



**Final Report of  
Recommendations and Concerns  
of the Ethnic Relations Commission  
during the period  
2018-2021**

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### *APPENDIX A*

RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT OF THE VIRTUAL NATIONAL CONVERSATION	
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**RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCERNS EMANATING FROM THE TEN (10)  
ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONS OF GUYANA**

During the period under review, the Ethnic Relations would have conducted Regional Visits to the ten (10) Administrative Regions of Guyana. During each visits, Commissioners would have conducted constituency meetings, stakeholders' meetings, courtesy calls among other engagements. Some of the common concerns captured were:

1. Political differences, affiliations hinder the development in several regions.
2. Stakeholders, support the invaluable role of a credible Ethnic Relations Commission.
3. The need for sub-offices of the ERC in the other Administrative Regions.
4. The need for informational materials on ethnic relations to be published in schools, from nursery to tertiary levels.

The tables below are extracts of the concerns and recommendations garnered from the various engagements held during the period under review.

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT / VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
Region One Barima-Waini	12/06/2019	<b><u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u></b>  <i>Venue:</i> Port Kaituma Secondary		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Shepherd Church Ministries and Oronoque CDC group willing to engage ERC on promoting its mandate.</li> <li>2. Dormitory supervisor appealed to ERC to maintain contact for collaboration.</li> <li>3. Community awareness of Hinduism requested to curb misunderstanding of religion's tenets.</li> </ol>
	13/06/2019	<b><u>Courtesy Call on Mayor</u></b>  <i>Venue:</i> Mabaruma Mayor's Office	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Venezuelan presence generating friction with locals.</li> <li>2. Assistance needed to tackle Venezuelan immigration.</li> </ol>	
	13/06/2019	Regional Democratic Council (RDC) Office, Mabaruma		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ERC intervention requested to resolve existing political impasse.</li> </ol>
	13/06/2019	<b><u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u></b>  <i>Venue:</i> Mabaruma Village Office	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More scholarships needed; technical institute urgently required.</li> </ol>	

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT /VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
Region One Barima-Waini	13/06/2019	<u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> North West Secondary Mabaruma	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sports &amp; culture representative required.</li> <li>2. Payment of stipends to village officials exceedingly late.</li> <li>3. Vehicle(s) required to assist work of police and village officials.</li> <li>4. Allegation made preference for employment given to graduates with government scholarships as opposed to other graduates.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Political affiliations have deepened divisions, threatening smooth development of region; call made for ERC's involvement in resolution process.</li> </ol>
	13/06/2019	<u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Kumaka, Santa Rosa	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social welfare authorities not honouring obligations leading to court case acquittals.</li> <li>2. GRA presence required to prevent illegal sale of alcohol.</li> <li>3. Facilities and coaching limited for several sporting disciplines.</li> </ol>	

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT /VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
Region One Barima-Waini	14/06/2019	<b>Stakeholders' Meeting</b>  <i>Venue:</i> Government Administrative Building Kumaka, Moruca	1. Community policing urgently needed.	1. Call made for frequent visits by the ERC.

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT /VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
Region Two Pomeroon-Supenaam	11/9/2018	Regional Democratic Council Office, Anna Regina	1. Allegations made widespread discrimination by the Police by civilians.  2. Allegations made persons of one ethnic group being employed and handpicked for selected positions.	1. ERC de-centralise and establish office in Essequibo (same expressed in other regions).  2. National holiday or event that celebrates arrival of all ethnic groups.  3. Text on country's history should be written.  4. Address each other as Guyanese and remove labels (similar sentiment expressed in other regions).

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT / VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
Region Three Essequibo Islands-West Demerara	26/09/2018	<u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> West Demerara Secondary		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Call made for national song, poem or similar initiative to encourage harmony.</li> <li>2. Complaint made of racial slurs at workplace, contributing to resentment.</li> </ol>
	16/05/2019	<u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Leguan Community Centre		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formation of sports groups, serving humanity suggested by a few participants as possible avenues to promote harmony.</li> </ol>

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT / VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
Region Four Demerara- Mahaica	17/07/2018	<u>Muslim Constituency Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Herdmanston Lodge, Georgetown	1. Religious tolerance not promoted- example of Hindu continuation of Hindu Society cited, string worn on wrist by Hindus, Kemar worn by Muslims brought into focus.	1. Use of National Greetings proposed to generate peace.  2. Sports, Drama and the use of the Mass Media among measures identified to “change the thinking” among the populace.  3. Bakja Health Movement wants ERC to designate a representative on religion in Parliament vis-à-vis behaviour of Members of Parliament.
	17/07/2018	<u>Christian Constituency Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Herdmanston Lodge, Georgetown		1. ERC should set up telephone hotline.
	17/07/2018	<u>Hindu Constituency Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Herdmanston Lodge, Georgetown		1. ERC should set up telephone hotline.



REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT / VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
<p align="center"><b>Region Four Demerara- Mahaica</b></p>	<p>25/07/2018</p>	<p><b><u>Indigenous Constituency Meeting</u></b>  <i>Venue:</i> Herdmanston Lodge, Georgetown</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mining and water pollution remain on-going problem in hinterland areas.</li> <li>2. Untitled villages need to be addressed, people of indigenous communities not benefitting under Mining Act (1989) Sec.111.</li> <li>3. Wages paid late to security guards, affecting families in indigenous communities.</li> <li>4. Medical services need improvement in Hinterland Regions.</li> <li>5. Unscrupulous businessmen exploiting workers in logging and mining sectors; not paying wages adequately.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. National holiday for indigenous peoples (September 10). September month of observances but without holiday.</li> <li>2. Calls made for name "Amerindian" to be changed to "First People" or "Indigenous People"; similarly change "tribe" to "nation".</li> </ol>

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<p align="center"><b>Region Four Demerara- Mahaica</b></p>	<p>25/07/2018</p>	<p align="center"><b><u>Indo- Guyanese Constituency Meeting</u></b></p> <p><i>Venue:</i> Herdmanston Lodge, Georgetown</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Indian Action Committee (IAC) would like the ERC to look into employment practices at GECOM, the unilateral appointment of the Chairman, the Palmyra Monument, attacks on some individuals in the press and appointment of Permanent Secretaries at several ministries.</li> <li>2. Much attention should be paid on re-writing Guyana's history with the help of scholars (e.g. Mr. Mc Gowan).</li> <li>3. Expressed alarm at behaviour of parliamentarians and asked Commission to intervene, thinks such behaviour stems from ethnic issues.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The "Ethnic Impact Statement" should be considered when major decisions are made by Government and "Affirmative Action" can be reviewed in the Guyana context.</li> <li>2. Production of 3 minutes videos for social media, nursery schools to bring peace and harmony.</li> <li>3. Designate a representative on religion in Parliament.</li> <li>4. Establishment of small ERC groups in villages which would report to ERC Head Office.</li> </ol>

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<p align="center"><b>Region Four Demerara- Mahaica</b></p>	<p>26/07/2018</p>	<p align="center"><u><b>Afro-Guyanese Constituency Meeting</b></u></p> <p><i>Venue:</i> Herdmanston Lodge, Georgetown</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. (The Procurement Act) of continuous discrimination towards African Guyanese irrespective of which Government holds the reins of power; another (Mr. Clyde Fowler) alleged an instance of blatant racism.</li> <li>2. The absence of Constitutional Reform, need for reparations, media monitoring, the non-issuance of a Banking Licence, the non-support of the Green Economy initiatives by the PSC, and the non-participation of all ethnic groups in observances such as Emancipation celebrations, were all seen as hampering ethnic harmony.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Representatives from the African community called for a comprehensive history of Guyana and its peoples to be re-written by eminent scholars, building a reciprocal relationship with the ERC in the context of the UN Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024).</li> </ol>

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT / VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
Region Four Demerara- Mahaica	26/07/2018	<u>Youth Constituency Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Herdmanston Lodge, Georgetown	1. Gabrelle Cummings, East Ruimveldt Secondary complained her school not exposed or given attention to Youth Parliament, etc because of prejudice. More popular / well-known schools considered / given attention.	1. Youth representative called on Commission not only to publicise its existence but its authority to eliminate discrimination, etc.  2. ERC urged to spread awareness of its existence as well as its prosecutorial powers, etc.
	26/07/2018	<u>Inter-Religious Organisation / Differently-able Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Herdmanston Lodge, Georgetown	1. Small religious groupings wish to be recognized appropriately.	1. Commission urged to take steps to disallow persons from categorizing the visually impaired as beggars.  2. ERC urged to work closer with young people of all ethnicities, school curricula, to curb unwanted behaviours.  3. Commission urged to pursue measures to (a) Promote Unity (b) Instill in persons to respect all cultures, religion & each other (c) Prevent dictatorship (d) Promote facilities /structures for the people's welfare.  4. ERC urged to confront issues in layman terms and deal with stereotypes.

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<p><b>Region Four Demerara- Mahaica</b></p>	<p>30/07/2018</p>	<p><u>Women Constituency Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Herdmanston Lodge, Georgetown</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ERC urged to work more with women's groups because women regarded as nurturers.</li> <li>2. ERC can align with "Parenting Programme" being conducted by Mother's Union.</li> <li>3. Call made for re-introduction of morals, empathy and focus, not only ethnicity.</li> </ol>
	<p>6/9/2018</p>	<p><u>Labour Constituency Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Herdmanston Lodge, Georgetown</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To detect discrimination claims, Commission requested to consider approach by entities to implement identification of ethnic composition, first at job application stage.</li> <li>2. Call made for Commission to use mass-based organisations to get messages across.</li> <li>3. ERC urged to conduct follow-up meetings with Union leaders to exchange candid views.</li> <li>4. ERC urged to conduct follow-up meetings with Union leaders to exchange candid views.</li> <li>5. Commission requested to consider approach by entities to implement identification of ethnic composition, first at job application stage, to tackle discrimination claims.</li> </ol>

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT / VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
Region Four Demerara- Mahaica	25/10/2018	<u>Stakeholder's Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Regional Democratic Council (RDC) Office, Triumph, East Coast Demerara.		1. Councillors recommended for ERC to conduct on-going public discourse to obtain citizens' views pertinent to their communities.
	9/11/2018	<u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Beterverwagting Secondary School, ECD	1. Alleged preference for one ethnicity over another exercised by operators of minibuses of ECD.	
	9/11/2018	<u>Private Sector and other related agencies meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Regency Suites, Hadfield Street, Georgetown.		1. University of Guyana prepared to collaborate in research & training relevant to mandate of ERC.
	29/11/2018	<u>Men's Stakeholders' Meeting</u>	1. Men not participating in fora as needed to tackle and resolve issues.	1. Funding for organisations within the religious bodies to assist with meeting economic challenges faced by men.  2. More men's fora to address challenges faced by men.

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT / VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
Region Five Mahaica - Berbice	20/09/2018	<u>Regional Democratic Council Courtesy Call</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Regional Democratic Council (RDC) Office, Fort Wellington.		1. Councillor Crawford proposed land be allocated in region for harmony project.
	20/09/2018	<u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Bushlot Secondary, West Coast Berbice.		1. Start of Harmony clubs in schools. 2. ERC input to be sought for harmony projects, lectures, etc.
	20/09/2018	<u>Workplace Engagement</u>  <i>Venue:</i> Guyana Rice Development Board (GRDB) Office, Burma, Mahaicony.		1. GRDB to further cement harmony in community with related projects in collaboration with the ERC.

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT/VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
<p align="center"><b>Region Six East Berbice- Corentyne</b></p>	4/04/2019	<p><u>Mayor's Courtesy call</u> <i>Venue:</i> Mayor's Office New Amsterdam Town Hall</p>	<p>1. Youth inculcating negative sentiments from the past and promoting same on social media.</p>	<p>1. Messages on harmony should be designed to target Berbicians solely due to the county's peculiarities.</p>
	4/04/2019	<p><u>RDC Courtesy Call</u> <i>Venue:</i> Regional Democratic Council (RDC) Boardroom New Amsterdam</p>	<p>1. Some citizens ostracized because of their political affiliation.</p> <p>2. Vibrancy and efficiency of ERC better with adequate funding which caters for regular outreaches, programmes, etc. throughout all regions to tackle marginalization, discrimination.</p> <p>3. ERC requested to zero in to resolve antagonistic relationships between RDC and Government Ministry / Ministries.</p>	<p>1. ERC can spread messages through RDC's and NGOs along with other mediums.</p>



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<p align="center"><b>Region Six East Berbice- Corentyne</b></p>	<p>4/04/2019</p>	<p><b><u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u></b>   <i>Venue:</i>            JC ChandisSingh Secondary            School            Corentyne, Berbice</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inculcating respect for the environment in children at the primary level can have spinoffs and ultimately lead to respect for other ethnicities.</li> <li>2. ERC vigorously engage the Municipalities, RDC's, NDC's and religious organisations for better impact in the society (similar sentiment expressed at RDC Region 6 meeting).</li> <li>3. ERC take messages about harmony to the minibuses, market places, street corners and other places where citizens interact; word-of-mouth identified as a strong medium, especially to persons with limitations on literacy.</li> </ol>

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT / VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
<p align="center"><b>Region Six East Berbice- Corentyne</b></p>	<p>5/04/2019</p>	<p><b>Stakeholders' Meeting</b>  <i>Venue:</i> Berbice High School, New Amsterdam</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some entertainers using religious holidays and cultural events example, Phagwah to promote commercial events which involve sale of alcohol, etc.</li> <li>Closure of businesses unnecessary (Good Friday); sale of products needs to take place despite religious / cultural holidays- world has advanced.</li> <li>Time-off from work needed for religious observances which are not national holidays, example, 'Maha Shivratri'.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request made for an ERC Office in Region 6 (similar request made in Region 7).</li> <li>ERC can focus its work on households, schools and religious organisations.</li> <li>Investigate entertainers promoting commercial events using the labels of religious holidays.</li> <li>ERC can raise the above concerns with the Guyana Revenue Authority (to approve licences for entertainment venues) and Police to sanction holding of events.</li> <li>ERC review Function No.5 to facilitate training and job opportunities for the youth to promote the Commission's mandate.</li> <li>ERC Harmony Ambassadors work with counselors in school.</li> </ol>

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT /VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Region Seven Cuyuni- Mazaruni</b></p>	20/02/2019	<p><b><u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u></b></p> <p><i>Venue:</i> St. John the Baptist Primary School Bartica</p>	<p>1. Laws needed on censoring content of letters to newspapers which subtly promote disharmony.</p> <p>2. ERC must address the ethnic problems starting with the politicians at the top instead of the people at the bottom.</p>	<p>1. Begin practicing the message of love and harmony in the home to inculcate into the minds of children.</p> <p>2. ERC should encourage more of the youth population to get involved in promoting its mandate.</p> <p>3. Physical presence monthly by ERC personnel necessary to address issues.</p>
	21/02/2019	<p><b><u>RDC Courtesy Call</u></b></p> <p><i>Venue:</i> Bartica Administrative Office Building</p>		<p>1. Call reiterated to remove prefixes Indo- and Afro-; address each other as Guyanese.</p>

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<p align="center"><b>Region Seven Cuyuni- Mazaruni</b></p>	<p>29/10/2019</p>	<p><b><u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u></b>  <i>Venue:</i> Kamarang Dining and Sports Hall</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Indigenous people are being discriminated against when they travel to Georgetown.</li> <li>2. They are called names such as 'buck man'.</li> <li>3. The rivers and creeks which are used for their livelihood, are being polluted with waste from mining activities.</li> <li>4. Equal opportunities are not being provided for Hinterland students. Requesting a quota system that will see the equal distribution of scholarships.</li> <li>5. The intake of Indigenous students to the University of Guyana is poor. Students are not given scholarships.</li> <li>6. ExxonMobil has been employing other ethnic groups except the Indigenous people.</li> <li>7. The Board for Industrial Training usually takes young people from other areas except the Indigenous communities. The only job available to school leavers in the region is mining.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ERC must review the legislation so that there can be laws that protect Indigenous lands.</li> <li>2. Request a quota system that will see the equal distribution of scholarships in the region.</li> <li>3. There should be an overhaul of the system by the Public Service Ministry to award scholarships and the people who are there to oversee this process.</li> <li>4. The National Assembly must put in place laws against acts of discrimination against Indigenous people and attach a fine to those who are found guilty.</li> </ol>

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT /VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
<p align="center"><b>Region Eight Potaro-Siparuni</b></p>	<p>22/11/2019</p>	<p><b><u>Stakeholder's Meeting</u></b>  <i>Venue:</i> Multi-Purpose Hall Paramakatoi</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No Digicel or GTT Phone service available in Paramakatoi for an estimated population of 3,000 persons.</li> <li>2. Technical Institution needed.</li> <li>3. No internet connectivity in community.</li> <li>4. Limited scholarships available.</li> <li>5. Contractor Naresh Persaud allegedly owes the Region \$700,000 GYD, \$600,000 GYD in royalty.</li> <li>6. Nursery and Primary school lack adequate electricity supply.</li> <li>7. No pavilion, no paved roads, no hospital in community, mining polluting freshwater several years.</li> </ol>	

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT /VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Region Nine Upper Takutu- Upper Essequibo</b></p>	<p>7/12/2019</p>	<p><b><u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u></b></p> <p><i>Venue:</i> Arapaima Primary School</p>	<p>1. Racial divide present in the Rupununi, adults influencing the youth to maintain distance and avoid interaction, for example, in sports.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use the game of chess which is played by all ethnicities (the world over) to culturally educate and as a means to promote understanding and interaction.</li> <li>2. ERC should organise seminars, workshops, training for residents, religious bodies and youth groups.</li> <li>3. ERC to de-centralise its operations (similar sentiment expressed in other regions).</li> <li>4. Impart knowledge on tolerance and understanding to children and use sports to promote same (similar sentiment expressed in other regions).</li> <li>5. ERC use its influence to accelerate the provision of infrastructure for sports in schools and the community.</li> <li>6. ERC visit villages in North and South Rupununi apart from only Lethem.</li> </ol>

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT/VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Region Nine Upper Takutu- Upper Essequibo</b></p>	8/12/2019	<p><b><u>Stakeholder's Meeting</u></b> <i>Venue:</i> Benab, Gunn's Strip, Konashen</p>	<p>1. Community in dire need of secondary school, transportation and sports facilities.</p>	<p>1. Training in Tourism to benefit community. 2. Train youth in medical and sports careers</p>
	17/10/2019	<p><b><u>Stakeholders' Meeting</u></b> <i>Venue:</i> Annai's Benab</p>	<p>1. Indo and Afro Guyanese are not awarded job opportunities by are Brazilian's business owners. 2. Indigenous boys are discriminated against in the community.</p>	<p>1. Calls for an Extension Officer to be deployed in the region so that the concerns and issues affecting the residents can be addressed expeditiously. 2. ERC must do regular visits to the Indigenous communities so that villagers can be met on a one-on-one basis. 3. Recommends that the ERC create special programmes and materials (Story books) that would target children, not only at schools but also at church and clubs.</p>

REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT/VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
<p align="center"><b>Region Nine Upper Takutu- Upper Essequibo</b></p>	<p>18/10/2019</p>	<p><b>Karasabai's Stakeholder Meeting</b></p> <p><i>Venue:</i> Karasabai Primary School Karasabai</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Victimization by the police towards Indigenous men.</li> <li>2. Persons of the Catholic faith are discriminated against by other churches/denominations.</li> <li>3. Indigenous people believe that they are not treated equally and their voices are not heard at the national level as compared to other races.</li> <li>4. There is disunity in the community at elections time, especially over the state of the road.</li> <li>5. No jobs available to young people who successfully complete school at the secondary level.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Calls to have an exchange program between teachers from the Coastland and teachers in Hinterland.</li> <li>2. A vocational and skills training Centre for unemployed youths is needed in the region.</li> <li>3. There is need for a secondary school in the sub-district.</li> </ol>



REGION	DATE	ENGAGEMENT/ VENUE	CONCERN(S)	RECOMMENDATION(S)
Region 10 Upper Demerara- Upper Berbice	04/10/2018	<b><u>RDC Courtesy Call</u></b>  <i>Venue:</i> Regional Democratic Council (RDC) Office Linden	1. Public Service Commission (PSC) criticised on role in Region Ten, ethnic dimension seen.	
	04/10/2018	<b><u>Stakeholder Meeting</u></b>  <i>Venue:</i> McKenzie High School		1. Awareness programmes on ethnic diversity.  2. Target areas should begin in the schools.

**ERC'S VIRTUAL NATIONAL CONVERSATION  
"HOW CAN WE IMPROVE ETHNIC RELATIONS?"  
HELD ON DECEMBER 14 AND 15, 2020**

**Introduction**

The first ERC National Conversation which was executed in collaboration with the University of Guyana and the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator on improving ethnic relations was held *fully virtual on December 14 and 15, 2020*, in view of the challenges posed by COVID-19. The Commission was able to garner the viewpoints of twenty presenters from diverse backgrounds on the subject who represented the youth and older segments of the Guyanese population.

Their presentations contained recommendations and were followed by comments, suggestions and recommendations as well from Guyanese locally and overseas. The compilation below is a starting point of recommendations from presenters and participants. It is intended to act as a stimulus for action to effect profound political and social change to enhance tolerance and understanding among Guyanese.

The ERC is gratified the ingenuity applied in a virtual environment was at an opportune time, using the available technological resources, now mandatory with the advent of COVID-19.

Moreover, the environment was conducive for the exchange of views both nationally and from the Guyanese diaspora. In the future, it is expected that the theme of the Conversation will be reinforced and remain a time-honoured one: Understand. Respect. Unite. – “Bridging the Ethnic Divide”. *See Appendix A for the full Rapporteur's Report of the Virtual National Conversation.*

***The recommendations were:***

1. A platform should be created for conversations between our Youth and Elders as well as policy-makers.
2. Further race relations engagements at the grass root level, communication and open dialogue on how discriminatory practices, policies and actions affect various factions in the Guyanese society.
3. Policy-makers to study how other countries have dealt with the issues of ethnic insecurities and to apply our unique towards our resolutions.
4. The Board of Commissioners of the ERC should not be overtly politically affiliated.
5. Since all stakeholders have influence, the Ethnic Relations Commission should work with them to strive for a workplace free of discrimination.

6. The country needs to first address the issues of race inequities to move the conversation forward.
7. Political tug-of-war must be quelled and replaced by political stability. Ethno-political struggle still exists, political solutions are therefore required to settle ethnic relations crises and we have to find practical and workable solutions. Politics must acknowledge the wrongs and all the rights.
8. ERC should endorse and support reparation programs.
9. ERC should continue the national dialogue/conversation on ethnic relations in Guyana.
10. ERC should collaborate with the Ministry of Education and the University of Guyana to develop public education programmes. The education system must include ethnic relations issues in its curriculum.
11. Legislative and policy positions must be drafted and enforced with input from all stakeholders; the need for a process that will either punish or reward improper political and inciteful behaviour.
12. Edutainment models should be developed by the ERC towards better socialization in the home, teach tolerance and respect on diversity to our children.
13. Explore the roots of our contentions to terminate stereotypes, and clarify misgivings on ethnic relations.
14. Explore the preferences of the economic capacity of the nation and people and put in place procedures to empower them according to choice and potential.
15. Undertake Constitutional Reform to support harmonious ethnic relations.
16. Establish mechanisms to evaluate and re-model the concept of ethnic relations.
17. Collection, analysis and publication of key data that address economic, social and political indicators by race and ethnicity. More research and funding required on inequality by race, ethnicity and gender.
18. There must be an accurate documentation of what transpired during colonization and the political turmoil before and after emancipation to dismantle the anti-black system that was used to stratify races by skin colour.
19. In keeping with Article 21 of the Constitution, there must be consideration of shared governance or shared government.
20. There must be legislative empowerment of the Ethnic Relations Commission to sanction acts that do not promote smooth ethnic relations in Guyana. The ERC should be given

more scope to do the necessary statistical, historical and social analyses of Guyana's society.

21. An accountability framework should be created to hold ERC Commissioners accountable for their actions.
22. The national census should be expanded; it should take cultural issues into context especially the section related to ethnic categories to allow people to identify themselves accordingly.

**COLLECTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS OF ERC COMMISSIONERS FOR THE  
PERIOD 2018-2021**

The Commissioners during the period under review, thought it prudent to document their recommendations for consideration to enhance the Commission in achieving its mandate, due to the difficulties they would have encountered. Listed below are collective recommendations of the Commissioners:

1. The need for orientation of “New Commissioners” and training for Commissioners before commencing their respective duties in particular to areas of impartiality and integrity.
2. Screening/background check of new candidates (Commissioners) to ensure no political bias.
3. A working knowledge of group dynamics.
4. A working knowledge of Parliamentary Laws.
5. Not guilty of any of the crimes listed in the Code of Conduct for Commissioners.
6. Uttermost confidentiality in dealing with Commission matters.
7. Mechanism to deal with errant Commissioners.
8. The office of ERC Chairman should be full time.
9. The constitution should clearly define the function of the Secretariat.
10. ERC should expand its services to the 10 administrative regions.
11. There is need to immediately address the inadequacy of the HR Policy document.
12. Professional development must be prioritized among staff.
13. Roles of Commissioners should be defined by law.
14. While ERC has commenced prosecution, other powers such as subpoena witness should be considered.
15. There is need for a new building to allow for expansion.

16. Implementation of sub-committee protocol document.
17. Implementation of Strategic Plan.
18. To work on image and branding repair.
19. Adopt code of conduct for staff.
20. For continuity, a board should come to an end when a new one is formed.
21. Development of a software to manage complaints.
22. There is need for affirmative action to be taken to bring diversity in public sector.
23. More research done on matters affecting Guyanese.
24. The need for a Memorandum of Understanding be developed with different countries as it relates to persons making racially insensitive statements living outside of Guyana and in order to hold them accountable.
25. Stronger penalties for public officials who make racially insensitive comments.
26. Establish Regional Ethnic Relations Committee.
27. Incorporate a race relations component within school curriculum.
28. Develop a working relationship with Facebook Inc. in an effort to better monitor and censor hate comments.
29. Develop a working relationship with other Ministries to address issues relating to distribution of public goods.
30. Reward companies for promoting equality and ethnic diversity in employment.
31. Engage the grassroots in race relations discussions.
32. Caregivers can aid in improving ethnic relations in areas such as education and by exhibiting zero tolerance against racism.
33. To redefine friendships.

34. Stepping out of your comfort zone and engaging with individuals of various backgrounds.

35. Do not condone racism



**UNDERSTAND, RESPECT, UNITE:**

**BRIDGING THE ETHNIC DIVIDE**

**“HOW CAN WE IMPROVE ETHNIC RELATIONS IN GUYANA**

**The Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) in collaboration with the  
United Nations resident Office and the University of Guyana (UG)**

**Virtual Conversation on Improving Ethnic Relations in Guyana.**

### **Rapporteurs’ REPORT**

Prepared by

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## INTRODUCTION

The National Conversation on Improving Ethnic Relations in Guyana was hosted on December 14 – 15, 2020, via Zoom and other social media platforms. It was also aired on several television stations. The conversation was hosted by the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) in collaboration with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office and the University of Guyana (UG) under the theme *Understand Respect Unite, Bridging the Ethnic Divide: How can we improve Ethnic Relations in Guyana?* There were approximately 331 online viewers over the two-day period, among who were representatives from public and private sector, political parties, non-governmental organisations and other interested individuals from the wider society. Over the two-day period, there were eighteen presenters for the National Conversation and five presenters at the National Youth Conversation which was held on the evening of December 14, 2020. Presenters were drawn from all of the ethnic groups in Guyana and individuals from related organisations.

## **1.0 DAY 1. OPENING CEREMONY**

### ***1.1 Welcome – Mr. Renne Chester, Chief Executive Officer/Secretary, ERC***

Mr. Chester welcomed all to the National Conversation and thanked all partners for making the event possible. The event was hosted by the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) in collaboration with the United Nations (UN) and the University of Guyana (UG). Mr. Chester stated that he hopes for future conversations more sponsors and persons will be active.

### ***1.2 Opening Remarks – Rev. Dr. John Smith, Chairman, ERC***

Rev. Dr. Smith, in his Opening Remarks, acknowledged the stakeholders and thanked them for their efforts in making the event possible. Rev. Smith requested that everyone be civil and tolerant of each other. He noted that the Conversation is meant for inclusion of all Guyanese therefore the views of all persons should be heard and respected. Rev. Dr. Smith hoped for future conversations that tackles the ethnic issues across Guyana.

### ***1.3 Brief Remarks – Ms. Mikiko Tanaka, United Nations Resident Coordinator***

Ms. Tanaka, in her Brief Remarks, acknowledged the sponsors and was thankful that the ERC reached out and decided to pursue this National Conversation. The UN acknowledged that Guyana truly needed an initiative as this one, especially after the recently concluded General Elections. Ms. Tanaka said that she hopes that recommendations coming out of the Conversation would advise on how to solve and improve social cohesion. The UN acknowledged the need for

collaboration and insisted that dialogue must continue to improve the lives of all Guyanese. Guyana's history has proven that ethnic diversion is a long path.

Ms. Tanaka acknowledged the recent Black Lives Movement that span across the world and stated that the UN Secretary anticipated the dismantling of racial barriers across the world. Goal 10 and 16 of the UN Developmental Goals highlights the need for inclusion and harmony for all. According to Ms. Tanaka, Goal 10 is concerned with reducing inequalities and ensuring no one is left behind, which is integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 16 speaks to peace, justice, and strong institutions. Ms. Tanaka concluded that conflict, insecurity, weak institutions and limited access to justice remain a great threat to sustainable development.

#### ***1.4 Brief Remarks - Professor Paloma Mohamed-Martin, Vice Chancellor, University of Guyana***

Professor Mohamed Martin in her Brief Remarks acknowledged the efforts of all stakeholders in making the 'National Conversation' possible. According to the Vice Chancellor, the University of Guyana regards itself as a key player in the national development of the country creating not only technically proficient students to be good citizens but also in ensuring citizens' success. She firmly believes that ensuring citizens' success would ensure national success.

Professor Mohamed Martin went on to discuss the impacts and efforts that the University of Guyana has had and will be putting in with the assistance of the ERC and other groups to tackle the issue of respectful coexistence of various groups in Guyana. Professor Mohamed Martin spoke to the difference between "tolerance" and genuine "respect" and outlined a way in

which the University one year ago had begun to try to address this amongst its own staff and students. Following an incident involving a non-registered student in December of 2019, which sparked outrage inside the University and nationally, the University dealt with the matter but not in the manner that many had expected.

The University did not seek to expel the student, but instead decided to work with the student and parents first and then with its staff and students to change the attitudes and beliefs which would have produced the unacceptable behaviour. As Deputy Vice Chancellor of PACE and a social psychologist who works on change, a project was designed that evolved into a Human Relations Course offered by the University. It brought together several academics and even the Pro Chancellor Maj Gen Joseph Singh to deliver a service course open to all staff and students at no extra cost for over 8 two hour modules. It is piloted and will be a mandatory course that will be taken by everyone on campus including staff. Some of the modules covered are Entrepreneurship, Emotional Intelligence, History of Guyana, Geography of Guyana, and Etiquette. In addition, there is one module that focuses on ethnicity, race, inclusivity and humanity. This course was launched in October 2020 with 937 people signing up within 24 hours. This response she believes demonstrates that citizens are looking for ways to live together and negotiate their differences, so that they can recognise and respect each other. The structure of the course has a pre-test which guides us as to how persons think before with a post-test to check for changes in knowledge after each module is completed. After the analysis of data, the University will then review and fix the course to make it better and then it would be released nationwide.

In closing, Professor Mohamed-Martin apologized for being unable to participate beyond the brief remarks since the event was scheduled at the same time as the University's annual

business meeting and end of year Council at which she was giving two major presentations. She expressed appreciation for and she also acknowledged those at UG and externally who assisted the ERC to plan, organise and execute the programme. She concluded by expressing the wish that the Conversation over the two days would make an impact so that we as a people can grow and move beyond retrograde divisiveness which impedes the general progress of all our people.

### **1.5 *Honourable Joseph Harmon, Opposition Leader***

Hon. Joseph Harmon stated that his participation in the National Conversation was to put forward recommendations for considerations in Parliament and thereafter implementation. Hon. Harmon noted that ethnic harmony is not elusive and quite possible. Hon. Harmon indicated that our racial tension started with our colonial masters, so as a multi-ethnic community, we must bridge the gap and effectively deal with racial tension. Hon. Harmon highlighted that the United Nations has realised our need to resolve this issue and has made actions points over the years; there have been pragmatic projects for the past two decades. He indicated that both the United Nations and the United States created programmes in Guyana to tackle these issues. The Leader of the Opposition went on to add that his party saw the importance of racial harmony and created a ministry to tackle this issue. The APNU/AFC government believed that to achieve unity and harmony, a structured approach to building harmonious relations in Guyana was the foundation. The Coalition government partnered with the UN to create a 5-year strategic plan to reduce socio-economic inequalities. It sought to foster integration, inclusion, and equitable benefits in the developmental processes. Moreover, it sought to promote social inclusion and acceptance of

diversity. The plan included enhancing citizens and community safety and promoting greater citizen partnership in political processes and decision making.

Hon. Harmon stated that the APNU/AFC government reconstituted the Ethnic Relations Commission because the government understood the role and functions of the Commission to the society. The issue of race, which may be considered sensitive to some, is of paramount importance to all of us. Hon. Harmon went on to state that the ERC was supported through human and financial resources. It is however important for us as Guyanese to note that there were insensitive statements made by a current Commissioner of the ERC which sought to fan the flame of ethnic disharmony. Acts like these must not happen and persons in authority must be held accountable for their actions so that issues like this do not happen again.

Promoting ethnic harmony and race relations is indeed a positive move but let us not forget that without creating economic inequalities and opportunities for all, enhancing citizens' safety and security can be a challenge. Promoting social inclusion and tolerance and strengthening inclusive and participatory governance without the things mentioned above will have no positive outcomes from discussion such as this. Hon. Harmon stressed the importance of acknowledging that ethnic relations is only one part of the problem and events like the dismissal of over 1000 Guyanese in four months is a bad start to any government. Such acts create a trickle-down effect in the communities across the country. Guyana is a diverse country where culture is shared across the board and as such promoting equality and equity should be of utmost importance. In closing, Hon. Harmon encouraged listeners and Guyanese to engage very deeply in this conversation over the next two days.



## **2.0 DAY I. SESSION 1**

### **2.1 Introduction of Facilitators**

The facilitators for the two-day Conversation were introduced by Mr. Renne Chester as Ms. Kala Seegopaul and Mr. Alex Graham. Ms. Kala Seegopaul is an independent consultant who possesses over two decades of experience as a trainer and facilitator. She has worked with local, national and regional organisations and is the Managing Director of New Era Consulting. Mr. Alex Graham is a media and communication consultant, a job he has been doing since leaving the media in the early 90s. In the media, he worked both radio and television. He is now the founder of a media and animation company. Outside of his professional role, Mr. Graham participates in active community service at all levels. He has also made contributions to several charities including Habitat for Humanity, where he served for several years as the Chairman. He currently serves as the Chairman for Guyana Prison Fellowship and Vice-President of Guyana Basketball Association. He was previously President of Guyana Swimming Association and the President of the Board of Governors of South Ruimveldt Secondary School.

## 2.2 Panel 1

### 2.2.1 *Mr. Kit Nascimento – Portuguese Representative*

Mr. Nascimento started his presentation by indicating that he speaks on behalf of himself as a Guyanese and does not represent the entire Portuguese community. Mr. Nascimento stated that to solve any problem you must first recognise it. He stated that this occasion was not the first time that efforts were made to deal with the issue of ethnic relations in Guyana. In 1994, Mr. Kampta Karan published a series called *Offering: a race and ethnic studies*, and he requested Mr. Nascimento to contribute his views at that time. Sadly, what Mr. Karan indicated then remains relevant now.

In 1963, the Secretary of State for the Colony of British Government, Duncan Sandy said that, “all that you have told me at this conference and all that I have seen in my visit to your country last July have convinced me that there is one problem which transcends all others, namely the curse of racism. That is the curse of British Guiana today. The whole life of the country is poisoned and weakened by mutual suspicion and fear between two predominantly racial groups, the Indians and Africans.” Sandy went on to point out the dominance of racial murder, arson, and violence; something we recently experienced in September. Sandy argued that there is no deep rooted or historical entity against the races nor is there any basic clash between them, nor is there any animosity between the religious groups, Christians, Hindus, Muslims.”

Mr. Nascimento stated that this observation made by Sandy can be a fair and reasonable observation. Sandy concluded that the root cause of the trouble lay almost entirely in the

development of party politics along racial lines. Mr. Nascimento acknowledged that Sandy was right but it was the British who suspended the constitution to expel a PPP government which at the time was supported by all Guyanese. This incident led to the division of Forbes Burnham and Cheddi Jagan and was unfortunately defined by race and continues to be defined by race.

Mr. Nascimento raised the argument that Guyanese needed to realise that we are not defined by political parties but by culture and we are one people, one nation, one destiny. Guyanese must ask themselves who they are. Guyanese need to acknowledge that we cannot go on unless we decide and acknowledge we share a common destiny and a joint responsibility for the stability of the country which was given to us at birth. Unless we as a nation accept and see things this way, we cannot and will not realise the goals that this conversation and future conversations set out to do. Mr. Nascimento stressed the importance of social cohesion from the top level. Communities must decide that they are voting for policies and vision and not on race.

In closing, Mr. Nascimento stated that beside the Indians, we were all brought here to work for our colonisers, but they have since been long gone. The land is now our own; as such we need to work together for the betterment of it for ourselves as one people. We must force our political leaders to move from race to policies. It is time to claim our real identity as Guyanese and not race.

### ***2.2.2 Honorable Lennox Shuman, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly***

In Hon. Shuman's opening remarks, he highlighted the need to continue the talks and hoped it bears fruit so that we can move forward as a country. Hon. Shuman based his presentation on two facets: politics and identity. Hon. Shuman argued that as a nation, we

allowed the identity component to grow so large that it forced the previous government to create a Ministry to tackle this issue. Deputy Speaker Shuman stated that even with the creation of the Ministry, political parties continued to make it a race game, as noticeable in the just concluded general elections. Mr. Shuman highlighted that parties are dependent on the race card for their political survival. The minority groups are usually overlooked by these major parties. Minority groups become neglected or they become invisible. He highlighted that indigenous people are capable of growth, but with the current social structure they become more unrecognised.

Mr. Shuman pointed out that indigenous people are not on any state boards in any of the two administrations. All the structures, whether intentionally or unintentionally, was/is set up to disenfranchise indigenous people from the constitution to communication; entities placement; their participation and influence. Mr. Shuman gave the example from his recent experience when he took applications into his community for work. Out of the 145 applicants, 140 of them did not have an NIS card, a TIN or even an ID card. He believed that the structure was built to alienate the indigenous people.

The main principles of inclusion tended to disrupt the status quo of the country. He agreed with Mr. Nascimento that we should start at the bottom which would allow for all people to be included. We need to be honest about our history, but we must not be dominated by our history. Mr. Shuman suggested that we must hold everyone accountable, especially those in power. Political leaders must answer to the people for everything they do. He went on to say that if we continue to say a land of six races as opposed to a land of six people, we will continue to have an ethnic divide. Even within the indigenous community, there are nine nations. How do we separate that? So instead of six races we need to say and preach “one people”.

Mr. Shuman used examples of Rwanda and Yugoslavia where ethnic tension divided and destroyed countries. He stressed that we as a nation need to put an end to that practice. Guyana came to the precipice of a civil war during the recently concluded general elections due to the turmoil. Shuman argues that it is the leaders themselves who have been sowing the seeds of racial discourse. Even amidst the brutal murders of the Henry boys, Shuman stated that leaders decided to fan the flames of racial tension. He stressed the need for the ERC to take a stand and have a mandate to hold these political leaders accountable. Mr. Shuman, in closing, asked that we as citizens hold our leaders accountable.

### ***2.2.3 Mr. David Hinds, Associate Professor, Arizona State University***

Dr. Hinds started his presentation by taking ownership of being called Afro-Guyanese. Dr. Hinds stated that Blacks across the globe bring a uniqueness to any discussion or discourse on ethnicity because it is the only group that endured enslavement. Blacks are the only race that experienced the most inhumane experiences of humanity and so therefore it is a historic responsibility for us to engage race not as an empty phenomenal but as something that is fundamental in understanding our humanity.

Dr. Hinds stated that the topic of the Conversation *How do we improve ethnic relations in Guyana* suggests that relations were soured so there was a need to put it back on even ground. This state of affairs can be attributed to the events which surround the recently concluded elections. He believed that the organisers were driven to this point due to the national elections. Racial divide or ethnic relations has always been an issue for discourse, but we tend to skirt around the issue and never get to the essence or the root because for some of us the root of race and ethnicity is not that fundamental to our views of the world.

Dr. Hinds went on to say that we have developed some barriers to real improvement of ethnic relations in Guyana. One barrier is that we have sought to silence the saliency of race and ethnicity to our national community and our history: the way we were brought here and the relations that developed around those. Dr. Hinds stressed that race and ethnicity are fundamental to who we are to the building of our society and we have not always acknowledged that point.

Secondly, we have substituted assumptions for reality. Reality is that we are in the process of becoming a nation because we are currently a nation of nations. We have even argued on the basis of the guilty race. Dr. Hinds indicated that he does not believe that we can improve ethnic relations and make it work. He believed that we can help create the conditions to help improve ethnic relations and not improve it ourselves. When different groups of people are together, there is always an ethnic divide because it creates a competition amongst the races for political and economic resources. Groups tend to respond to the threat of disenfranchisement and dishonour. As such Guyana is no different.

In closing, Dr. Hinds indicated that we may have given ourselves a basket to fetch water, because in the fight for democracy we kicked the ball in substantive democracy down the road. He noted that we must have formal democracy with ethnic democracy. Secondly, we have to link ethnic relations to power relations. We cannot divorce ethnic relations from our relations in the society. There are practical things we must discuss such as constitutional reform and ethnic and racial education amongst our people. Success of those initiatives, Dr. Hinds argued, rests on the power of our relations. The question of improved ethnic relations has been put back for several years, first by the coming of oil and gas into our political economy; secondly, by the resurgence of external forces in our politics. Those two factors have further muddied the ethnic waters in Guyana.

#### **2.2.4 Mr. Ravi Dev, Former Member of Parliament and Founder of ROAR**

Mr. Dev opened his presentation by repeating the theme of the conversation. He went on to define the key word – ethnic – in the theme. He indicated that we in Guyana did not have a race issue but more so an ethnic and cultural issue. Mr. Dev stated that we need to look beneath the problem so that we can focus on the important aspects of the issue. Mr. Dev stated that our culture is mutable and can be changed. He said that he wanted to eschew that polemics have not gotten us anywhere in the past. He chose to make his presentation more analytical so as to look beneath the surface of what we are experiencing.

Mr. Dev. emphasised that unless we have a common understanding of what causes our ethnic problems, our solutions as we may call them to that extent would be off base if we missed the mark. He suggested one mode of analysis that has been put forward which he has been trying to test the hypothesis for over 30 years. While class was the mode of operation, ethnicity has now become our mode of operating and this can change given our history and where we came from because we have changed. Our culture has changed no matter where we have come from; our culture has been creolised automatically. All groups need to realise that we are not maintaining any culture from the golden days and acknowledge that we have all changed.

Mr. Dev stated that we/people cannot tell persons how to feel or react to ethnic challenges, especially Africans, given the fact that they are descendants of slaves. Asking people to just discard ethnic identity is an issue that plagues the world. So to ask persons to discard this whole idea about ethnicity is not going to happen because it is built on structural features which guide us to move forward and to act and to believe and to behave in a certain manner. The war of ethnicity began when democracy was introduced into Guyana in the 1950s. This division was

latent when the concept of democracy was brought forward. Mr. Dev also highlighted the grounds on which democracy is defined. He noted that Mr. Burnham was forced to push the race card after realising that blacks were the minority. So he set up a base to protect himself and people.

In conclusion, he recommended that first we must address the effects different cultures have on conflict in a plural society. Secondly, we must inculcate civic nationalism and not be ashamed to say that it does not necessarily conflict with ethnic nationalism. Thirdly we must enforce equal rights for all citizens. Fourthly, we must acknowledge that political democracy has now become a reality. We must now realise and accept that ethnic divide moves across each party, given the evidence in the last two elections. There must be economic affirmation for African and Indigenous Guyanese because they were discriminated against and were excluded from national development and economic equity. For any of this to happen, Mr. Dev said that we must have an ethnic impasse.

#### **2.2.5 Ms. Renata Chuck-A-Sang**

Ms. Chuck-A-Sang, the lone female on the panel, insisted that she was not speaking for the Chinese people but for herself as a person of Chinese descent. Life in Guyana for a person of Chinese descent was and is covered by stereotyping. Assumptions are made and remarks are thrown that are not complimentary but downright false. Now in the time of Covid-19 and the disease originating from China, the blatant disrespect has gotten worse. She mentioned that the United Nations in May released a statement on the impact of hate on the Chinese people due to COVID-19.



Even before Covid-19, Chinese were targeted about their way of life, what they ate and their physical characteristics. Chinese, when attacked are never defended or protected by law enforcements. Othering plays a role in prejudice and disenfranchising of an entire group because it gives a sense of power. Chinese have been here since before Independence and the new Chinese people have received the backlash, but have bravely entered new communities to set up life even without knowing or having little English. Ms. Chuck-A-Sang stated that we are one nation and must keep in mind that we have more in common than differences. Racism is a disease that plagues us all.

Ms. Chuck-A-Sang highlighted that since Guyana signed onto the UNSDG for fighting ethnic inequality, it has submitted one report in 2006 on its plans for fighting ethnic inequality and has never resubmitted again. It is a document that needs to be updated biannually. There are 3 pieces of legislation that persons use to bring a case against the state and persons: Racial Hostility Act, Prevention of Discrimination Act and Chapter 45 of our Constitution. The state has a responsibility and Guyanese need to make the effort on how to educate ourselves on how we arrived at this current situation and what has brought us here. As Chinese in Guyana, we will never have the power or numbers to fight or claim political power, but that is not something Chinese seek; maybe on the individual level but not a consensus for the persons in minority. We have to ask ourselves how we can ensure that the lives of Chinese are free from discrimination and that they are allowed to live and work in Guyana. One of the ways we can tackle this issue is to educate ourselves on others and that the data is available and accessible. We need to ask the right questions. Another tactic that can be used to reduce racism is to foster new relationships with persons who are different from you in ethnicity, class, work and religion. People must be able to hold a mirror to themselves and question their beliefs and whether their beliefs hold merit

and do not affect others. Another thing is to look at the persons in power and see if they reflect persons in society. In conclusion, when support and access to justice happen, we can adapt a zero tolerance against ethnic discrimination.

#### **2.2.6 Open Discussions**

C: The difficulties we have had and continue to have is that we approach the conversation with a different understanding of things when we are supposed to have a common understanding about these same issues. Therefore, in the basis of moving forward, we must have a common understanding of issues with which we are confronted.

Mr. Shuman stated that there was a massacre in Wismar, but there is no evidence or basis for the comment. Those historical events need to be cleared up so that we do not have that confusion in the future.

Q: How will persons at the bottom become aware of their responsibility to initiate change to address the racial polarization? What voice do they, persons at the bottom, have to impact this massive issue?

*A: The point is that persons at the bottom already live and communicate with each other, whether through sports or culture, we behave as Guyanese. That is where we learn to respect each other and it is at that level that we understand and tackle the problem especially in the terms of sports, drama and music. It is at those levels that we are most Guyanese than at any level. It is when we move into the political realm, as David Hinds pointed out that it becomes a competition for organised power in the ethnic terms that we have a problem.*

C: Wismar Massacre - Three Indians were killed, dozens were raped, 240 houses were burnt to the ground. Tragedy is about perception. It can be considered the first ethnic cleansing in the Western Hemisphere because 2,399 Indians had to flee Wismar. Weeks later a vessel by the name Sun Chapman was destroyed, and 45 Africans Guyanese were killed, most of them were from Wismar and McKenzie. This event raised the eyes of the people and some more Indians were killed in a kind of tit for tat response. In early 2000, the PNC started to commemorate the sinking of the Sun Chapman at the spot where it sank. Mr. Granger later made a monument. This monument should have been celebrated by all groups because everyone was affected because of it. Politics must acknowledge the wrongs and all the rights.

### **2.3 Mr. Ashton Simon, Commissioner of the ERC**

Mr. Simon represents the nine indigenous groups in Guyana on the Commission. In his message, he said that over the years the ethnic divide has taken us to the brink of distrust and deep distrust and division. As recent as this year, we have seen the hidden yet open spheres of hate, disrespect and distrust undermining our hopes and aspirations. However, my living experience has a message of hope for every Guyanese. That message is not lost as a new horizon is emerging. As concerned Guyanese, we must harness this opportunity to design and develop this new highway to our destiny. A highway that will make our aspirations, visions, unity and trust abound in a true Guyana, making Guyana a model of its motto, "One People, One Nation, One Destiny".

## 2.4 Panel 2

### 2.4.1 *Mr. Eric Phillips*

Mr. Phillips opened his remarks by reciting the motto ‘One People, One Nation, One Destiny.’ According to Mr. Phillips, it is a motto that speaks about nationhood, it is a motto of unity, it is a motto that speaks of justice. In essence, our motto speaks of justice, caring and an inclusive society. The most recent national elections revealed the depth and racial divide that occur in Guyana. Mr. Phillips highlighted that Facebook has allowed for persons to display their hate and learnt racism and this ‘freedom’ is destroying us. Guyanese have been feeding on a level of hate that is a slippery slope for destruction. Mr. Phillips asked that we remember our past, in 1962-1964 where race riots claimed more than 176 innocent lives. In addition, 920 persons were injured, 1400 homes were destroyed by fires and about 15,000 persons were forced to move their homes to settle in safer and more secure ethnic communities.

Today, Guyana’s real problem is how to achieve political, economic and social justice. Guyana is economically, politically and racially divided, as well as religious and spiritually divided. Persons tend to ignore these realities because they do not want to see change and may be profiting off the instability. If we are to truly improve race relations, we need to collectively address four specific areas of difference: political, economic, religious and social. These characteristics are the glue that formed our divided society. Leadership is needed, shared, and collected. Leaders need to work together for a better Guyana. Many of the racists in Guyana have a different narrative of Guyana’s history and how things are. Many of them have been built on myths and not the reality of how things were.

A fundamental question to ask before finding a solution is “Who are we? What is Guyana? Who is Guyana?” Some will say Guyana is richly endowed in natural resources and this is true; we have no natural disaster, our land is rich for resources, food, water, scholars, engineers, teachers and lawyers and many more. These things and people are all Guyanese. Guyana is strategically placed on the map that benefits from all aspects of the Caribbean and South America. So as Guyanese, we are blessed beyond words; we are indeed El Dorado and the Kingdom of Enchantment. We have it all, but our richest resource should be our diverse culture and our youths who are unified, and this situation is what the world should see. But what does the world see? Is it our society filled with hate and ethnic divide and economic instability? We must accept that racism is a disease that destroys us.

Mr. Phillips questioned what it is that we as a country and people want to achieve and show. The Westminster system of winner-takes-it-all has disenfranchised our electoral and political system. It does not suit a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society such as ours. It is more suited for homogeneous society and Guyana is not that. We need to define what democracy is for ourselves and what is based on our culture and history and not what Western states decide. Look at democracy in the USA and the racism and inequality it has created, is this what we want? What we need is an indigenous-based new constitution that will be a framework for national ethos for a just and fair society. We can define democracy as a human right marketplace of freedom, collective items, inclusive and transparent institutions, cohesive communities, strong families with responsible individuals who share a common vision, common value system, jointly created, enjoyed, peace, brotherhood and prosperity. That is the type of democracy we need to define.

We need to pursue community inclusion, minority inclusion and rights. Most importantly we must not compromise over sovereignty to other nations. In summary, Guyana needs constitutional change in order to fix the ethnic divide.

#### **2.4.2 Mr. Nigel Hughes, Attorney-at-Law**

Mr. Hughes' presentation focused on accuracy and reliability. We as Guyanese at home and abroad tend to hurl insults and accusations against each other without evidence and facts. What we are having is basically prejudice of each other. Three items that are important in tackling the race issue are to commence an analysis of the contributions of the various ethnicities to the making of Guyana, establish an accurate teaching of history and conduct the dissemination of reliable data by ethnicity and race.

Mr. Hughes noted that we must acknowledge all ethnicities and their contributions to making a modern Guyana. Amerindians were the first and the Africans were here 400 years before the Indians came. Since Independence, the most consistent and important factor at every general election whether rigged or otherwise was race and ethnicity. Yet since independence, successive governments have made no effort to collect data by race and ethnicity or analyse the impact of various policies on different races and ethnicities. So there cannot be a rational basis on race and economics because there is no data to prove it. In the absence of the collection of national data based on race and ethnicity, it is difficult to begin any analysis of the statements made and propagated by leading national figures on the issue of race, power, distribution of national goods and the availability of opportunities.

There has not been a lot of work on income equality in Guyana. Mr. Hughes quoted an extract from Collin Constantine that states, 'the starting lines of incomes shares in 1960 were

wholly unequal, at mid race (1998) the bottom 50% lost half their mean income and the finish line, the top 10% owns 41% of the household income, while in 2013 the bottom 50% realised a mere 12.42%". The interesting thing about this phenomenon is during the time that Guyana had an Economic Recovery Programme, which was implemented during the Hoyte administration in 1988. It took away the income of a lot of African Guyanese. Notably, this situation occurred during the period when we were ruled by an African Guyanese.

The ethnic composition of the income distribution is of great political importance. The rise of Indo Guyanese at the expense of Afro Guyanese in terms of income share, poses a significant obstacle to social cohesion. In the words of Ronald Reagan, 'the government is not the solution to our problems, but the government is the problem.' The collection of data by race and ethnicity does not make you racist. The more information you have about a problem will help solve the problem. Mr. Hughes indicated that we need to stop making gathering data as racism. He stated that Guyanese cannot solve the problem unless we have the information. We tend to preach democracy but democracy does not guarantee equality of treatment. Once a government is elected, there is no mandate or obligation on the part of the government to treat its citizens equally and fairly. If there is no data on national resources how can citizens challenge the inequalities of the Government policies? Mr. Hughes stressed the need to start collecting data on race and ethnicities so that we can have an honest and fact based discussion on equal opportunities.

Mr. Hughes argued that there is a generational wealth and education issue in Guyana, especially for a particular group of persons. The result of persistent and chronic income and wealth inequality, poor education, chronic lack of opportunities and perpetual discrimination means that for some ethnicities and races, every successive generation has to start at the bottom

of the pile with the same old systemic challenges. In closing, Mr. Hughes highlighted some possible solutions to the problem:

- Collection, analysis and publication of key data that addresses economic, social and political indicators by race and ethnicity.
- More research and funding on research on inequality by race, ethnicity and gender.
- Constant vigilance on race and the impact of policies by ethnicity and race.
- Concerted effort by the Government and the society to acknowledge and challenge the issue of race.

## **2.5 *Open Discussions***

C: Conduct National hearings in all communities as well as scientific surveys to hear problems and solutions directly from the masses.

C: Mr. Hughes was really speaking to democracy as electoral democracy. Real democracy extends to responses and responsible political behaviour as equally important elements of the equation. If those aspects of democracy are embraced, then there will be a framework for the resolution of our problem.

C: I do not challenge what was said, but I will say this: unless you have an incentive that will either punish or reward political behaviour that is not responsive, then it is aspirational and a lot of what I heard today is aspirational rather than concrete proposals. We like to say in Guyana "ah could feel this thing happening". That may be an accurate feeling, but unless you have the data that could support why your apprehension, fears or euphoria exists, you cannot begin to analyse the problem. I cannot challenge what was said so far, as that is concerned why I say the incentive regime to promote that kind of behaviour does not exist.



Q: Has there been any kind of actual research done by UG or other contextualized for Guyana resulting in a multi discretionary module of engagement to mitigate racial discrimination?

A: *No such study has been done.*

C: I see a low weight working class segment of the population at the bottom, but not local sports and cultural celebrities and religious leaders. My understanding is that leaders be they political, religious, business, social are responsible for defining culture, so the bottom will have little or no impact because they have no voice and no visibility. The problem is that the leaders responsible for initiating change have so far neglected their responsibility because this specific change to mitigate racial animosity does not support the agenda of acquiring and retaining power which requires pandering to and even stalking a specific base. This is not unique to any specific party in Guyana and definitely not unique to Guyana. Culture which incorporates discrimination starts at the top.

C: The biggest power anyone at the bottom of the population has is called a vote. It is the people who elect those who control power, whether they control power on the racist basis, on an economic basis or a democratic basis. There will always be a government and there will always be a government that exercises power. But is that government going to be based on racial domination or is it going to be on the basis of national interest. Do we see ourselves which is the way I began as Guyanese or do we see ourselves first and foremost as Africans or Indians who dominate other Africans or other Indians? In my view, we have not yet begun to end the identity as Guyanese. The evidence of that position is that when Guyanese qualify, where do they want to go? They go out of the country. The biggest ambition of qualified young people in Guyana at the moment is to go to work and live somewhere else. We do not identify yet as Guyanese. Until

we start to identify as Guyanese, we can connect all the statistics in the world that Mr. Hughes recommend, it will not change the time of the day.

C: I do not know what Guyanese means and that perhaps may be the biggest part of the problem. We keep saying Guyanese, but Guyanese to you can mean something completely different to me and everyone else. You are assuming that there is a concept of national figure or ethos that we commonly share. I think that Mr. Phillips pointed it out in his presentation that if we do not have a common culture, common values, share obligations, I do not know what being a Guyanese is. It may be an awful thing to say, but in America to pick the most recent example, there are countries like India that have been there much longer, you have a commitment, a particular philosophy set out in their constitution. In Guyana, the first constitution was an inheritance from the British when we attempted to assert our independence by becoming a republic in the 1970s. When we severed our relationship with the British Council several people said that Mr. Burnham was doing this because of his personal power. So, when you say, and people say and they like to say "We must be Guyanese," you have to ask yourself exactly what that means. After 54 years, there is no common 'Guyaneseness' across the ethnicities. I am sorry but that is my personal view. So, you can say yes, they need to be Guyanese. The second point I wish to make is that people leaving Guyana has nothing to do (and I am talking about young, qualified, and unqualified people migrating out of Guyana) has nothing to do whether they are nationalistic. It is pure economic survival and if people cannot make it despite the sacrifices they make to go to university and other educational institutions, they're not going to act against their own personal self interest in the name of some nationality. They are going to go where they have better opportunities and so I am sorry, young people are entitled to migrate if those who are responsible for creating the framework for development in Guyana do not create the opportunities for them.

So, it is ok to be very privileged to talk about being Guyanese, but the economic reality for those people is that they don't have much of a choice.

## **2.6 *Mr. Barrington Braithwaite, Commissioner of the ERC***

Mr. Braithwaite in his opening remarks stated that, “in unmasking the ethnic tug of war that presides in Guyana’s social organism, the predominant factors will be revealed through the volatile banners of religion, culture and economics.” Commissioner Braithwaite went on to state that “race is a consequence that is positioned to define the justification for any quest towards dominance over the other.” History has played a crucial part in everything and to these we must focus our attention. Guyanese were drawn from diverse world views, some more severe than others. Commissioner Braithwaite suggested that, “we must concede no human variation was utopia or nirvana a collective memory that ever existed.” The conflicts between caste, vicarial demarcation and tribal consciousness if left unaddressed will be preached in shadow rather than through cultural and religious understanding of one and the other. Separate evolution of consciousness impacting on the timelines inherited and developed in Guyana inevitably resulted in contentious conflict because our genetic traits are practically culture and genes, and if left to inculcate in isolation will retain fossilised approaches and transference of deeper inherited injuries. Racial conflicts are not always a result of direct memories, but sometimes they happen because of a lack of recognition of the social, cultural and religious boundaries. Politics can be the elephant in the room in selected cases, a liberator or at times a crafty ever evolving self-serving virus conducting its same choice of rituals on its victims if those tenets remained rooted in familiar traditions and customs.

According to Commissioner Braithwaite, this conversation must be bold enough to recognise all the above on merit, but the subliminal culture of deficit and face differences exist

and constitute the most volatile conflicts before the major groups that trickle down. Commissioner Braithwaite stated that the ERC's task was to evolve the exchange towards solutions. He described the conversation as the first direct discourse since independence that strives to overcome the superficial. Mr. Braithwaite stated that everyone has a memory that influences perception that we must explore. He asked that if the memory is populated by what was or is, or contrived by stereotypes or by real experience, guilt or escapism from a harsh addiction to a more accommodated embrace, it would be welcome. In closing Commissioner Braithwaite stated, "Let's fulfil the purpose of the task of this conversation."

### **3.0 NATIONAL YOUTH CONVERSATION**

#### **3.1 Summary**

The National Youth Conversation consisted of five presentations and was chaired by Mr. Travis Bruce and Ms. Devica Uditram. Ms. Jennifer Persaud, Programme Officer, welcomed the audience to the function, which was followed by Commissioner Pandit Deodat, Youth Constituency Representative, who presented the Opening Remarks. Commissioner Deodat expressed great excitement for having the National Youth Conversation which offered young people across Guyana the opportunity to proffer solutions on how to improve race relations in Guyana. Commissioner Deodat also encouraged the participants to be the change they want to see. The National Youth Conversation attracted many young professionals who presented very riveting presentations on how to improve ethnic relations in Guyana. There were approximately one hundred and fifty-nine viewers via Facebook and Zoom, in addition to viewers from the various television networks.

## 3.2 Presentations

### 3.2.1 *Ms. Elsie Harry, Activist and Commonwealth Youth Worker*

Ms. Elsie Harry shared her views on the history of racial conflict among the main ethnic groups in Guyana and her belief that relations could be improved by dismantling the anti-black system in Guyana. She deconstructed the anti-blackness concept from two different perspectives.

The first perspective considered anti-blackness in its earliest forms as a manifestation of “the unproven baseless theory of a hierarchy of races”, with White Europeans at the top and a downward ranking as skin colour becomes darker, essentially white supremacy. This system supported the notion that Caucasian European have a higher level of civilization than other races and are ordained by the creator to govern civilization and to receive maximum benefit from resources across the globe. According to Ms. Harry, this was the view that undergirded colonization and ethnic conflict in Guyana. Harry stated that Europeans, seeking to maintain a balance of power in Guyana, coerced the Indigenous Peoples into returning run-a-way slaves to the plantations which resulted in conflict between the two races. She then considered the origin of the conflict between Africans and the indentured labourers. It started when enslavement was no longer profitable and emancipation was on the horizon. Plantation owners had to look for a new labour force so they created the system of indentureship in which labourers were contracted from India, Madeira and China. These groups were brought to Guyana and overworked, receiving meager wages as compensation. What ensued was strife between these groups and the Africans who could not negotiate reasonable wage packages for themselves in the face of the new system of indentureship.

Her second perspective of anti-blackness is directly related to people of African descent. To explain this second dimension, Harry quoted a definition from Dr. K. Ross, which states “Anti-blackness describes the inability to recognize black humanity. It captures the reality that the kind of violence that black life experience is not based on any specific thing a black person did, the violence we experience is not tied to any particular transgression, it is gratuitous and unrelenting.” She believes that the modern state of Guyana continues to perpetrate acts of violence on people of African descent and other races.

Ms. Harry concluded her presentation by offering the following solutions for the improvement of race relations in Guyana:

- There must be an accurate documentation of what transpired during colonization and the political turmoil before and after emancipation to dismantle the anti-black system that was used to stratify races by skin colour.
- There must be a reconsideration of shared governance or shared government.
- There must be legislative empowerment of the Ethnic Relations Commission to sanction acts that do not promote smooth ethics relations in Guyana. The ERC should be free from interference to carry out this mandate.
- An accountability framework should be created to hold ERC personnel accountable for their actions.

### **3.2.2 Mr. Kyle Joseph, Project Coordinator**

Mr. Kyle Joseph is of the view that Indigenous People are left behind in many aspects of life, such as basic necessities such as access to education, health care and basic things like playgrounds for young people to play. He stated that after examining Indigenous Peoples' situation, he concluded that race relations went beyond what he coined 'street racism' and is manifested in government policies. He posited that Indigenous People have been left out of major discussion with regards to development. Mr. Joseph further stated that the notion that Indigenous People need to be taken care of came out of colonization, when the 'White man' took care of Indigenous People. After colonization was over, governments took that same approach by visiting their villages and presenting them with pockets of development. However, the infrastructure has been largely the same for the last twenty years. Mr. Joseph also addressed the issue of Indigenous women being over sexualized and treated differently from women of other racial backgrounds. They are regarded as timid individuals, who can be easily taken advantage of.

He concluded his presentation by stating that Indigenous People should always be part of the national conversation. He believes that the ERC should do more than having national conversations via Facebook. Instead, the ERC should also visit schools and other institutions to consult with the wider Guyana and the avenues used to do so should be reachable to all strata of people, even those without internet access.

### 3.2.3 *Mr. Kian Jabour, Politician, Entrepreneur*

Mr. Jabour's presentation placed significant emphasis on the need for data-driven investigation to both diagnose Guyana's racial issues and to come up with meaningful solutions to address the problem. He believes that Guyanese needs to go way beyond the perception of our race relation problems and dig deeper through the use of empirical data to determine the issues affecting us as a people and produce relevant resolutions. Mr. Jabour felt that there is a need to establish a clear indication of discrimination and used contract awards as an example of one instance where data should be used to determine racial inequity. It is his belief that only an accurate and comprehensive analysis based on data procured from both the government and the private sector could reveal the racial nuances, if any, in the awarding of contracts.

Mr. Jabour further stated that comprehensive data generation is also needed for creating government policies and the necessary implementation of such policies. He indicated that it is necessary to create a better society that is more balanced and diverse therefore, policies need to be drafted to do this through data generation.

In offering solutions to the ethnic relations conflict in Guyana, Mr. Jabour made the following recommendations:

- Education can be used as a tool to combat racism.
- The ERC should be given a lot more scope to do the necessary statistical analysis of Guyana's society and that the Commission should also be enabled to conduct thorough investigations into these issues and institute penalties if there is a need to do so.

In concluding, he again stressed the need for scientific studies to be conducted to determine problems so that the appropriate programs can be implemented to assist with identified problems.



There must be expert intervention through analysis done by organizations both locally and internationally, and both the government and the private sector should issue report cards based on their diversity annually so that the nation can see how they are performing. In parting, he advised that any form of tokenism, which is an individual acquiring strategic positions based on race, should be discouraged.

#### **3.2.4 Mr. Derwayne Wills, Social Activist**

In his presentation, Mr. Wills examined four fundamental ways in which racism manifests itself: ideological level, institutional level, interpersonal level and personal level. The ideological level is merely about ideology and how it informs everything we do, including not only how we trust people but also how our laws and policies are passed; the institutional level addresses how things are cemented into words and actions that are publicly funded; the interpersonal level addresses issues of “who [doesn’t] like us because he/she is a racist”; and the personal level is based on one’s internalized ideas about our racial groups.

He then addressed the issue of how power is manifested by asking three questions: Who has power? Who does not have power? How power is used by people who have it against people who does not? He quoted Article 13 of Guyana’s Constitution which states that the principle objectives of a political system is to create opportunities for the involvement of persons within the society to be part of the decision-making process that affects their lives and wellbeing. He believes that Article 13 is a powerful example of how politicians can create a more powerful society by involving civil society in the decision-making process to improve race relations in Guyana. Wills also addressed the issue of public procurement (government contracts) and how it

has the power to direct monies to assist those communities underrepresented in public procurement practices. He stated that the participation of marginalized communities in the public procurement process also has the potential to lift persons, families and communities out of poverty. Therefore, the public procurement process can be used as an effective mechanism for the distribution of resources across the races.

In concluding, Wills recommended the following for improving ethnic relations in Guyana:

- More data should be secured to understand how race/ethnic groups are represented throughout the society in terms of access to resources, access to capital, representation on state boards, and representation to elected offices including those at the local government level.
- The Ethnic Relations Commission needs to be involved in more aggressive data collection exercises where they also advocate for aggressive data collection approaches to central government and for the information to become more open source. Additionally, the Commission should become more active in the public domain.
- Data should be used to understand the distribution of political and economic power across race and ethnic groups.
- Data should be used to disaggregate criminal persecution, success of the judicial actions and the distribution of government contracts by race and ethnicity.
- There should be ethnic impact assessments for legislation and government policy.
- The national census should be expanded, especially the section related to race, to allow people to identify with different race groups of their choice.

### **3.2.5 Vishani Ragobeer, Journalist**

Ms. Ragobeer believes that community dialogue is a crucial road map to foster racial solidarity and harmony. She stated that most persons, at some time in their lives, have expressed prejudice, either knowingly or unknowingly. Her presentation was pocketed with her personal experiences, with the most significant takeaway being the value of having open conversations about ethnic relations with family members, friends and community in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the issue of ethnic relations.

In concluding, Ms. Ragobeer stated that engagement with people at the grassroots level is important. Further, it is important to encourage inclusivity and healing from the years of ethnic conflict.

### **3.2.6 Open Discussions**

#### **3.2.6.1 Questions and Answers**

Q: Dr. Desrey Caesar-Fox, who died eleven (11) years ago, spoke of racism she faced as an Indigenous person in Guyana. There was in those days the coastlander/hinterland discrimination, and while there is the perception that things have improved, the question was asked if it has actually improved or is it just cosmetic?

*A: There have been small improvements in the way Indigenous people are viewed but much more needs to be done.*

Q: The Amerindian Act is laced with several avenues whereby the subject Minister maintains dominion over Indigenous peoples, e.g. through vetoing a Village Councillor's refusal for large

scale mining or overturning certain Village Councillor's decisions. What are your thoughts on legislative amendments and are you familiar with any work in this regard?

*A: Village Councillors are not totally in control of their land since the government can quickly overturn their decision, which can undermine their power. If we are going to respect Indigenous People's decision, those are some of the legislations that have to be changed.*

Q: How do you see ethnicity in the police force and recruitment?

*A 1: We cannot separate cultural aspects and who are the predominant groups that apply for certain jobs. The same situation exists in other agencies such as the Guyana Elections Commission and the Guyana Defence Force. I suspect that is a huge factor, so when using data collection, we have to consider this factor.*

Q: Mr. Jabour spoke about balancing the ethnicity of the police force so that there is more confidence. However, it can be argued that the police force tends to negatively impact black communities more than others. How do you respond to that and what can we do to change that?

Q: How do we address the racial/ethnic stigma and stereotypes that do exist? (We do not need data collection to prove that they exist or we do?)

*A: It does not matter what race you are, the reality is we all have social stigma and have dealt with our fair share of racism. Dealing with the social sides of these stigmas and people's perspectives become very difficult to rectify. Data is required to create social programs and find solutions to deal with stereotyping and stigma. If we do not have that particular data that is required for social programs to be created, how exactly do we go about educating those in society when we do not exactly who is being affected, where and how? These are all the*

*questions that need to be asked, even before we can start educating people. We need to start becoming more analytical and stop educating people on what we think is the issue or solution.*

Q: If you are faced with a situation where you had to deal with a racist from the same political party as you, how would you deal with that?

*A: I would want to believe that anyone joining an organization as the one that I am a part of, would hopefully, understand before they get involved that one of the ideologies of the organization, and one of the main platform of A New and United Guyana is to end racism in Guyana with a proposal of shared governance. However, if a racist joins the party, they would have to be educated.*

Q: Do you think there is an unaddressed emotional component to the ethnic question, or can this issue be solely resolved by a pragmatic and logical approach?

*A 1: There is going to be emotions in any race relations discourse and it is necessary to allow for the healing process because people have been hurt and have lost loved ones.*

*A 2: Guyanese people have had these real traumatic experiences, which have informed how we navigate our daily lives here in Guyana. So, definitely, there is an emotional component to the issue. And we cannot avoid that, but it is not a bad thing, it is incredibly good for us to have these spaces for us to express our emotions and talk about it.*

*A 3: Ethnic strife is as a result of our emotions and feelings to things that have happened to us. So, coming all the way from colonialism to 2020 in Guyana, people have experienced various things and it is their feelings and reactions to those things that have caused ethnic strife in Guyana. The unresolved ethnic component is what the issue is. You cannot take emotions away from the discussion because there has been so much hurt.*

Q: I think that there should be a balance between qualitative and quantitative measures while conducting these analytical studies (I think there should be a push more for a qualitative dataset with a view for behavioural change. Does the application of punitive measures by the ERC breaches constitute the healing of Guyana?

Q: How do we tackle the issue of classism or colourism within a culture that may lead to racism?

*A: Classism and colourism might be a component of or stem from racism.*

Q: How do we as an individual confront persons from our own race, family members who are outright and publicly racist?

*A 1: You just need to talk to people within your family, try to listen to where they are coming from, and try to understand that what they are explaining might be formed by some experience they might have had.*

*A 2: Have dialogue on the matter and engage them; do not be confrontational, it does not work.*

*A 3: Have open conversations with your family members about the race issue.*

*A 4: Have consistent and frank dialogues about the race topic.*

*A 5: Disaggregate the comment and try to understand what it is based on. A lot of times, those comments are based on that person's experience with one or two people from that particular ethnic group. Start having a conversation about the issue, explaining that not because you have that situation with one person from a particular ethnic group does not mean all persons from that group are the same.*

Q: What are your thoughts on the truth and reconciliation process in South Africa, Malaysia and Rwanda model, where they try to create some amount of equity? Do you think it would be valuable to Guyana?

*A 1: Truth and reconciliation would allow for honest dialogue.*

*A 2: For truth and reconciliation to count we need to have an honest account of what happened historically and document the facts in order to move forward.*

### **3.2.6.2 Comments**

- I also hope that institutions, society and the government would bridge the gap, where a person who is a racist feels uncomfortable stepping outside his/her house with racist thoughts because everybody else is thinking at such a level that opposes the racism that they carry, so that they begin to feel guilty and silly about the situation and finally they are forced to change.
- I was looking forward to hearing from you younger folks. All the best and may we all be open, listen keenly and try to do so in an unbiased way.
- We do need studies that are properly conducted with analysed results to confirm, but we also have to include the grassroots approaches to dealing with these issues. Ethnic relations is just so complex... it is not a one size fit all approach in my view.... healing requires so many elements including truth and reconciliation process in my view. We also need to study how other countries have dealt with the issues of ethnic insecurities.
- Race relations engagements require strategic grassroots level communications & open dialogue on how discriminatory practices, policies and actions affect various factions and

open space to discuss why we need to and how we can challenge indoctrinated internalized racist rhetoric.

- I would like to see exchange conversations between: Youth and older folks- over 50s, 60s; Youth and Parliamentarians. I believe the older folks owe youth many answers but also need to listen to how our actions have impacted what is taking place in Guyana today.
- The International Republican Institute is working currently to have the dialogues on race and ethnic relations between a) youth and parliamentarians/developmental partners/diplomats and b) youth and the elders. It is unfortunate this is not being initiated by a local CSO...
- I have really enjoyed this panel, thank you for some honesty, I still think we are still too measured; sometimes we don't want to say things that are too harsh in the conversation. But I think these conversations would have to make room for more truth and these truths are going to be very painful and at some point we would have to acknowledge the pain that would come out of the process.
- I really think we need to focus on what data is needed and align our approach. Many studies have been done at UG, via other organisations etc. We need a review for sure.... look at gaps then develop a strategy of what research is needed. Works by late Andaiye (her new book) should be recommended reading



### **3.3 Conclusion**

The youth segment came to an end with a cultural presentation followed by the Closing Remarks by Ms. Jennifer Persaud, Programme Officer, Ethnic Relations Commission.

## **4.0 DAY II. SESSION 2**

### **4.1 Summary**

Day 2 commenced with a Recap of Day 1 Proceedings, followed by four Panel Discussions, Open Discussions and a Cultural Presentation that bought the curtains down on the two-day event. The Chairperson for the Day's proceedings was Mrs. Nadine Luthers-Williams, Programme Officer, Ethnic Relations Commission, who made the Call to Order and gave brief opening statements. At the end of the Day's Proceedings, Mrs. Luthers-Williams capably closed the two-day Symposium with Appreciation and Closing Remarks. The facilitators for Day 2 were Mrs. Kala Seegopaul and Mr. Alex Graham. There were approximately 92 online participants and, like Day 1, the programme was aired live on at least four television stations.

### **4.2 Recap of Day 1**

Both facilitators summarized the events of Day 1. Ms. Seegopaul made mention of some of the salient issues that were raised during Presentations and the Open Discussion sessions. Some of which included:

- The issue of ethnic polarization in Guyana which manifested itself in Guyana's most recent major event, the national elections
- The situation seems bleak and it was obvious that persons were searching for solutions to the problem
- Both the challenges and solutions are rooted in party politics/racial lines
- Democracy does not guarantee equality
- The need for a common definition of culture, identity and race among Guyanese
- The absence of data on race
- Mental health implications

Some of the solutions identified were:

- The need for honesty and an acknowledgement that race is an issue
- The need for shared policies
- The need to create conditions for positive race relations
- The need for data analysis by race which was resonated by many participants; and the need for the Ethnic Relations Commission to undertake data collection on ethnic issues as a long-term plan
- All persons having equal access to justice

According to Mrs. Seegopaul, the recommended measures/solutions can be classified as constitutional, personal and at a leadership level. On the personal level, there must be respect for diversity and inclusion. Persons also mentioned the need to take the discussion to the community level with the assistance of non-governmental organisations.

Mr. Graham stated that the issues coming out from Day 1 consistently surrounded three main issues: accuracy, identity and democracy. The arguments were clear that an agreement on facts was necessary: for the historical facts, it was necessary to have accuracy in narrative and the current facts should be data-driven. In terms of identity, Mr. Graham pointed out that the need for a common language was touted by most participants. The question of *What is a Guyanese* needs to be answered. In explaining the theme of democracy that emanated from Day 1 events, Mr. Graham pointed out that many participants spoke to a system of governance that would assist with ethnic relations issue. He highlighted that the same issues were emphasized at the National Youth Conversation which was more animated and livelier than Day 1 of the National Conversation. He however expressed disappointment at the attendance at the National Youth Conversation because he had anticipated a greater degree of participation from youths. He ended his Recap by reminding all that there is the need for everyone to listen to understand and not only seek to be understood.

### **4.3 Panel 1**

#### ***4.3.1 Dr. Henry Jeffrey, Political Analyst***

Dr. Jeffrey's presentation can be described as two-pronged because it looked at both challenges and the way forward for ethnic relations in Guyana. According to Dr. Jeffrey, the idea of an Ethnic Relations Commission was strongly supported as an institution to bridge the ethnic divide in Guyana. However, two decades after, the Commission has made no positive impact on ethnic relations. As a matter of fact, some may argue that the situation has

deteriorated. According to Dr. Jeffrey, the ERC is caught up in a permanent political affiliation, which might be one of the reasons that the organization cannot do anything about the situation.

Dr. Jeffrey gave a historical perspective on race relations which he said is responsible for the current situation in Guyana. He quoted information from two reports (Waddington Report 1951 and the Robertson Report 1954), along with the views of an influential British philosopher of the nineteenth century, John Stewart Mills, to support his argument that the ethnic divide in Guyana was deep-rooted. According to Dr. Jeffrey, the influence of our history, along with some unscrupulous politicians who exploit the race card to gain votes, are responsible for deteriorating race relations in Guyana. In Mills social structural view, human beings are not completely free but are constrained by the social relations that they form. According to Dr. Jeffrey, ethnic relations in Guyana is formed by the nature of the variables and the political framework. Dr. Jeffrey posited that if we use Mills' argument that ethnically divided countries are dysfunctional, then Guyana is doomed to political stability and poverty.

In addressing how countries can be more stable and democratic, Dr. Jeffrey relied on the writings of Sir Arthur Lewis (1965), who discussed two types of democracy: one where there is equal citizenship and majority goals and another where various forms or power share exists to accommodate different types of ethnicity. According to Dr. Jeffrey, once a group is of a sufficient size to the extent that the constitution ignores, the problem of ethnic relations will arise. There was little point in blaming political leaders for the ethnic divide because their use of the race card assists them in winning their place to lead the country. Leaders have confidence in their ethnicities and spew political ethnic bias. Dr. Jeffrey strongly believes that in order to address ethnic relations in Guyana, power sharing is inevitable. He gave examples of countries such as Belgium, Canada, Sri Lanka and Malaysia that had similar issues and adopted power

sharing and managed to avoid political chaos. He felt that Guyanese leaders have not taken advantage of what is required.

In concluding, Dr. Jeffrey made the following recommendations on how ethnic relations can be improved in Guyana:

- There is the need to engage all stakeholders; that would make everyone feel as if equality exists.
- There is the need to implement measures to close ethnic gaps.
- The political tug-of-war must be quelled and replaced by political stability.
- There must be a context for the Ethnic Relations Commission to chart its course; as it stands now, the role of the ERC is questionable.

#### **4.3.2 Mr. Nicholas Boyer, Chair, Private Sector Commission**

In Mr. Boyer's opinion, ethnic division was being counteracted by several actions to foster and promote harmony between ethnic groups. He said that these actions were aimed at bringing Guyanese to accept themselves as *One People*, which he said is part of our National Motto. According to Mr. Boyer, despite these efforts for tranquility and peace, ethnic relations devil the social and economic landscape of Guyana. He called on members of the private sector to strive for a workplace free of discrimination. He also mentioned that there exist structural barriers to inclusion such as cultural diversity, and advised that the private sector work in partnerships to bring about social cohesiveness. Mr. Boyer felt that understanding and tolerance are critical to nation-building and saw the Ethnic Relations Commission as also playing a major role in bringing an end to racial discrimination.

In conclusion, Mr. Boyer mentioned that Guyana is signatory to several United Nations conventions to bring an end to racism, and as Chair of the Private Sector Commission, he urged all Guyanese to respect those conventions.

#### ***4.3.3 Mr. Ralph Ramkarran, Guyanese Politician and Lawyer***

Mr. Ramkarran opined that the topic of ethnic relations in Guyana is a core issue that Guyanese are required to deal with if they are to survive as one people. According to Mr. Ramkarran, Guyana's post-slavery period was characterized by immigration where various ethnicities came to Guyana. Ever since then, there has been tension between races, sometimes in the form of riots, for example the Angel Gabriel Riot of 1856 between the Africans and the Portuguese.

Mr. Ramkarran gave a brief political history of Guyana that spanned the 1950s to 1990s. According to Mr. Ramkarran, ever since the 1950s in the era of Universal Adult Suffrage, young politicians from the People's Progressive Party understood that it was necessary to embrace two major race groups in Guyana. Hence, the formation of a multi-ethnic party that fragmented in the early 1960s. The need to reunite was recognized and a dual partnership proposal between the People's Progressive Party and the People's National Congress was crafted. However, this resulted in greater dissention and disharmony until a total breakaway occurred between the two groups. The composition of the two major parties represented the Indian and African populations in Guyana. He stated that since then there were sporadic calls for coalition between the two main groups however, there is still an ethno-political struggle between the Indians and the Africans. Mr. Ramkarran stressed that given the political history of Guyana there must be a

political solution to the ethnic relations crisis; otherwise, ethnic disharmony will continue to strive.

He recalled that in 1991/1992, the People's Progressive Party was calling for a winner-does-not-take-all system (shared governance). He also reminisced that some People's National Congress stalwarts had put out a paper on shared governance, political unity and power sharing. Mr. Ramkarran felt that the time is now ripe to explore these positions because it is needed to resolve major aspects of ethnic disharmony in Guyana. He cited the example of the recent murders of three youths in Berbice to show how political issues can degenerate into ethnic violence.

#### **4.3.4 Open Discussions**

Q: What is the bargaining power of the Ethnic Relations Commission against this political system?

*A: it is the general belief that the ERC has no clout to bargain with political parties. The parties need to win votes and they will become radical with ethnicity if needs be; this happens the world over. The only solution is power sharing and not fighting for power. Political parties spew propaganda that promote ethnic division on a daily basis.*

Q: Do we really need to promote social cohesion or is it social inclusion that is really needed?

*A 1: The two main political parties sit and make determination of who gets what, when and how. They all look after the interest of their supporters. Social inclusion has to happen at the*

*governmental level. Ethnicity is not the real problem. The problem is that people are placed in a competitive framework, hence their behavior.*

*A 2: Since Guyana became independent in 1966, both parties had about equal time at the helm of the ship but did not change the situation. Economic imbalance and economic instability is also part of the problem. How do we create wealth for the population? There is a lot of poverty in the rural areas or a low amount of assets. The future seems to be entrepreneurship which should result in the creation of wealth across the population, access to capital, education and resources. There should be policies in place to take stock of how these things are put in place for entrepreneurs across location and ethnicity and there should be equal access. More reliable data is needed to determine these things that would lead to policies for greater wealth distribution. The income in Guyana is interesting. We need to look at the banks' lending policies that are sometimes punitive.*

*A 3: There is the perception that one group is dominating the other because significant state resources go to one group. However, even if the two races have equal wealth, the problem would still exist because they do not trust each other and always have to find ways to win. They have to find ways to demonstrate that the other side is wicked and evil. Therefore, any discussion on ethnic relations must be taken into the government circle. Both sides have resources and use it to berate each other.*

*A 4: Social cohesion should not be philosophical – there is need for social inclusion. With oil, the gap will increase because Africans and the Indigenous People do not have generational income. The distribution of wealth should be determined by both parties, which is another argument for power sharing with the minority.*



*A 5: I am firmly against socialist policies that are being touted by some speakers. A society with a large middle class should be multiethnic. How do we get there? The notion of shared governance is too wide. I do agree that there should be a system of government reform which shifts excess power from the executive and place it into the hands of another group of people. The house should be divided into two seats (higher and lower), with independent persons running for the lower seats and allow for the reduction of power for the executive (change governance). The younger generation is now becoming a mixed society. What the older people saw as problems, the younger people do not. Today, it is more a political than an ethnic relations problem. From a Chamber level, there is the trend of more multiethnic business people emerging; in a few years, their access to capital and resources should bring about a changed middle class.*

*A 6: Oil wealth will go to people with capital and generational wealth. There must be a system of power sharing so that the minority will be included and distribution of resources will spread. There should be a collective executive with a rotated Presidency. Guyana is still in the British traditional mode.*

#### **4.4 Commissioner Deodat Persaud, Ethnic Relations Commission**

Commissioner Deodat began his presentation by saying that unless Guyanese learn to live as One People as stated as part of our National Motto. In his message of peace, he declared that persons do not live in a vacuum but have to exist with persons of all ethnic backgrounds. He urged all to see each other as Guyanese brothers and sisters and to have love, tolerance and respect for each other. According to Commissioner Deodat, now is the perfect time to start the

dialogue and look for meaningful solutions. He saw the Symposium as affording two days to all to find solutions; he was also cognizant that the two days cannot generate all of the answers to solve a problem that existed for decades. He concluded by asking all Guyanese to do their part to build Guyana.

## **4.5 Panel 2**

### ***4.5.1 Ms. Olive Sampson, Chief Executive Officer, International Decade for People of African Descent Assembly – Guyana***

Ms. Sampson described the problem of ethnic relations as very complex. According to Ms. Sampson, for those who believe that there is a difference in attitude between the young and the old on the issue, they need to observe the activity on social media where even the young people hurl the same kinds of words as the older generation. Ms. Sampson concluded that the work of improving ethnic relations in Guyana has to cover all generations.

Ms. Sampson gave a brief history of her organization. She said that the organization was formed because of the challenges faced by people of African descent worldwide. These challenges did not arise because Africans created them, but were created by a system to maintain European supremacy. Africans were always positioned at the bottom of the social strata. Ms. Sampson said that Guyana's roots are firmly planted in the plantation economy which resulted in persons being stratified by wealth, power, ethnicity and class and divided by religion. This social structure continues to be supported by the Europeans. Guyanese joined forces in 1953 to gain independence but did they share a common understanding of their experience? According to Ms. Sampson, Forbes Burnham sought to undermine and dismantle the European structures

through some of his policies that were implemented, however the European structures still underpins our society and our thinking. According to Ms. Sampson, there is need to understand the thinking of ethnic division and marginalization so as to replace it with ideology that determines the removal of the plantation system.

Ms. Sampson said that the fact that the ERC has embarked on a national conversation is admirable and it is hoped that they would use the propositions to tackle the issue of ethnic relations in Guyana. Ms. Sampson offered the following suggestions for the improvement of race relations in Guyana:

- The ERC should endorse and support repatriation programs
- The ERC should be involved in the launching of an Afro-conflict resolution strategy
- The ERC should launch a national dialogue on ethnic relations in Guyana
- The ERC should collaborate with the Ministry of Education and the University of Guyana to develop public education programs

Ms. Sampson concluded her presentation by emphasizing that Guyanese must understand their history and respect it. Rewriting of our history should also be supported. She believes that ethnic relations can be nurtured if confronted truthfully and can result in improved decision-making at government level.

#### ***4.5.2 Ms. Jean LaRose, Director, Amerindian People's Association***

Ms. LaRose's main contention in her presentation is that the two main ethnicities continue to be the majority face in most things that happen in Guyana. She also contended that

politics create ethnic divide in indigenous communities because of the influence of the two major political parties. According to Ms. LaRose, indigenous people are seen as property and pitted against each other because of political affiliation. They are also affected by favouritism along party lines as some Toshias are ignored because they belong to a particular party. Political parties usually expect loyalty for infrastructural works conducted in indigenous communities as if it is a favour and not a fulfillment of the government's responsibility to the citizens of a country. Ms. LaRose used the recent national elections to illustrate this point. She firmly believes that the time has come to do away with the thinking that the indigenous people are the property of any political party.

Ms. LaRose also discussed the issue of protectionism, where Amerindians are placed in reserves because of the perception that they cannot govern themselves. She admitted that legislation is now being prepared to address this problem. She stated that even though history and education are important to the indigenous people, the textbooks of history have less information on the indigenous people than the other ethnic groups. She advised that there is a lot of information available that can be added to the curriculum to discuss the contributions of the indigenous people. The contributions cannot be measured the same way as other ethnic groups because they might not be economic, however they should be included in the general system.

Ms. LaRose examined the issue of institutional racism where legislations are in place that disregards the indigenous people. She felt that there was a need to address indigenous people politically, economically and culturally to safeguard the rights of this section of the population. In discussing the concept of *One People*, Ms. LaRose emphasized that within one people we have six peoples and we need to recognize and respect each of the groups in terms of policy-making. Speaking from a personal standpoint, Ms. LaRose said that an indigenous person is

very comfortable in their home environment, but when they are taken out of location it becomes a frustrating experience, especially for the elderly where English is not their first language. They are easily discarded and not dealt with because of cultural barriers and non-appreciation of indigenous people.

In conclusion, Ms. LaRose offered some suggestions for the improvement of ethnic relations in Guyana:

- There must be regular open conversations with due care taken not to create more tensions. These conversations must be done in a culturally sensitive way when addressing different groups, and the indigenous way of holding these conversations must be respected
- The education system must take ethnic relations issues into consideration
- Legislative and policy positions must be drafted with input from all stakeholders
- There must be respect for the land for indigenous people not only as a community but also as a way of life

#### **4.5.3 Comments**

As an example of how change can start from the grassroot level, one facilitator gave an example of a church in the South Ruimveldt community that encourages diversity by allowing its indigenous members to pray publicly in their own language, with or without translation.

#### **4.6 Commissioner Rajkumarie Singh, Ethnic Relations Commission**

According to Commissioner Singh, race relations are retrogressing at a rapid pace. There is a clause in the Constitution that deals with it but the legislation cannot work alone. The process of education can allow the much needed change. Commissioner Singh believes that the public media can play an extensive role by sharing messages of peace and love. She also suggested that the school curriculum be revised to teach ethnic relations issues. Commissioner Singh stated that improving ethnic relations in Guyana can be done individually and collectively because it is everybody's responsibility

#### **4.7 Open Discussions**

Q: Based on the conversations had thus far (yesterday and today), are we suggesting that quota based representation (by race/ethnicity) in political offices and on state boards will directly aid in improving race relations?

A: *People who sit in Assembly came from party lines. Ideally, it should be persons who understand culture, location and other issues and can capably represent the interest of their constituents.*

#### **4.8 Panel 3**

##### **4.8.1 Reverend Ronald McGarrell, Chair, Inter-Religious Organisation**

Reverend McGarrell's message had love for self and neighbor as its main theme. He said that 95% of Guyanese have a desire to live in peace because of their teachings on loving. He

urged all to love God and love their neighbours. By loving God, people would have an appreciation for each other. He felt that the time has come to have dialogue because the will of God lies in peace. A nation fragmented by race and politics is not what God wants. Guyana needs people who are determined to restore the nation now so that future generations can enjoy the fruits of their heart. Guyana also needs harmony. Persons were encouraged to open their hearts and allow God's love to flow like a river so that they will live a life of full love. Persons need to recognize who they truly are and what they want to become. There is also the need for introspection.

#### **4.8.2 *Sister Dolly Haimraj, Pandita***

Sister Haimraj, who spoke on behalf of the Guyana Arya Samaj, said that the organization is aware of the diversity – multiethnic, multiracial and multicultural – of the Guyanese people and that bringing such diverse people together is no easy task. However, the organization is optimistic that with love and harmony, it can be achieved. People are often carried away by race, class, power and wealth and forget to go beyond the physical. It is the belief of the organization that the teaching should start from home where children should be taught to love each other so that they can emulate this behavior. Everyone must be responsible. Sister Haimraj cautioned persons about being narrow-minded and unfriendly to each other. She posited that people with small minds divide the world into two and people with big hearts encompass all. People stand divided on religion, colour and creed, which is man-made and oppose the Vedas.

Sister Haimraj concluded by encouraging persons to walk together, talk together and acquire knowledge. She stated that ingrained hatred is the killer of love. Hatred reflects the lack of understanding, goodwill and the spirit of sacrifice. She is positive that Guyanese are equipped with the necessary knowledge to reverse the situation.

#### **4.9 Open Discussions**

Q: Would this discussion lead to a slate of recommendations to the National Assembly? Is the National Assembly required to take the recommendations seriously and formulate policy based on them?

*A: The intention is that some of the recommendations can be taken to the National Assembly.*

C: Quota-based policies can be fraught with dangers. We cannot sacrifice "best and brightest" to fill a quota. However, "targeted numbers" can be used to establish targets without violating meritocracy.

*A 1: The best and brightest issue is a myth... doesn't exist in any society...it's about privilege.....meritocracy is not a principle in Guyana..... we need to find solutions and not be caught up in the theory...and you know that...the idea of a superior race is embedded in this myth of best and brightest....look at Guyana... we have "so called" best and brightest in the List System of choosing our MPs?.....many believe some races are business persons... a myth that has exploded across the world... it's all about access to resources including capital.. QC has proved that....*



*A 2: Africans are not perceived to be entrepreneurs but the village movement proved otherwise. In terms of “best and brightest”, QC has proven that it is those with access to resources and generational wealth who enjoy the best.*

Q: I hear many nice friendly statements from ERC Commissioners. Can someone explain what is the role and mandate of the ERC?

*A: Information on the role and mandate can be found on the ERC's website which is very active.*

#### **4.10 Commissioner Ruth Howard, Ethnic Relations Commission**

Commissioner Howard, who represents the Women's Constituency on the Ethnic Relations Commission, stated that the issue of ethnic relations has affected Guyanese for decades. She opined that women, who are caregivers, can aid in improving ethnic relations in areas such as education; showing zero tolerance against racism, redefining friendships and holding leaders accountable; and by stepping out of their comfort zone and engaging with people with varying backgrounds. She urged all women to stop the inaction so that they will not be seen as condoning current action.

#### **4.11 Panel 4**

##### ***4.11.1 Dr. Baytoram Ramharack, Political Scientist***

Dr. Ramharack opened his presentation reflecting on Mr. Nigel Hughes's presentation on Day 1 of the National Conversation. Dr. Ramharack said that he is totally in agreement that

solving ethnic conflict by data-driven information was more useful than solving them by emotions. He believes that the conflict between being Guyanese and being Afro or Indo-Guyanese was a mistake. He considered being Guyanese as a nationality or a member of a state, but being Afro or Indo-Guyanese as historical and having the cultural values of people. He strongly believes that the two concepts should be separated. Instead, they are often used as two connected issues to create a narrative of progressing Guyana to a state of cohesion and harmony.

Dr. Ramharack made mention of a former Liberian President who spoke about the positive connotations of ethnicity and race. Dr. Ramharack believes that in the local scenario, ethnicity and race can be used to enrich Guyana. Guyana, however, is caught up in an “Ethnic Security Dilemma” where the party in office does not reflect support for all Guyanese. He believes that the situation requires normative and structural reforms beyond constitutional engineering.

Dr. Ramharack shared population statistics for the period 1980 – 2012, which he said should allay fears that one group can be totally in control after elections. The statistics showed that while the Afro-Guyanese population remained stable throughout that period with a 6% growth, the Amerindian population grew by a remarkable 94%. Dr. Ramharack stated that, based on the statistics, the Amerindians and mixed group population is growing at an exponential rate and it was obvious that no single dominant group can win the elections without support from other groups. He concluded by saying that the argument about one dominant group winning the election because of its population alone is a myth and should be done away with.

Dr. Ramharack gave some prerequisites for the improvement of ethnic relations in Guyana which include:

- A Trust and Reconciliation Commission - which is necessary for consensus to have healing
- A unifying narrative
- Third party intervention in the form of civil society and other organisations
- A national dialogue which should include political leaders.

According to Dr. Ramharack, the social media is a good platform but it can also be a dangerous place. He also felt that the Amerindians must be a full partner in the national dialogue and that the ethnic security dilemma of the two major groups must be addressed. He encouraged all parties to denounce violence as a political tool and observed that even though efforts are currently underway to look at constitutional reform, the constitution is as good as the men governed by it. There must be conditions that allow for more inclusive democracy. These conditions should take the following into consideration:

- No single dominant group
- External threats e.g. Venezuela
- Multiple population segments
- Small population
- Geographical concentration of population – some power should be transferred to local government

Dr. Ramharack's proposals for improving ethnic relations in Guyana included the following:

- Ethnic impact statements to evaluate disparities of proposed legislation – he believes that this is crucial and much-needed. There must be institutions to reflect the population, for example, balance in the civil service

- Federalized republic – where there is devolution of power and local communities have more power
- Affirmative action programs to help economically and socially depressed communities
- A reshaping of the education curriculum

Dr. Ramharack concluded his presentation by stating that all communities must play a role and should also support unity and diversity to allow all groups to flourish. They must also respect each other.

#### ***4.11.2 Mr. Vincent Alexander, GEOCOM Commissioner***

Mr. Alexander's presentation was premised on the disposition that this was the first in a series of conversations and that the Ethnic Relations Commission would have more public conversations on various aspects of the problems with the intention of finding solutions. According to Mr. Alexander, the fact that the ERC is even holding the conversation has proven two things: (a) that Guyana is an ethnically divided community and (b) ethnic relations is an issue in Guyana.

Mr. Alexander stated that the ERC was established in 2002 because it was felt that there was a need for an institutional mechanism to promote harmony and security in Guyana. He also referred to legislations that speak to the mandate of the ERC. He believes because of recent events, the ERC has found it necessary at this juncture to address the issue of ethnic relations in Guyana.

Mr. Alexander's presentation sought to address the symptoms of ethnic disharmony in Guyana, the causing factors and to make recommendations or offer solutions to the problem. Mr. Alexander said that it was time to go beyond talks of the situation being created by power hungry politicians and persons in power and deal with the root cause of ethnic disharmony in Guyana. Some of the symptoms highlighted were:

- The daily comments in the media which is a sign that ethnic disharmony and hatred exists among the population
- Open chastisement, condemnation and isolation of kin who are involved with persons of other ethnic groups
- Censorship and sanctions to parties other than kinship party
- Preferential treatment based on complexion

These symptoms, among others, are ingrained and are indicative of ethnic problems in our society.

In addressing the causing factors, Mr. Alexander briefly outlined the socio-political history of Guyana from which it is believed that the seeds of racial disharmony was sown. He spoke of Guyana being populated by seven people which sets the stage for conflict of diverse cultures. He also looked at the issue of competition among the various groups which gave rise to ethnic conflict. He summed up by saying that it must be recognized and accepted that ethnic disharmony in Guyana has deep roots in the country's history.

He recommended both macro and micro activities that he felt were needed to create a harmonious society. The macro activity included national conversations among all stakeholders and the micro activities that were necessary to complement the macro activities

included (a) the establishment of a model education system to protect the entire society from a value-based, institutional and structural perspective which would improve the teaching of passionate history; the establishment of an electoral system that would support harmonious ethnic relations; and the establishment of mechanisms to evaluate and remodel the enterprise of ethnic relations. Mr. Alexander concluded by saying that core values that foster diversity must exist at the national level.

#### **4.12 Open Discussions**

C: According to Dr. Ramharack, the mixed race population has grown. Is mixed race a culture or religion? Mixed race is a social construct. It must be acknowledged that two races dominate both parties and the winner-take-all system does not change anything. Federalism crystallises racialism. Including economic resources to all areas does not solve a problem which is political, social and economic.

C: The fact that we have to discuss the problem is an indication that our country is divided. Even if we have fallen votes that propel parties into victory, there is still an ethnic divide that must be addressed. There must be mechanisms in place to get to that point. The arguments against federalism are numerous. However, devolution would allow local communities to determine their resource needs and empower them to make their demands. Too much power is centered around the government.

C: I cannot believe that we are having a discussion on federalism, I am sorry I missed that presentation so I may be misconstruing this discussion ... wonder where they would put folks

like me who really is not in any particular group due to heritage and identifies as nothing other than Guyanese.

C: The makeup of the police force is based on who applies – cultural circumstances are important.

C: Several speakers refer to Ethnic balance in the disciplined forces and need to create Balance. Having been on a Recruitment Board that traversed main regions to achieve diversity in a specific 'disciplined' organization, the following immediate responses were often expressed on:

- 1) The requirement for Interviewees to state willingness to be transferred for lengthy periods to outlying areas, without their families;
- 2) Paltry salaries, notwithstanding the nature of having to face life threatening circumstances;
- 3) Generally poor conditions in places of employment;
- 4) Cultural norms & demands for socializing among the team;
- 5) Sub cultures of high percentage of family members in the organisations;
- 6) Apparently subliminal 'demands' to comply with unacceptable organizational 'norms'
- 7) Organizational pressure to 'comply' then complain, even when the Command may be 'Unlawful'

C: The army and police make up is dependent on who is applying... check who are applying and this extends to GECOM too... We cannot talk about more inclusion if certain groups in Guyana tend not to apply for these jobs. When I attend UG... there were some folks that didn't send their kids to UG due to having to do National Service. We need to look at all the circumstances including cultural circumstances when we are discussion changing certain situations.

C: There is an imbalance in the armed forces, police and the public sector because the way in which the services are made up has historical antecedents. It goes beyond composition and is also an economic question. Populating them in a certain way would create a crisis for people who would have been in these services. There must be equal opportunity to livelihood and no form of dispossession. The solution would be to have more people in their communities involved in the security of the community and this must be based on established procedures. There are no antecedents to federalism.

Q: What chance would we have of getting to an acceptable FACTUAL VERSION of our history?

C: Ethnic division starts in the home. Persons have tendency to tell their children that if they marry someone from a certain race that they disown them.

C: Over the past two days there has been no real attempt to define improved race relations. If you draw a connection between this conversation and what happened earlier in the year, one might say that improved race relations mean racial peace. Some persons see peace as an end. That conflict must be settled. Now is not the time to say that ending racialism means racial peace. We have to capture the mechanisms of power in favour of an ethnic group. This conversation is about telling other groups to act peacefully. The exercise, while useful, should contextualize where we are historically and ask what we need at this juncture. Do we need racial peace? There is the absence of racial peace when institutions of decision making are in the hands of one racial group. The basis for real improvement is sharing of institutional power.



## **5.0 APPRECIATION, CLOSING REMARKS AND NEXT STEPS**

This final segment was facilitated by Ms. Nadine Luthers-Williams, Programme Officer, Ethnic Relations Commission. Ms. Luthers expressed appreciation to all of the persons who made the two-day activity a success. The list included the facilitators of the two-day conversation; the Chairman, Commissioners and Chief Executive Officer of the Ethnic Relations Commission; the Project Coordinator and team of the Ethnic Relations Commission; the Technical Team; Rapporteurs; performers for the cultural segment; and the viewing audience who made valuable contributions.

According to Ms. Luthers-Williams, the ERC commenced this public discourse to address a very sensitive topic in our society. It is the first in a series of conversations that will continue into the New Year. The Commission is looking forward to active involvement and participation in addressing the prevailing issues that confront us as a people.

Ms. Luthers-Williams concluded with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi that says “*Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and test of our civilization*”. As a parting shot, Ms. Luthers- Williams sent out a personal appeal to all Guyanese for healing with these words: “*Let’s heal My Guyana, Your Guyana, Our Guyana!*”

## Appendix I – Day 1 Chat Files

9:16:18 From Shaquille Bourne to Everyone : Audio is low

09:16:47 From Kimbely Yearwood to Everyone : I am unable to hear anything.

10:00:39 From Catherine Hughes to Everyone : Why are we seeing the same thing over and over again!!!!

10:01:20 From Annerre Ferguson to Everyone : probably they are encountering tech... problems

10:25:25 From Jennifer Persaud to Everyone : Technical audio. We are currently working to fix it.

10:26:00 From Kala Seegopaul to Everyone : Apologies for then technical difficulties

10:30:03 From Vincent Persaud to Everyone : Question for Mr. Nascimento. How will persons at the bottom become aware of their responsibility to initiate change to address the racial polarization? What voice do they, persons at the bottom, have to impact this massive issue?

10:46:57 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : I do hope that all of the speakers will not be addressing this issue from a purely political standpoint, focusing on who is and is not holding office, because that can easily be addressed by looking at those who are actively involved in politics. I would like to posit that the racial and ethnic issues we face go beyond politics. Politicians just use it to their advantage

10:51:27 From eric phillips to Everyone : agreed Clayton...justice, equal access etc,

10:51:51 From Vincent Persaud to Everyone : The conversation is beginning to seem like a campaign platform. Mr. Nascimento made the valid point, in my opinion and which should be

well-known, that the racist issue originated and is sustained by party politics. Shouldn't a conversation be addressing solutions?

10:54:43 From Shirley Melville to Everyone : One of issues that needs to be addressed is a clear understanding between race and ethnicity. Firstly we are Guyanese with a rich cultural diversity. It makes me uncomfortable when asked what race are you? instead of what is your nationality?

10:58:55 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : @Vincent Persaud... "racist issue originated and is sustained by party politics" Originated NO.....Sustained, Nurtured, Used as a political Weapon YES

11:01:04 From Vincent Persaud to Everyone : why originated = no?

11:07:18 From Elsie Harry to ERC Guyana(Direct Message) : If the host "pins" the current speaker then that person will show up on all of our screens automatically. It will remove the need for everyone to do that themselves

11:07:34 From Elsie Harry to ERC Guyana(Direct Message) : you can also use the spotlight feature to do the same thing

11:11:40 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : \*enslaved, not slaves....

11:11:46 From eric phillips to Everyone : What is culture.....we are using an incomplete definition of culture.....if we use a broader and truer definition of culture then the issue of power and economics are left out....."When we speak of the culture of a place, we are talking about far more than its artistic expressions or its 'cultural products' – literature, music, dance, art,

sculpture, theatre, film and sport. All of these, of course, are important expressions of the culture of any social group and are part of its shared joy in the business of being alive. We return to these topics later. But culture is more than all of that. Culture is also about the relationships between ideas and perspectives, about self-respect and a sense of security, about how individuals are socialised, and values are formed and transmitted. It is also deeply intertwined with structures of power and wealth. What it is not – contrary to the views of some – is an expression of unchanging tradition. The evidence argues against those who assign hopelessness to countries that .

11:29:54 From Vincent Alexander to Everyone : our conversation has to be informed by our factual history. we therefore have to agree to what is our factual history. I make this since even in this forum positions have been articulated on false historical premises. I contend that while it is true that Indians were subjected to hostility and the burning of their homes in Wishart, there was no massacre. such narratives worsen our ethnic relations

11:36:02 From Vincent Alexander to Everyone : the matter of formation of the PPP in 1950 accepted the organic fragmentation of the society. It is therefore wrong to contend that that problem started with the split of the PPP when in fact there was a latent problem that has from time to time been manifest. our politics has been the most obvious moment of such manifestation although the ailment is ever present and problem even more destructive while latently festering.

11:36:25 From HY to Everyone : Dear speakers, I think it may be worthwhile to have a mutual agreement or disagreement of what the definitions of race, ethnicity, and culture. To have a fundamental conversation on these constrained subjects may be akin to identifying building blocks, and may then pave the way for greater, structured discourse on the wider topic of Guyana's future.

11:36:26 From Vincent Persaud to Everyone : what hostility were Indians subjected to in Wismar?

11:36:47 From Sherod Duncan to Everyone : Are the presentations being made available via text?

11:39:02 From Vincent Alexander to Everyone : there was certainly no massacre, there was arsony in response to murders that had occurred in other communities.

11:40:58 From Vincent Alexander to Everyone : race and ethnicity are used interchangeably but Ravi explained what is generally met in our conversatipn.

11:42:44 From HY to Everyone : Question for Mr. Ravi Dev: I quite liked how Mr. Ravi Dev has made the distinction that ethnicity has to do with the question of origin whilst culture is mutable.

11:43:02 From HY to Everyone : (Please ignore incomplete question above)

11:43:46 From HY to Everyone : Question for Mr. Ravi Dev: I quite liked how Mr. Ravi Dev has made the distinction that ethnicity has to do with the question of 'origin' whilst culture is mutable. My question is: what do you think are the factors that directly contribute to the mutability of Guyana's culture?

11:44:28 From Vincent Persaud to Everyone : so the hostility in Wismar are probably a couple of arsons, a couple of murders, some beatings, all of which can be casually dismissed?

11:49:58 From Vincent Persaud to Everyone : I was speaking but you were not hearing me. I'm not muted.

11:50:42 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : Can the panelists suggest 2 ways in which we can improve race relations in Guyana.

11:51:43 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : The Debacle of Racial Conflict, demands possible implementation of the following: Holistic efforts to ensure ALL have access to Justice

11:52:37 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : Truth & Reconciliation fora in EVERY region

11:53:58 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : Teaching of the Constitution from Primary level, throughout, with emphasis on rights

11:56:59 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : Finally, Compulsory, multi-level strategies to edify , through the EDUCATION system, the VALUE & Contributions of each Ethnic Groups

12:15:01 From Denis Chabrol to Everyone : conduct national hearings in all communities as well as scientific surveys to hear problems and solutions directly from the masses.

12:15:14 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Has there been any kind of action research done by the UG/other contextualized for GY resulting in a multi-disciplinary model of engagement / to mitigate racial discrimination?

12:28:56 From Vincent Persaud to Everyone : To follow up on Mr. Nascimento's response. I see low wage working class segment of the population as the bottom, not local sports and cultural celebrities and religious leaders. My understanding is that leaders, be they political, religious, business, social, are responsible for defining culture. So the bottom will have little or no impact because they have no voice and no visibility. The problem is, the leaders responsible

for initiating change have so far neglected their responsibility because this specific change to mitigate racial animosity does not support their agenda - acquiring and retaining power - which requires pandering to, and even stoking, their specific base. This is not unique to any specific party in Guyana and definitely not unique to Guyana.

12:30:06 From Vincent Persaud to Everyone : Culture, which incorporates discrimination starts at the top

12:34:12 From Vincent Alexander to Everyone : Mr Hughes really is speaking to democracy as electoral democracy. Real democracy extends to responsive and responsible political behavior as equally important elements of the equation. If those aspects of democracy are embraced then there will be a framework for the resolution of our problem.

12:37:57 From Shane Tull to Everyone : what are the mental health implications on our society as it relates to the current racial climate.

12:39:16 From LENOX SHUMAN to Everyone : I had previously advanced the idea of a TRC. It is something that I do believe needs to operate in Guyana as it did in South Africa and we have to be willing to compromise for a state of equilibrium in the country

12:41:43 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Nigel's argument for data-driven responses is critical. ERC's long term plan should include this.

12:42:32 From Vincent Alexander to Everyone : Mr. Persaud I was not being dismissive but I am say that untruths impact people's behavior hence we must commit to truth as the basis for mutual respect rather than race bating.

12:43:50 From Salaudeen Nusrudeen to Everyone : There seems to be a confusion, as always, by the speakers confusing ethnicity and citizenship. The nation is not a race, but the collection of all the races in an organized, accommodating and equitable manner. Its not that we are divided, as a nation, but we have been unable to build a nation that reflects and aligns our diversity - so nationhood as defined by our motto is useless and unaspiring.

[11:07 AM, 12/14/2020] Salaudeen Nusrudeen: ...and maybe dangerous

[11:07 AM, 12/14/2020] Salaudeen Nusrudeen: eric is talking nonsense

[11:08 AM, 12/14/2020] Salaudeen Nusrudeen: the conversation so far on this matter is weak and shows our shallowness and thus our state of affairs

[11:11 AM, 12/14/2020] Salaudeen Nusrudeen: ERC- is totally mis-aligned. they dont understand the issue; if our institutions are getting it wrong, time to jump ship from the sinking ship

12:44:30 From Sharon Lalljee-Richard to Everyone : Indeed, Mr Hughes has made some sound suggestions which can create a solid foundation upon which we can formulate a constructive framework toward solving our ethnic issues. Trusting the ERC and others can be instrumental in seeing these through. We should start there.

12:45:30 From Vincent Alexander to Everyone : The Indians who came here in search of economic well being did not become less Indian .

12:45:36 From Salaudeen Nusrudeen to Everyone : From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone:  
11:41 AM

Nigel's argument for data-driven responses is critical. ERC's long term plan should include this.

From Vincent Alexander to Everyone: 11:42 AM

Mr. Persaud I was not being dismissive but I am say that untruths impact people's behavior hence



we must commit to truth as the basis for mutual respect rather than race bating.

From Me to Everyone: 11:43 AM

There seems to be a confusion, as always, by the speakers confusing ethnicity and citizenship. The nation is not a race, but the collection of all the races in an organized, accommodating and equitable manner. Its not that we are divided, as a nation, but we have been unable to build a nation that reflects and aligns our diversity - so nationhood as defined by our motto is useless and unaspiring.

12:46:03 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : Mr. Shuman, I believe that also. However, there MUST be a multi level, integrated approach to link the findings, with concomitant systems to acknowledge the VALUE& RESPECT for inputs of those who made priceless contributions to the nation, that are not quantified in terms of value to GDP earnings.

12:46:21 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Vincent, how do we do truth-telling in a context where we are so extremely distrustful of each other and do not have the facts upon which to take informed action, Nigel's idea is so important to decision making, planning etc.. to treat with the problem. Do you think so? Thanks much for your contribution.

12:46:37 From Baytoram Ramharack to Everyone : Just a comment... We are confusing a legal term "Guyanese" with a definition that relates to ethnicity (Indian Guyanese, African Guyanese, etc). A person can be Guyanese, and at the same time be African, Indian, etc...

12:46:54 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Mr. Shuman, I need to know more about TRC. Thanks.

12:47:11 From Vincent Alexander to Everyone : Guyanese who migrate are not necessary less Guyanese in fact many of them demonstrate a love for Guyana even as they reside oversea

12:47:28 From Vincent Alexander to Everyone : overseas

12:47:31 From Salaudeen Nausrudeen to Everyone : There seems to be a confusion, as always, by the speakers confusing ethnicity and citizenship. The nation is not a race, but the collection of all the races in an organized, accommodating and equitable manner. Its not that we are divided, as a nation, but we have been unable to build a nation that reflects and aligns our diversity - so nationhood as defined by our motto is useless and unaspiring. I agree with Nigel we need DATA to guide our policies!

12:47:48 From Baytoram Ramharack to Everyone : I missed the earlier presentations...nice job Nigel.

12:48:20 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : Thank You Mr. Hughes

12:48:30 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : and Mr. Phillips

12:49:38 From Baytoram Ramharack to Everyone : I share the concern for lack of data...not just on ethnicity but in every other areas.

12:52:01 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Good job, Shane! Being committed to the process of healing needs that kind of unmasking and willingness to be honest

12:55:09 From Deeann Ali to Everyone : It is so sad to see race talks allowed in society with impunity. I also support the call for data driven decisions and policies.

12:58:02 From Deeann Ali to Everyone : There has also been an absence of documented recent history of Guyana. Would like to see the University of Guyana embark on a project to document our history.

12:58:05 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Makes sense, Nigel. Policy. Then we need ethical leadership to enforce.

12:58:28 From Baytoram Ramharack to Everyone : Data driven policy and Ethnic Impact Statement to assess who benefits from such policies are crucial for addressing equity in a future Guyana.

12:58:32 From Sharon Lalljee-Richard to Everyone : Can the economic disparity be linked to a deeper issue such a education, etc. rather than an ethnic one?

12:58:47 From Vincent Alexander to Everyone : Hughes is not suggesting state ownership. He is suggesting state policy. The response a

12:59:15 From Vincent Alexander to Everyone : about Marx is therefore irrelevant

13:01:36 From eric phillips to Everyone : Winner take all...gold, oil, forestry, shore bases, hotels, loans, fisheries, ...all state assets..so the generational wealth gap exist and will continue to become larger.....

13:01:54 From Shirley Melville to Everyone : Very good presentation Mr Hughes.

13:03:29 From eric phillips to Everyone : Policies based on historical and current data are needed...especially with foreigners entering this market...all Guyanese will lose.....including those currently privledged

13:05:01 From Vincent Persaud to Everyone : audio from the moderators is very low, fading intermittently

13:05:35 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Suggestion to ERC - continue to have structured conversations with thought-leaders in a separate room with the view to synthesizing a long-term

plan. Connecting with NGOs / individuals etc. is important. Listening interviews cross-country will help ERC to gather data.

13:05:42 From Sharon Lalljee-Richard to Everyone : As long as citizens regardless of race continue to lack a sound financial understanding which is linked to education, no amount of policy can solve the economic disparities.

13:07:02 From Baytoram Ramharack to Everyone : When it comes to wealth, all Guyanese ought to be more concerned about the wealth that is going to be owned and controlled by the transnational corporations that are associated with the oil and gas economy.

13:07:57 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Good job - moderator. 3 important words - accuracy, identity and democracy!

13:09:52 From Deeann Ali to Everyone : The summary of what constitutes the Guyanese identity is on point.

13:10:18 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Please make presentations available for us to think through..

## Appendix II – National Youth Conversation Chat Files

17:18:32 From ERC Guyana to Everyone : Hey Derwayne

17:18:42 From ERC Guyana to Everyone : do you have a powerpoint presentation

17:19:04 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : Sadly, no. I don't.

17:19:11 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : Is this Jenny?

17:19:12 From ERC Guyana to Everyone : Great no worries

17:19:19 From ERC Guyana to Everyone : Nope the tech team

17:19:24 From ERC Guyana to Everyone : Jenny just came in

17:19:35 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : lol, ok. Hello "the tech team"

18:15:47 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : I was looking forward to hearing from you younger folks. All the best and may we all be open listening keenly and try to do so in an unbiased way. Blessings

18:19:29 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : Thanks Raquel

18:29:22 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Excellent presentation Elsie

18:29:28 From Dameyon Wills to Everyone : Preach! Totally Agreed Ms Harry!

18:29:53 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : welcome

18:30:05 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : Thanks for kicking off the discussions Elsie

18:30:42 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : Lots of food for thought. Excelente!

18:31:43 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : such little time! :(

18:31:59 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : Big up Aishalton, Deep South Rupununi!

18:32:14 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : I would like to see exchange conversations between 1. Youth and older folks- over 50s, 60s 2. Youth and Parliamentarians. I believe the older folks owe youth many answers but also need to listen to how our actions have impacted what is taking place in Guyana today.

18:33:03 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Beautiful Aishalton...

18:35:59 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Dr Desrey Caesar-Fox, my dear friend that died 11 years ago spoke to racism she faced as an Indigenous person in Guyana. There was in those days the Coastlander/Hinterland discrimination and while things have improved perhaps, would love to ask Kyle how does he feels about this. Has it improved? or it is mostly cosmetic?

18:36:51 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : @Raquel: the International Republican Institute is working currently to have the dialogues on race and ethnic relations between a) youth and parliamentarians/developmental partners/diplomats and b) youth and the elders. It is unfortunate this is not being initiated by a local CSO...

18:37:49 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Thank you Quacy. Not so familiar with this organization but I guess it is international? Anyway we will have to start somewhere.

18:38:19 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : Yes!

18:38:26 From Saeed Hamid to Everyone : Excellent point, Kyle!

18:38:27 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : On point Kyle- man in the street discussion.

18:38:46 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : but they already have such an ambitious mandate. I think the gap is in carrying out that mandate

18:40:10 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : Or outright call for their own supporters to desist!

18:41:27 From Saeed Hamid to Everyone : Race relations engagements require strategic grass-roots level communications & open dialogue on how discriminatory practices, policies & actions affect various factions & an open space to discuss why we need to and how we can challenge indoctrinated internalised racist rhetoric.

18:43:06 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : agreed respect, not tolerance is key.

18:43:09 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Excellent points Kyle

18:43:27 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : presentation very well received Kyle

18:44:07 From Saeed Hamid to Everyone : Kyle - The Amerindian Act is laced with several avenues whereby the subject Minister maintains dominion over Indigenous peoples, e.g. through vetoing a VC regusal for large scale mining or overturning certain VC decisions. What are your thoughts on legislative amendments & are you familiar with any work in this regard?

18:44:15 From Saeed Hamid to Everyone : refusal\*

18:46:55 From Saeed Hamid to Everyone : Thank you for responding, Kyle.

18:47:25 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : to be presented to national assembly- see that's what I was talking baout

18:47:36 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : about\*

18:47:39 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : dead in the water..

18:57:54 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Hi- I am curious how you see how ethnicity in police force and recruitment. We cannot separate cultural aspects and who are the predominant groups that apply for certain jobs ...also GECOM, GDF etc I suspect that is a huge factor, so when have data collection we have to consider this factor.

19:00:54 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : How do we address the racial/ethnic stigma and stereotypes that DO exist? (we do not need data collection that prove that they exist or we do?)

19:03:47 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Quacy- we do need studies that are properly conducted with analysed results to confirm, but we also have to include the grass roots approaches to dealing with these issues. Ethnic relations is just so complex... it is not a one size fit all approach in my view.... healing requires so many elements including truth and reconciliation process in my view. We also need to study how other countries have dealt with the issues of ethnic insecurities

19:06:49 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Thanks Kian for your presentation..

19:11:18 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : @Raquel: I think that there should be a balance between qualitative and quantitative measures while conducting these analytical studies (I think there should be a push more for qualitative dataset with a view for behavioral change. Does the application of punitive measures on reaches

19:13:33 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : Another question: Does the application of punitive measures by the ERC re breaches constitutes to the healing of Guyana?

19:17:03 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : once we hear that feedback we know what's coming



19:18:10 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : Their mandate already includes data collection so definitely not adding

19:18:31 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : but when that data is collected if it has to go to national assembly to be acted on then i'm not sure what we're doing exactly

19:18:50 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : Because we have noted that several politicians have no interest in correcting this situation..

19:19:12 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : yes- that is a good term 'Ethnic Impact Assessments'

19:19:39 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : Question for Mr. Jasbur, You spoke about balancing the ethnicity of police force so that there is more confidence (i agree with Ms. Thomas comment..."We cannot separate cultural aspects and who are the predominant groups that apply for certain jobs")

However it can be argued that the police force tend to negatively impact black communities more than others. How do you respond to that and what can we do to change that?

19:20:09 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : Sorry Mr. Kian

19:21:12 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Indeed Derwaye as I see myself as a particular group but as Guyanese due to my Heritage... but so often feel like I am sitting on the fence, looking on helplessly-

19:21:29 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : no particular group I mean

19:23:43 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : Quacy the data isn't to prove that ethnic stigma exists but to identify where it exists and how it affects various persons....it's because we know it exists why the research becomes necessary

19:24:25 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : Was this proposes solution by ANUG driven by data?

19:24:29 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : I really think we need to focus on what data is needed and align our approach. Many studies have been done at UG, via other organisations etc. We need a review for sure.... look at gaps then develop a strategy of what research is needed. Works by late Andaiye (her new book) should recommended reading

19:24:33 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : \*proposed

19:24:58 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Thanks Derwayne for your presentation

19:26:43 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : Hi Vishani! Happy to share with you!

19:26:55 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : Thanks Derwayne. I love the dissecting of the problem into the 4 I's

19:27:23 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : Community dialogue....noice!

19:30:42 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : On point: Gender Inequality

19:32:57 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Community Dialogue a must... indeed.

19:34:49 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : We are essentially talking with ourselves, over and over

19:35:41 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : We need to talk with others for sure

19:36:02 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Honest and powerful...thank you Vishani

19:37:45 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : thanks again Elsie, Vishanie, Kyle and Kian...  
yall were really great eh! And thanks also to the folks here on the zoom

19:38:05 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : thanks all

19:38:19 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : Mannn! We all should've gotten more time!

19:38:21 From hy to Everyone : Question for all speakers: Do you think there is an unaddressed emotional component to the ethnic question, or can this issue be solely resolved in a pragmatic and logical approach?

19:38:54 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : "Hi"

19:39:03 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : Question for Mr. Kian, You spoke about balancing the ethnicity of police force so that there is more confidence (i agree with Ms. Thomas comment..."We cannot separate cultural aspects and who are the predominant groups that apply for certain jobs")

However it can be argued that the police force tend to negatively impact black communities more than others. How do you respond to that and what can we do to change that?

19:39:20 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Do you think Guyana needs a Truth and Reconciliation process in Guyana?

19:40:10 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Has any studied any other country models on reconciliation or how to solve ethnic inequality- eg Malaysia, South Africa, Rwanda

19:40:38 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Has anyone studied I mean...sorry typing too fast.

19:41:52 From Saeed Hamid to Everyone : What is the best way to deconstruct internalised racist norms that have been instilled through families & friends? Everyone says "education" as a bandaid for that problem - but my personal opinion is its much more multifaceted and strategic than that. Id appreciate feedback

19:42:10 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : How do we tackle the issue of classism/colourism within a culture that may lead to racism?

19:47:39 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Maybe Intra Race discrimination he means... due to skin colour

19:47:41 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : and class

19:47:54 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : no

19:47:59 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : its ok

19:49:55 From Aggrey Marsh to Everyone : What if talking does not work ?

19:51:38 From hy to Everyone : @aggrey, I don't think talking only once would do the trick. For anyone to experience such an epiphanic change would take time.

19:54:54 From Aggrey Marsh to Everyone : How do we deal with racist business owners who sow division publicly ?

19:55:07 From Saeed Hamid to Everyone : Not sure if this was covered already, but what would each panellist recommend for the ERC to consider adopting/implementing to allow it to more effectively achieve its constitutional mandate?

19:55:51 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : Abbbbsolutely @Elsie!

19:56:17 From Aggrey Marsh to Everyone : True elsie !!

19:56:51 From Quacy Grant to Everyone : Love this...we should have more conversations in our inner/close circles

19:57:23 From hy to Everyone : I also look forward to more talks among younger folks

20:00:06 From Aggrey Marsh to Everyone : How do we deal with racist business owners who sow division publicly ?

20:00:15 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Totally agree

20:00:37 From Aggrey Marsh to Everyone : yessssssssssss

20:00:55 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Absolutely Elsie...

20:03:15 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : There must be a process that is facilitated and rules of engagement...

20:03:35 From Aggrey Marsh to Everyone : lol

20:06:15 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : We have to remove the fear... if south Africa, Rwanda can do it... Guyana can... don't you think?

20:07:11 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : I don't think we have been in situation like Rwanda and South Africa... if Rwanda happened in Guyana... we would all be no more... over 1 million folks

20:08:19 From Tabitha Sarabo-Halley to Everyone : honest dialogue must be two fold. Internal truths have to be determined. Conversations within groups. Then conversation between groups. What must be noted is that one of the major issues is that everyone as and every group

has their own perception of reality. And who are we to say that their perception is right or wrong.  
A level of maturity would be needed to hear each others truths recognizing that it may not all be  
accepted

20:08:36 From Tabitha Sarabo-Halley to Everyone : but then based on those truths determine a  
way forward

20:08:49 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : Precisely! We all speak from vantage points

20:08:54 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Indeed.

20:08:58 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : But this is where the commission has a role in  
corroborating

20:09:02 From Saeed Hamid to Everyone : Excellent round of discussion from all.

20:09:08 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : but at the same time dangerous because it could  
invisibilise some truts

20:09:10 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : \*truths

20:09:38 From hy to Everyone : @tabitha, I think if we are given more opportunities for  
conversations like these, we can be co-accountable friends to our own perceptions of reality.

20:09:39 From ERC STAFF to Everyone : audio issues

20:09:42 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : are rather confessions still waiting to be  
validated into truths... in the sense of foucault

20:09:45 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : \*or

20:09:46 From ERC STAFF to Everyone : please understand

20:09:50 From ERC STAFF to Everyone : we are fixing it

20:09:53 From Aggrey Marsh to Everyone : ok

20:10:02 From Aggrey Marsh to Everyone : We understand

20:10:33 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : I feel we are too fearful to speak about race issues in Guyana and as a mixed Guyanese that don't fall into any category period... it is very frustrating ... I honestly cannot say I have ever experienced racism or discrimination so - but I feel a lot of empathy for groups that do... we need a space too...

20:11:04 From ERC STAFF to Everyone : yes you can

20:11:09 From Clayton Halley to Everyone : Check microphone battery

20:11:12 From ERC STAFF to Everyone : go ahead Dr Thomas

20:12:46 From ERC STAFF to Everyone : we will be joining you again shortly.

20:19:12 From Saeed Hamid to Everyone : I think mixed persons should be able to identify with the ethnicity make-up they represent as well, whether they are able to successfully do so is another thing but 'identification' is the key term. You must be able to respectfully & appropriately identify, noting the distinction between race & ethnicity.

20:20:25 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Yes Saeed... but I find hard to identify as anything other than Guyanese in Guyana as I have four groups..... but yes understand that everyone have a choice to indentify as they feel...

20:20:32 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : identify

20:22:45 From Aggrey Marsh to Everyone : Fair and thank you

20:23:41 From Jasper adams to Everyone : Not hearing you

20:25:18 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : thank you

20:25:21 From Elsie Harry to Everyone : thank you, bye everyone

20:25:49 From Derwayne Wills to Everyone : Take care everyone! Bye bye!



### Appendix III – Day 3 Chat Files

09:16:13 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Not hearing

09:33:03 From eric phillips to Everyone : Well done Henry..

09:38:46 From Mark Weeks to Everyone : I must say thank you Mr. Jeffrey for that very detailed and comprehensive presentation. Question: What is the Bargaining power of the ERC against the Political system in view of ensuring accountability, policy related approach and Establishing efficient Quality Control measures ?

09:40:00 From eric phillips to Everyone : We keep speaking about social cohesion when as Dr. Henry Jeffrey suggested from his presentation.....we need ethnic and social inclusion.....more than ethnic and socialcohesion.....Can Dr. Jeffrey speak to social inclusion as a core value instead of social cohesion ....social cohesion avoids the real issue of economic, political and cultural/ethnic justice and equality of access to national resources...

09:40:44 From eric phillips to Everyone : Language is important in our ability to heal.....Africans were ENSLAVED ...they were not slaves.....

09:41:38 From Raymond Reddington to Everyone : I love the presentation by Dr Henry Jeffry, he basically said the ERC is a waste of time and I agree

09:42:20 From cvanier to Everyone : I agree with Eric, Africans among other ethnic groups were enslaved throughout history!

09:45:07 From eric phillips to Everyone : Its not only ethnic disharmony caused by political structures ...its economic disharmony also...we need to define the correct problem...economic, political and cultural justice .....or we will continue to pursue the wrong solution...

09:48:28 From Raymond Reddington to Everyone : shared governance is far from happening in Guyana, because they are many persons who are against shared governance imbedded in political parties.

09:49:54 From Mark Weeks to Everyone : Thank you for your response, Mr. Jeffrey

09:50:56 From Raymond Reddington to Everyone : imbedded\*

09:51:14 From cvanier to Everyone : For Guyana to heal, we the people need to look within ourselves and reconnect to GOD, the Creator and Supreme Being

09:52:07 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Based on the present context, how is power sharing brokered? Especially when our peoples need to be weaned from the kind of thinking that hampers this kind of initiative?

09:52:55 From Raymond Reddington to Everyone : members of the ERC should not be politically affiliated..

09:53:34 From Denis Chabrol to Everyone : Dr. Jeffrey, there is a lingering concern in some quarters that there will be no opposition to hold a government accountable in a power-sharing governance model. How do you respond?

09:54:04 From Denis Chabrol to Everyone : And what makes Guyana so different from say the US where there is evidently race-based voting also?

09:54:07 From Mary downey to Everyone : What mechanisms can be put in place to ensure that shared Governance continues to be competitive?

09:55:30 From Mary downey to Everyone : Holding politicians to account

09:57:59 From Mark Weeks to Everyone : Recommendation: In my humble opinion since the Business Community has a major influence on the Political system, I'm suggesting that Ethnic Relations begin with (in) the Private Sector since Economic stability or treat to that stability will facilitate a change in view of profit/sustainability.

10:02:45 From Raymond Reddington to Everyone : I don't agree with what Mr. boyor is saying.

10:03:30 From Mark Weeks to Everyone : Mr. Boyer made a great point, thank you ...in additional that its necessary to have a Quality Control measures to support policy to ensure an unprejudiced approach

10:04:17 From Mary downey to Everyone : ERC membership should not be tied to approval of the Nation Assembly

10:04:59 From Mary downey to Everyone : national assembly

10:10:56 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : The fact that this came up here in this manner suggest that some of us are not ready for this kind of conversation.

10:18:03 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : Sir you do not speak for me

10:18:13 From Mary downey to Everyone : What if all political parties and institutions have to have percentage representation as the ethnic make-up of the population? Like the mandated percentage of women

10:19:26 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Glad ta

10:20:12 From Shane Tull to Everyone : How does this contribute to the conversation of ethnic healing?

10:20:23 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Glad that you are clarifying Mr. Graham and I like what Boyer is thinking...

10:20:49 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : This gentleman is derailing this serious conversation

10:21:29 From Catherine Hughes to Everyone : For the record Nigel Hughes in his presentation never suggested a socialist approach. I suggest that anyone who thinks that should review his presentation.

10:21:31 From Mary downey to Everyone : every littler adds up...visual representation should give some comfort

10:23:06 From Shane Tull to Everyone : we must address the issues of race in equity to move this conversation forward. To do otherwise would be dishonest.

10:24:15 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : @Catherine Hughes, thank you, it is funny that one would respond to and Suggest that Mr. Hughes said what he said in the wrong context when he didn't even listen to the presentation.....

10:24:52 From David Hinds to Everyone : Data tells us the extent of discrimination or lack thereof. But data should not be seen as a substitute for qualitative research and analysis. I don't think this is what Nigel meant, but already that is how it is being interpreted . this was evident in the discussion among the young people last night.

10:24:57 From eric phillips to Everyone : True Cathy.....Nigel just stated that we need to have real data to enable policies that will bring about social and economic progress that will lead to better race relations in Guyana....

10:26:53 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : Moderators please take control

10:42:20 From eric phillips to Everyone : excellent recommendations Olive....

10:44:27 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : Thank you Ms Sampson

10:50:46 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : We have to mature to a place where we respect the opinions & choice/decisions of others

10:54:27 From Mary downey to Everyone : Ms La Rose's comments must also be given serious attention. The hijack of the country by the two main (ethno) Parties must be brought to the end.

10:56:28 From Mark Weeks to Everyone : Olive Sampson@ Great Presentation love it

11:01:28 From Baytoram Ramharack to Everyone : Conversations on race/ethnicity generally revolves around the two major groups, its good to see the Amerindians playing a role in this discussion...they may have the capacity to transform Guyanese politics.

11:02:29 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Heart-felt, practical and so real...Ms. LaRose

11:03:59 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : General Question: Based on the conversations had thus far (yesterday and today), are we suggesting that quota based representation (by race/ethnicity) in political offices and on state boards will directly aid in improving race relations?

11:05:48 From eric phillips to Everyone : Thank you Jean.....excellent..

11:06:21 From Mary downey to Everyone : direct and indirect benefits should be embraced...there is no silver bullet

11:12:10 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : Thank you Ms. LaRose

11:12:32 From Baytoram Ramharack to Everyone : Quota-based policies can be fraught with dangers. We cannot sacrifice "best and brightest" to fill a quota. However, "targeted numbers" can be used to establish targets without violating meritocracy.

11:13:30 From Mary downey to Everyone : Just looking for Guyana-Focused solutions

11:14:58 From Jasper adams to Everyone : Would this discussion lead to a slate of recommendations to the National Assembly? Is the National Assembly required to take the recommendations seriously and formulate policy based on them?

11:17:41 From eric phillips to Everyone : Baytoram.....the best and brightest issue is a myth,,doesn't exist in any society...its about privilege.....meritocracy is not a principle in Guyana.....we need to find solutions and not b e caught up in the theory...and you know that...the idea of a superior race is embedded in this myth of best and brightest....look at Guyana..we have "so called" best and brightest in the List System of choosing our MPs?.....many believe some races are business persons..a myth that has exploded across the world..its all about access to resources including capital..QC has proved that....

11:20:56 From Mary downey to Everyone : spoton

11:22:25 From eric phillips to Everyone : Can the volume be increased

11:30:08 From Mark Weeks to Everyone : agreed... privilegium, However how do we move forward beyond this dialogue, would the ERC and those pursuant of affecting a real change react to rejection or sloth like response. Would everyone Simply just give up or is there contingency plan.. how do we ensure there is a change @eric phillips

11:31:43 From Salaudeen Nausrudeen to Everyone : I hear many nice friendly statements from ERC Commissioners, can someone explain what is the role and mandate of the ERC?

11:34:38 From Mark Weeks to Everyone : privilegium noun. law in favor of/against specific individual; (claim of) special right/privilege.

11:43:39 From Mary downey to Everyone : would suggestions still be welcomed after the end of today?

11:45:43 From Vedawattie Ram to ERC Guyana(Direct Message) : Not seeing the hand icon to respond...?

11:46:24 From ERC Guyana to Vedawattie Ram(Direct Message) : Its in the bottom where it says reactions

11:46:31 From Mark Weeks to Everyone : recommendation the Dialogue show be continuous not only facilitate continued contribution and but also to sensitize the general participants of ERC's progression in achieving their mandate

11:47:00 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : Agree Mark

11:48:25 From eric phillips to Everyone : Well said Dr. Ramharack about data and ethnicity...data in itself is useful...the interpretation is more important as well as the policies out of the knowledge...

11:50:05 From Mark Weeks to Everyone : Consideration of how to define what is a Guyanese should take into account the Pillars of Society and Data driven research is recommended but how do we secure Data Integrity given the potential for deflated or inflated results @ Baytoram

11:50:05 From eric phillips to Everyone : True.....while two brothers fight to death.....the foreigner inherits the wealth.....African proverb...

11:51:11 From eric phillips to Everyone : Best and Brightest in business?.....

11:57:40 From Mark Weeks to Everyone : Please provide relevance of 2012 Data, since circumstances can contribute to a major shift in those results (2020)

11:59:05 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : Capability doesn't suggest "best & brightest" and are we saying "best & brightest" (whomever you deem this to be) are anti-corrupt/anti-racist?

12:00:47 From eric phillips to Everyone : is not having access to jobs, resources, capital, national resources, concessions...not violence.....should we renounce this violence too

12:06:12 From eric phillips to Everyone : What about economic balance dr. Ramharack....we always seem to take the essence of racial security out of the equation and focus on the army police and public service

12:12:22 From eric phillips to Everyone : Federalism will crystalise racism.....and is solving the wrong problem..region 9 is 22000 square miles or 1/4 of Guyana...and its has 20000 people.....or 0.26 % or less than 1% of the population...

12:16:09 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : Several speakers refer to Ethnic balance in the disciplined forces and need to create Balance. Having been on a Recruitment Board that traversed main regions to achieve diversity in a specific 'disciplined' organization, the following immediate responses were often expressed on: 1) The requirement for Interviewees to state willingness to be transferred for lengthy periods to outlying areas, without their families;



12:19:25 From Salaudeen Nausrudeen to Everyone : Federalism may not have to be based on our current regional structure. We need to avoid social maintenance (which we have been doing for the past 50 years) and rebuild a new society that can be functional and meaningful for all. Maintenance does not help anyone or any country.

12:21:06 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : 2) Paltry salaries, notwithstanding the nature of having to face life threatening circumstances; 3) Generally poor conditions in places of employment; 3) Cultural norms & demands for socializing among the team;

12:22:02 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : 4) Sub cultures of high percentage of family members in the organisations;

12:23:28 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : 5) Apparently subliminal 'demands' to comply with unacceptable organizational 'norms' 6) Organizational pressure to

12:24:15 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : I agree with you Mr. Phillips

12:24:18 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : 6) Organizational pressure to 'comply' then complain, even when the Command may be 'Unlawful'.

12:25:33 From Mary downey to Everyone : What chance would we have of getting to an acceptable FACTUAL VERSION of our history?

12:26:29 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : The army and police make up is dependent on who is applying.. . check who are applying and this extends to GECOM too. Cannot talk about more inclusion if certain groups in Guyana tend not to apply for these jobs. When I attend UG... there were some folks that didn't send their kids to UG due to having to do National Service. We

need to look at all the circumstances including cultural circumstances when we are discussion changing certain situations.

12:29:17 From Mary downey to Everyone : Anywhere affirmative action is needed, it should be employed....the solution is what matters

12:30:20 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : It appears that some believe that unless those who work in what is often referred to as the Perhaps solving the Salaries, Conditions &

12:30:36 From Antonio Dey to Everyone : Apart from politicians being an attribute to ethnic divide due to party partisanship or prerogatives it solely depends on the family which is the cornerstone parents should teach their children how to appreciate one another despite race, religion, creed or even political prerogatives

12:33:01 From Antonio Dey to Everyone : The say that the private sector doesn't develop a country however when you think about it in most developed Countries like China thr private sector would've assisted in some way in terms of development infrastructural, educational, technological, inter.alia

12:33:40 From Rev. Fay Clarke, MS to Everyone : It appears that some believe that people who work in what some refer to as "the unproductive sectors", though qualified, are not worthy of equal Respect, Honour and Salaries. Equal recognition MUST be made in a tangible manner of contributions by ALL Guyanese.

12:40:08 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : Agreed Rev Clarke

12:43:19 From Raquel Thomas to Everyone : I cannot believe that we are having a discussion on federalism, I am sorry I missed that presentation so I may be misconstruing this discussion ...

wonder where they would put folks like me who really is not in any particular group due to heritage and identifies as nothing other than Guyanese.

12:49:35 From Dr Raquel Thomas to Everyone : There may be different perspectives re Youth vs Older Guyanese. Would like to see a cross conversation (Dialogue) between youth and older folks.

12:54:43 From Shirley Melville to Everyone : ERC should be more gender based. The 24 categories should be reviewed as there are overlap in the categories. This would allow for more focus on issues. As an important vehicle towards nation building, trust is fundamental. Therefore, citizens and businesses must be active participants in building strong, sustainable and enriching communities.

13:01:04 From Vedawattie Ram to Everyone : There are diverse views about understanding our context present and past. While we do not seem to have the capacity to engineer change via macro solutions...I am sure we can agree on more bottom-up workable solutions. I have a micro-solution in mind connected to a long-term plan. Will be in touch. Agree with Vincent Alexander that we have to work on both macro & micro solutions simultaneously.

13:21:58 From Clayon Halley to Everyone : Thank you to the ERC for kick starting this national conversation.....hope is that this will continue even if its just zoom meetings once per month that would allow for the youth and elder discourse as well. I'd also like to suggest the ERC set up a Youth Council (made up of youth across our 10 regions) to aid in its efforts of having more youth involvement in improving race relations in Guyana.