



NEWSLETTER

| JULY — AUGUST 2020

Excerpts from the address of

President David Granger

**at the Inaugural
General Meeting
of the IDPADA-G
Co-operative
Credit Union Ltd**

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Excerpts from the address of President David Granger at the Inaugural General Meeting of the IDPADA-G Co-operative Credit Union Ltd

President Granger addressed the Inaugural General Members Meeting of the IDPADA-G Credit Union on June 2nd, 2020. The Meeting, held online to adhere to social distancing guidelines, engaged over 450 credit union members and special guests. The excerpts below are taken from President Granger's remarks. The full speech can be found at www.idpada-g.gy and on IDPADA-G's Facebook pages.

“... The ‘International Decade’ acknowledges that Africans were the victims of the greatest crime against humanity and continue to suffer from dispossession, discrimination and intergenerational poverty. The ‘International Decade’ recognises that people of African descent have not yet fully overcome the legacy of colonial underdevelopment, which continues to contribute to their present condition.

The Programme of Activities, proposed by the United Nations, rests on 3 pillars – Recognition, Justice and Development. The ‘Programme’ recognizes that poverty is both a cause and consequence of discrimination. It urged that states should take appropriate steps to: “... strengthen national programmes for eradicating poverty and reducing social exclusion that take account of the specific needs and experiences of people of African descent...”

I proposed a five-point Plan of Action for the International Decade, in my address to the Cuffy 250 Forum in August 2016. I urged that the ‘Plan’ include efforts aimed at African economic empowerment.

The registration of a Co-operative Credit Union, by the International Decade of People of African Descent Assembly – Guyana, is a step in the direction of economic empowerment and eradicating poverty. It is in accordance with the objectives declared in the Programme of Activities of the ‘International Decade’ and the five-point ‘Plan’ which I had proposed in 2016.

Co-operative Credit Banks existed in British Guiana over a century ago. These institutions first emerged in response to African subsistence

farmers’ need for loans.

The ‘old model’ Co-operative Credit Banks catered primarily for small loans for small-scale agricultural production and for meeting basic household and emergency needs. The ‘old model’ did serve the purpose for which it was intended. A ‘new model’ is needed to become an engine of economic development. . . .

. . . Co-operative Credit Unions were the successors of the Co-operative Credit Banks. The Co-operative Credit Unions have declined, with only 30 such institutions existing as at October 2019. Credit unions today account for slightly more than 24,000 members with estimated assets of US\$28.9M.

The ‘new model’ of Co-operative Credit Unions must become an engine of enterprise development. Co-operative Credit Unions should graduate beyond catering only for the elementary stage of development – the provision of personal and subsistence loans. The ‘new model’, I suggest, should cater for four stages of economic enterprise development:

- traditional or subsistence;
- commercial or retail;
- industrial or manufacturing; and
- internationally-competitive stage

Co-operative Credit Unions should aim at financing not only small-scale agriculture, agro-processing and craft ventures but also commercial enterprises – the second stage of development. The third stage of development – the industrial stage, would involve the provision of capital for industrial development. The fourth stage would result in a co-operative credit union providing support for the production of internationally- competitive commodities.

The ambition of a new model is to provide financial services from the level of the small farmer and household, right up to the level of industry. Financing is needed at the levels of micro, small and medium-scale enterprises, particularly in the agriculture and agro-processing sector.

Government has launched a number of initiatives aimed at stimulating these sectors. The G\$50M agro-processing plant at Parika, Essequibo

Islands-West Demerara Region, was established in March 2020. The investment allows for the processing of 130 kg of produce per hour, benefits some 100 small farmers and provides employment for 20 persons.

The Regional Agricultural and Commercial Exhibitions (RACE) has become a catalyst for economic diversification led by micro, small- and medium scale enterprises. The Rural Entrepreneurial Agricultural Project (REAP) aims to revitalize rural village economies.

The ‘new model’ which I propose, envisages Co-operative Credit Unions as financial institutions with increasing assets, reserves, savings and shareholdings. The model is one which would see shareholding and savings widened and with a more diversified lending portfolio. All of this would necessitate legislative and regulatory changes.

The ‘new model’ is necessary for economic empowerment. Its development should be a priority for the

remaining years of the International Decade of People of African Descent.

I urge the International Decade of People of African Descent Assembly – Guyana to consider carefully the adoption of a new model of Co-operative Credit Unions that will not be marginalized within the overall financial sector, but which has the potential to compete eventually with the formal financial sector and to stimulate enterprise development at the subsistence, commercial, industrial and internationally competitive stages.

I commend the International Decade of People of African Descent Assembly - Guyana on the establishment of the Co-operative Credit Union. The Credit Union is one of the many projects which will be undertaken by the Assembly but it has special significance for local economic empowerment.

I congratulate the Union on its Inaugural General Meeting. I wish it every success, beyond 2024 and for decades to come.



**IDPADA-G COOPERATIVE
CREDIT UNION LTD #2171**

DESPITE the COVID-19 pandemic the IDPADA-G COOPERATIVE CREDIT UNION LTD held its Inaugural General Members’ Meeting on June 2, 2020. The meeting was held virtually due to the restrictions in force to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of the meeting the membership stood at 814. The keynote address was given by His Excellency Brigadier (Ret’d.) David Granger.

Members present elected two

committees viz: (i) The Management Committee and (ii) The Supervisory Committee. The Management Committee has been meeting weekly to ensure that all systems are in place to operationalize the credit union and begin receiving loan applications, potentially, by January 2021. The Management Committee also voted to join the Credit Union League.

Registration of new members is ongoing, by appointment, at the Secretariat of IDPADA-G.

For further information, please check out IDPADA-G Cooperative Credit Union’s Facebook page.

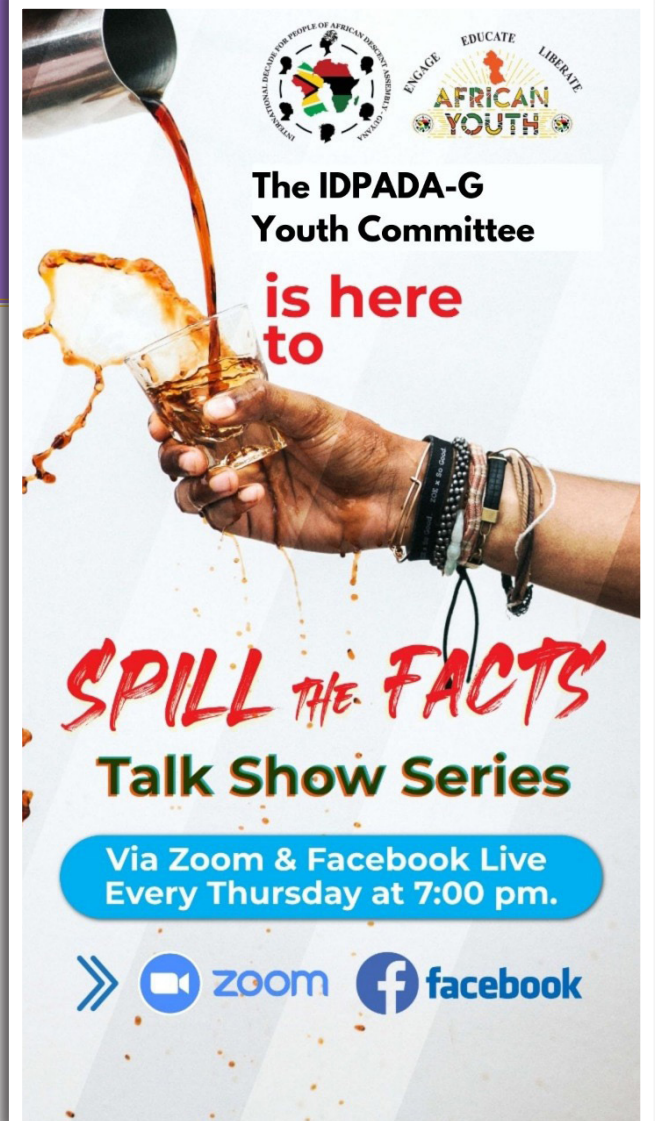
IDPADA-G On A Quest for Educational Engagement

IDPADA-G rolled out its newly founded “*Spill the Facts*” series to the public on Thursday, April 16th, 2020 in our desire to maintain continued engagement with the public and sharing of fact-based information during the COVID19 pandemic. In this series, IDPADA-G spotlighted a myriad of issues that have been plaguing the Guyanese society. To address these issues, IDPADA-G invited notable local and international authorities on each of the subject areas to make presentations and answer the burning questions that our audiences had.

The programme “Spill the Facts”, began to pique the interest of not only local viewers but persons from our diaspora and the wider International Community. Our committed audience therefore saw appearances from the then President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana Mr.

David A. Granger on the topic “Historic Moments and Turning points in African Guyanese History”, Mr. Enrico Woolford on “The Influence of Social Media in National Decision Making”, and Historians Dr. Melissa Ifill, Dr. David Hinds and Dr. Alissa Trotz on “The Origins of Race Issues” just to name a few. To commemorate the birthday of Mr. Courtney Crum-Ewing, a special programme was done to keep his memory alive and to highlight the efforts being made to dismantle the global anti-black oppressive system.

Given the support and immense success that the programme has received, going forward, IDPADA-G intends to provide continued engagement on topics of public interest as part of our mandate under one of our five E’s, that being Education, since we believe that “Education is the most powerful weapon that can be used to change the world”- Nelson Mandela.



The IDPADA-G Youth Committee is here to **SPILL THE FACTS** Talk Show Series

Via Zoom & Facebook Live Every Thursday at 7:00 pm.

zoom facebook

The Impact of COVID-19 on Guyanese of African Descent

CCOVID-19 arrived to the shores of Guyana in March 2020. Having watched various countries in the world grapple with the negative impacts of this pandemic, including the loss of lives and livelihoods, it brought with it, very real concerns for the health and the wellbeing of the Guyanese people. For people of African descent, who have historically suffered injustices at various levels of society, for no other reason than the existence of strong anti-black sentiments, the situation is particularly dire. Cognizant of this reality, on 16th April 2020, the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent released the following: “Statement on COVID-19: Racial Equity and Racial Equality Must Guide State Action”.

The publication called on member states to; “commit to equity in the current public health crisis and to recognize the current risk that the historical exploitation of the bodies and resources of people of African descent pose to decision-making today, including driving racial disparities in access to health care and

treatment.”- (United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, 2020)

The Working Group also requested that all interested stakeholders submit reports on the impact of COVID-19 and the response to the pandemic, on



the human rights of people of African descent as well as recommendations for the protection of the foregoing under the current circumstances.

IDPADA-G’s submission, primarily articulated by its youth committee, hinges on the basis that African Guyanese, still suffering from twenty-three years of race-based exploita-

tion and economic marginalization, are severely affected by twin crises in Guyana – COVID-19, as well as the political tensions and economic slow-down which resulted from a protracted period, during which matters related to the March 2nd General

election remained unresolved. The majority of African Guyanese were living a precarious existence prior to COVID-19; the disease has rapidly destroyed their tenuous livelihoods, and has left them more vulnerable and destitute.

Further, this organization has observed that persons of African descent often occupy housing that is usually cramped, and/or located in informal communities or squatting areas with limited access to running water and sanitary washroom facilities, fur-

Summarily, IDPADA-G’s report was categorized into four areas of

impact: Political, Healthcare, Educational and Occupational. The report explained that the political tension heightened by undeclared election results but really, fuelled by anti-blackness, resulted in discriminatory acts directed toward people of African descent who are traditionally viewed as supporters of the political grouping that sought re-election. The discriminatory acts included, racial profiling and harassment in stores, a deliberate delay or denial of service, for example, to African Guyanese seeking to rent apartments owned by people of other races and the threat by Indo-Guyanese farmers to poison food sold to African Guyanese. The COVID-19 pandemic has already resulted in limited service options, now; race further limits the options of African Guyanese and places them in a position of increased vulnerability.

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West Indian Cricket, a Game of Resistance?

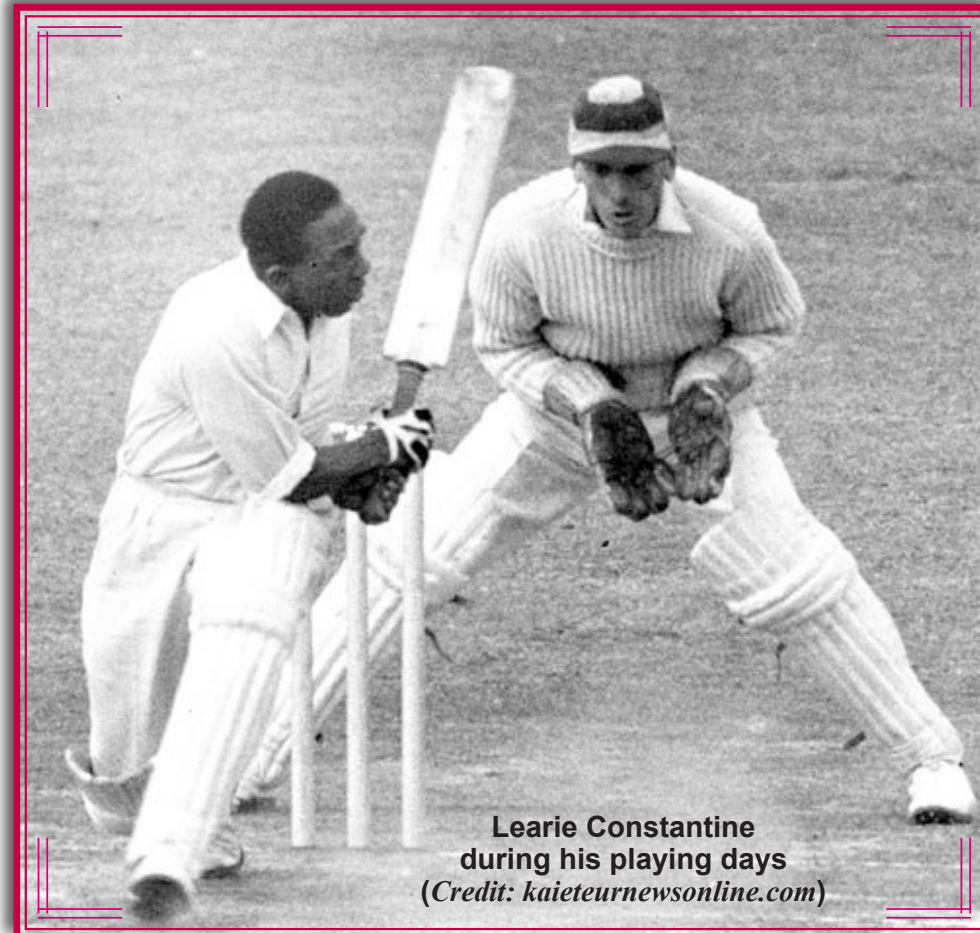
By Johnnell Henery

CRICKET is privileged to boast of a rich and complex history in the West Indies.

Some have said that the emergence of cricket in the region possibly goes as far back as the early 1800s. This they supported by the discovery of the “Barbados Cricket Buckle” which is an image of a slave playing cricket. Whilst others argue that the English Sport gained importance in the Anglophone Caribbean territories - Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica as well as Trinidad & Tobago - during the post-emancipation era by colonial administrators, wealthy planters, merchants, and schools. They promoted cricket as both an amateur and moral ideal through which the colonial ruling class symbolized their values, norms and prejudices. Regardless of its origin we cannot overlook the significance of cricket since its emergence within the region. According to McClendon (1998) “once the slaves were emancipated, cricket became the new cultural institution by which England sought to socialize the populations and reinforce hierarchies in its colonies.”

As a British endeavour teeming with vast rules and codes, cricket is said to have been used as a means of containing resistance through agents of socialization. During the colonial period,

as the sugar plantations began to form the basis for a plantocracy, schools were built for the children of the planters. Teachers were imported from England to ensure that British values would be absorbed by the young. According to Manley (1988), “it was these



Learie Constantine during his playing days
(Credit: kaieteurnewsonline.com)

teachers who initiated young West Indian school boys in that altogether idiosyncratic and arbitrary collection of objectives and rules which made up army games and, in this case cricket.” Manley further suggests that “the young sons of slaves were required to bowl at the young sons of the slave owners or to the army officers doing

garrison duty, to provide batting practices.”

However, whilst the British used cricket as a means of instilling discipline and adherence to rules, the sport provided the black and brown West Indian with an opportunity to “lash out” against

the ball to the plantation owner or by, (2) using the game to prove their worth through wins, and (3) by engaging in and embracing the Englishness of cricket while simultaneously discovering ways to play the game in their own image and forge a new identity for themselves outside of the shackles of the colonial society.

Clem Seecharan stated that “by propelling a cricket ball at his owner or his owner’s son, he was symbolically contesting their unbridled power over his person: their property (...) in this context, therefore, cricket could not be just a game: it was definitely an instrument of mobility; if not liberation (...) Cricket was a potent symbol, the site of African imaginings of liberty and the recovery of self. The fact that it was at the core of the imperial mission rendered the game an effective vehicle to carry African yearnings for freedom, and the undermining of imperial hegemony with its ordained hierarchies” (Newman, 2013).

In concluding, Cricket for West Indians goes way beyond the boundary of being merely a game of sport. It became an opportunity for some to gain recognition and fight back against their oppressors. Cricket became a tool that fostered respect and equality for a people desperately trying to emancipate themselves from the mental slavery that engulfed their daily lives. In relation its evolution in the region, cricket can in many ways be considered a game of resistance.

The Impact of ...



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ther increasing their exposure to COVID-19. Their lack of ownership of decent housing is as a result of the systemic discrimination that they have faced, for example the lack of access to financing from commercial banks for mortgages or the denial of upward mobility in institutions in which they work.

Penultimately, people of African descent traditionally rely on the state for the education of their children through the public-school system. With public schools being closed, persons who have the means

to enroll their children in private learning entities, can ensure that their children continue to learn, especially those who have internet access in their homes and electronic devices. In many African Guyanese homes, there is no access to these necessities. Therefore, children of African descent are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 restrictions in education and stand the risk of falling severely behind in their learning if this situation is not rectified quickly.

Finally, on the matter of front-

line workers and essential staff, it is critical to emphasize that at least 80% are African Guyanese; these include doctors, nurses, members of the joint services and other workers in Government agencies, workers responsible for utilities, workers in factories, telecommunications and transportation. This increases the risk of contracting COVID-19 significantly, within a specific ethnic group, because of their occupational alignment.

What COVID19 and this after election period have revealed is

that the lives of people of African descent in Guyana are not valued, and, though Guyana has signed on to several international agreements for the protection of Human Rights, these have not secured justice for African Guyanese. Even in the current United Nations Decade for People of African Descent, African Guyanese continue to fight an upward battle for equity.

To read the full report, including the recommendations, please go to IDPADA-G’s website: <http://idpada-g.gy/new>