachers Training College, and one of the first Black women to graduate from Tuskegee institute USA with a B.S.C. [Honours] degree in Home Economics. On her return to B.G she created the Dawson Music Lovers Society, Madam Lowe organised concerts at the Town Hall and Moonlight singing on the sea wall, her academic activities were spread across Education, Health and Nutrition, her work in developing community clubs and projects in the Manchester/Liverpool/Lancaster area endorses the unselfishness of her contributions of which much is taken for granted today.



Lynette Dolphin was born on 7, February 1916 in Georgetown, and was a custodian, as the head of the department of culture of the legacy of Vesta Lowe. Lynette was a teacher and musician achieving a Diploma at the Royal School of Music. The Assoc. Board of the R.S.M awarded her the Gold medal for the highest Dist. of works in the British W.I her talents as the Chairman of the History & Arts Council & The Department of Culture that followed covered the Independence celebrations and the 1st 1972 CARIFESTA. Her distinguished career also included the bringing into being, the Nat. School of Dance

Arthur Chung first President of the Republic of Guyana Pg.16



Arthur Chung made history by becoming the President of the first Republic in the commonwealth Caribbean and the first ethnic Chinese of a non Asian state. Arthur Chung was born January 10, at Windsor Forest on the west coast of Demerara. Where indentured Chinese immigrants had settled. Arthur Chung was a Lawyer, senior Magistrate, puisne Judge. This was no ceremonial President, his international engagements and presence at the crucial period of decolonising Guyana are well listed, one marked incident was a surprise visit to the DF at Eteringbang, which caused a stir among the Venezuelians on occupied Ankoko Island.

Sir David Rose Pg.20 first Governor General of the Republic of Guyana



Sir David Rose was by all terms an able asset to young Guyana, he was the son of Dr F.G. Rose considered an authority on Leprosy and Filariasis, establishing the department of Pathology at the Georgetown Hospital. Sir David Rose worked in his early years in the public service, and served in the military from 1941 to 48. He returned home and joined the Police Force rising to position of Ast.Comm. [Crime] In 1958, he joined the West Indian Federation as Federal Defence Officer, in 1960 he acted as administrator of Antigua and St. Lucia, he was a highly decorated Knight and also received the Colonial Police medal with Bar for gallantry, before his final role as Governor General of the newly Independent Republic of Guyana

Shridath Ramphal Pg.17



Shridath 'sonny' Ramphal was born on October 3, 1928 in New Amsterdam. His early education revolved around the influences of his father James Ramphal, a Presbyterian School teacher and a pioneer of secondary Education in Guyana. Sonny Ramphal maintains that his father's passionate belief 'in the basic goodness within all men' inspired his life. Completing his secondary education at Queen's college he began his legal training at King's College, London, and was called to the bar in 1951. He returned to B.G. in 1953 with an interest in constitutional law for the creation of the West Indian Federation, but ideological differences with the then local political administration forced him to leave for the W.I. Shridath returned to independent Guyana in 1967 and was appointed as Min. of State for Foreign Affairs, then as Justice Minister and was involved in shaping Guyana's cold war foreign policy, along the principles of non-alignment. He was appointed in 1975 as the Common wealth's second Secretary General. In 1989 he served as head of the World Conservation Union and played an important role in the Earth summit of 1992. His legacy is tremendously inspiring and irrefutable as a true son of the soil.



Martin Carter Poet Pg.18

Martin Wyide Carter was born in Georgetown B.G. in 1927, he attended

Queens College, joined the civil service, served as secretary to the Superintendent of prisons. Martin was not unaware of the struggles and politics of the day. The concerns of living standards and constant upheavals of the working class and the unemployed. He joined the communist PPP, then the second holistic working class development after Critchlow's union movement. The PPP won the elections in 1953. But fractured by its socialist management approach that led to Crown intervention. Carter had written his poems of resistance in 1954, his outspokenness led to his incarceration in the 1950 s. After independence Carter joined the PNC and served in several key positions. Including Guyana's representative to the U.N. His was a life of literature and resistance and to-date is Guyana's 'Greatest Poet'.

Sister Therasa La Rose Pg.19



Born Mary Therasa La Rose in 1928, she received her early education at Santa Rosa School, and having entered the religious order of Mercy in 1953 she went on to earn a Bachelor of Science Degree in elementary education from the college Misericordiae in Pennsylvania in the US of A. these accomplishments served her well as an ardent Educator, working with the schools located in the interior, as well as in Georgetown. Sis. La Rose also worked as a Government official in various capacities among the hinterland populations. Her strengths highlighted an ability for practical thinking outside of the fixed template. Her focus intensified on the dual directive of training and income. She became a talent scout for those talents through encouraging high quality productions to be displayed in the Craft shop she managed. These very products would be used for local and international exhibitions. Sister Therasa La Rose was a pioneer in cultivating Cultural Industries among the Amerindians.

The Rupununi Treason Pg. 23

Independent Guyana summoned elements of resentment from the accustomed spectre of the colonial past that was bound to erupt in one way or the other. The young

government should have paid attention to the interviews the British writer Michael Swan conducted with members of the Rupununi oligarchy in his 1958 book 'Marches of El Dorado'. The cession of Rupununi supported by Venezuela began with the assault of the police station and the murder of the occupant police detail. It was the combined force of a cadre of brave and patriot pilots of the civilian G.A.C. The experienced leadership of Colonel Ronald Pope, and his local officers, Colonel Martindale, Cpt. Vernon Williams, Cpt. Desmond Roberts and Lt. Joseph Singh that forced the retreat of the 'conspirators of treason' to Brazil.



In Defence Of New River Pg. 21

The British did not usher British Guiana into independence with complete territorial clarity, the border with Suriname was one such area in Guyana's New River zone. Premier Johan

Pengel of Suriname started his ambitious push by expelling Guyanese out of Suriname. On Tuesday Dec. 12 1967 Superintendent Lloyd Barker was dispatched with a troop of TSU by a GAC amphibious aircraft to arrest and deport a 40 man Surinamese surveyor team from camp Oronoque. The Suriname military had also occupied parts of the New River triangle. Chief of staff of the GDF Colonel Price demanded special assault training for his troops. Again the GAC. This time a Twin otter was adjusted to accommodate a selected WO with a GPMG by George Lloyd. Pilot Malcolm Chan-a-sue described as the bravest of the brave, that soldier 'WO' River could not have had success without the corp of pilots, Roland De Silver, Michael Chan-A-Sue, Philip Jardim, and Anthony Mekdesi, the GDF officers and troops on the ground, to whom, all Guyana, remain indebted.



Denis Williams Artist, Archaeologist Pg. 24

Denis Williams was born Feb. 1, 1923 in Georgetown British Guiana. Denis emerged as one of Guyana's most exceptional sons. Artist, writer, novelist, Archaeologist and innovator, Denis founded the Burrowes school of Art, The Walter Roth museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and constituted the donation of the home and the collection of Books and African Art of H.H. Nicholson into the African Museum. Denis was Director of art and can be easily credited with the cultivating of the visual arts from 1974 onwards. He was in charge of the overview of the production and installing of Philip Moore's 1763 symbolic National monument. The disciplines of Anthropology and Archaeology was ushered into the national stream of education by the efforts, scholarship and vision of Denis Williams. Dr Williams was a Smithsonian fellow and brought his talents and life experiences to the inspiration of every artist that was touched by him, a reservoir that spanned the new and the old world, from London to the Sudan. His legacy in the Humanities is unequalled with the numerous souls he wrestled with continuously, to broaden our horizons speaks for itself.



Desrey Fox Pg. 25

Desrey Clementine Ceasar was born on Jan. 2, 1955, at Waramadong, upper Mazaruni River, upon completing primary school in the village. Desrey was sent to G/town to attend Secondary school, but the family was unable to afford it, so she was back in the Mazaruni. Desrey credits her further education to Clement and Joyce Clarke, two teachers from the coast who came to the area, identified her potential among a small group and prepared them for the GCE examinations, which she passed, also having passed the C.P. Desrey further topped the nursing counsils exam. on midwifery, taking up a position at the G.P.H in 1973. As a result of the upper mazaruni Hydro project the linguist Dr. Walter Edwards needed Akawaio and Arecuna speaking researchers. This was the door that launched Desrey into social Anthropology, working in the production of Amerindian languages and culture, a source person on the Kenaima lore. Desrey Fox is the first Amerindian female to earn a Ph.D. having done laudable research, and published in the discipline of social Anthropology.



Hero ^{pg 22} Pilots



The 1951 Timehri Journal's review of the establishment of the British Guiana Airways Ltd. provides a condense background towards the inevitable creation of the B.G.A.L and its heir the G.A.C. The genesis of the post Independence era found all disciplines dependent upon the G.A.C for swift hinterland movement whether it was cargo or personnel, including the young GDF. The twin events of the Rupununi Treason and the incursion of the 'New River Triangle' would test the mettle of our then civilian pilots who with one decision would become "Combat Pilots: these are the listed brotherhood who are referred to as our hero pilots. Because when the gauntlet of sovereignty was caste that early in our Nation. The positive results that followed could not have been possible without adding their patriotism, courage and the mastery of their skills as pilots. The lone photo on the site www.GuyanaGraphic.com with Prime Minister Burnham and Albert Isaacs, Fazil Khan, Roland Da Silva, Philip Jardim, Michael Chan-a-sue and Louis Crawford after receiving their awards, highlights these sons of the soil. Roland Da Silva received Guyana's highest award, 'The Cacique Crown of Valour'. The Golden Arrow of courage was awarded to Michael Chan-a-sue, Tony Mekdici and Philip Jardim. They became the foundation of the GDF Airwing in 1971. And the Hero Pilots of our earliest beginnings as a Nation.

All licence publishing rights of the Harmony Colouring Book-BK-1, is the property of the ERC Ethnic Relations Commissions in its current form and construct
© copyright is reserved to Artist / Writer Barrington Braithwaite and will be so protected by the ERC during the duration of the printed existence of the said Harmony Colouring Book.

Clem ^{pg 26} Seecharan



Clem Seecharan grew up in East Berbice, Corentyne, attended the Sheet Anchor Anglican School and the Berbice Educational Institute, and Queen's College. His higher education was completed in London. Dr. Seecharan's tremendous contribution to the international and Guyanese pool lies with the diverse work he has done and continue to do, with credibility to bring the Indo Guyanese social and historical narrative into the national discourse, and the awareness towards bridging the debate on the diversity of things national, necessary for the forging of a modern Guyana. But his works could not be complete without telling the story of cricket. He is indeed the major scribe of the main topics of his research, which if utilised as brave references can surely nourish and unmask many a social facade. His publication 'Jock Campbell The Booker Reformer in British Guiana 1934-1966 won the Elsa Gouveia Prize from the Association of Caribbean Historians in 2005

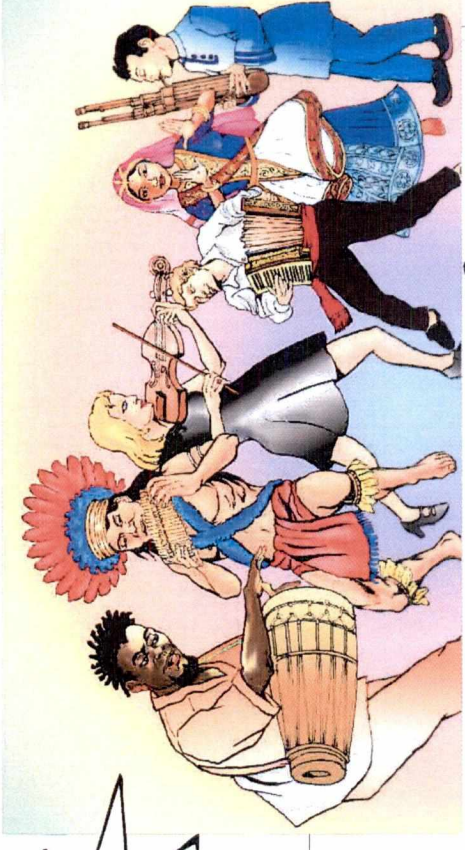
Acknowledgements



In the context of relating things Guyanese, it's a challenge that involves every emotion, the search begins and inspiration is confronted by frustration, then the memory of the old and wise relative who told you a story and ends it with *"bway yuh ent know how much ting yuh ent know about"* and years later you regret not sitting around a little more as you stare at the empty chair where so much of a slightly tainted looking glass allowed your imagination to travel into places of yourself, the humanity of the Guyana that shouldered our coming, and despite everything, still inspires. First I must say thanks to those who took time to research and write before I came, and the controlled rage of my wife with pursuing a career niche when all whispers pointed to 'Deh all does guh mad. I can go back to my God parents, my father, and the discipline I learned under Dr. Denis Williams, but in this case I started with doing historical characters for Emancipation ads, that led to a long and exciting engagement with Retd. Brigadier David Granger's Emancipation magazine, and further back to a period of unusual youthful characters I call the Camp street chapter. The current content of this Harmony Colouring Book started as a project with GNNL, encouraged by its editor Nigel Williams that allowed the further research into areas before taken for granted, with crucial aspects left out, the kind of project that needed a team but without the means it became a lonely journey. Historical interviews, Books, Newspaper extracts, old magazines, cross researching, with the justification of once it's done it's there. The quick criticism of my ERC colleague Retd. Major General Norman Mc. Lean that caused a surge of enquiry that led me to Malcolm Chan-a sue, the Civil Aviation and to Capt. Rodwell Paul [whose trilling experience at Jonestown is yet another noted national adventure] Paul provided me with a down load of an article by Philip Jardim that tied in with Brigadier Granger's books, The Defence of the New River and 'The Rupununi Rebellion, both I had previously done artwork for, but needed further details on a small but important aspect. I must give thanks to the positive reception of my fellow Commissioners at the ERC, and their positive recommendations that will enhance its presence in the capacity as a HARMONY COLOURING BOOK celebrating Guyanese of diverse origins and cultures, across important national time lines, whose contributions contributed to who, and all we are, *least we forget*. I cannot close without mention of the gracious support of the Ramsaroop sisters when I turned to them for clarifications on the Dharm Shala.



*Colour Them
Your Way*





Free Ourselves from Prejudices

Tel# 231-6265/231-6281/ 225-7788/ 225-7139

Website: www.erc.org.gy

Email: Peau@erc.org.gy

