



# NEWSLETTER

| MARCH 2020

## IDPADA-G Emergency General Meeting



Representatives of Member Organisations and Guests at the Emergency Meeting



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THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR  
PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT  
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**O**n Sunday March 15, 2020, IDPADA-G's Coordinating Council convened an emergency meeting of its General Assembly to discuss the well-being and safety of the African Guyanese community in light of the discord following the March 2 General and Regional Elections.

This Emergency meeting sought to address, in particular, the heightened racial tensions and racially motivated attacks against people of African Descent in Guyana. Members of the organization noted the restraint demonstrated by the African Guyanese community in the face of racially motivated attacks, and voiced fear for the safety of

our entire community, considering the attacks on innocent school children, the security forces and random African Guyanese.

Within the United Nations framework, as the Country Coordinating Mechanism mandated to protect the interest of African Guyanese, IDPADA-G has compiled a report on this situation. Following a motion passed by IDPADA-G's General Assembly, the organization submitted the report along with a petition to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the broader international community and the local Ethnic Relations Commission, to alert them to the recent acts of "racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance" towards Afri-

can Guyanese.

**On Thursday March 19, members of the Coordinating Council along with the CEO and representatives of the secretariat visited the families of five students from Western Berbice who were injured during an attack on their school bus. In each case, words of comfort and tokens of support were shared with the children and their families. IDPADA-G pledged to continue their support by providing mentors for the students, and to provide counselling where needed. It was gratifying to observe the show of appreciation from each family for this visit.**

# 'Be Ambassadors of Peace in the Midst of Violence'

*5 young students caught in a violent protest- these are their stories beyond their injuries*



Members of IDPADA-G observing backyard garden of injured student

**O**n March 19<sup>th</sup> 2020, members of the International Decade for People of African Descent Assembly-Guyana travelled to various villages in Region 5, Mahai-ca-Berbice, to lend support to the families of children affected by the March 6<sup>th</sup> protest in Bath Settlement. The protest, related to what was termed, 'the delay in the release of the 2020 Election Results', targeted a state owned school bus transporting students, predominantly of African descent, and resulted

including her last round of examinations. She also explained how she liked to participate in school activities and served as class prefect. The IDPADA-G team affirmed the young lady by greeting her using the term 'Doctor' and encouraged her to persevere in the pursuance of her goals.

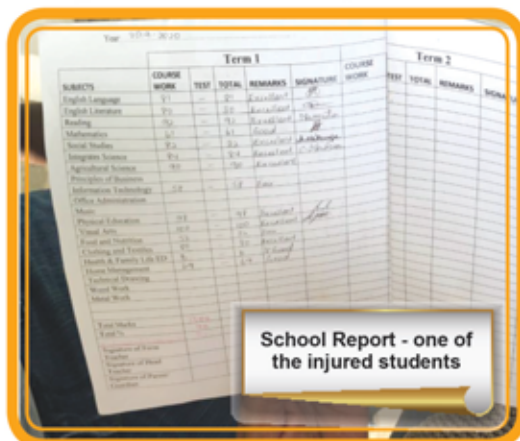
When the team arrived at the home of one of the youngest students affected, her younger brother and sister looked on curiously. The student relayed to us that although she was terrified shortly after the incident, she was now able to go about her days with some normalcy. Her mother, an educator, recalled being in shock upon receiving the news about what happened to her daughter. She thought about all the children in her care, how they were of various ethnicities and she had endeavoured to treat them all fairly, yet her daughter suffered this fate. After the incident however, she still remains resolute that she will continue to discharge her duties as per normal and will not allow hate or fear to affect her work.

Amidst the brilliant young people visited, there was one exceptional young man. Very reserved and soft-spoken, never meeting the gazes of the visitors as he listened to why they ventured to see him. It wasn't until they inquired about the impressive vegetable garden in front of his home, that he became at ease. He sprang up from his sitting position and proceeded to offer a tour through his garden. He explained that he loved to spend his time caring for his crops and spoke about his plan to grow more food to sustain his household. The team inquired if agriculture was also his career goal, to which he responded in the affirmative. Although he is some years away from completing secondary school, he does aim to enrol at the Guyana School of Agriculture.

The penultimate visit was to the home of a police officer who had worked tirelessly, over the days following the Elections, to ensure that order prevailed and the security of citizens remained uncompromised. He was not able however, to shield his daughter from the protest action that unfolded. He recalled how his daughter returned home drenched in her own blood after refusing to be taken to the hospital for fear that she would suffer further harm on her way there. Her mother explained how she immediately became her daughter's doctor, removing pieces of broken glass from her face. The daughter, with her pleasant demeanour said that she felt safer at

home. When asked about her career choice, to the team's surprise, this brave young lady explained that she wanted to become a soldier because she wanted to protect others. Even after such a traumatic event- she still retained her love for humanity.

The final visit was to the home of another aspiring doctor, specifically- a paediatrician. Her love for children, coupled with her love for science has motivated this career choice. She recalled receiving a blow to the head during the incident and becoming unconscious. She feels fortunate to be alive and wants to use her skills to impact the lives of others positively. Her father indicated that he takes the education of his daughters very seriously. He wants them to have all the op-



School Report - one of the injured students

in five (5) of these students between the ages of 13-16, sustaining physical injuries to their heads and other parts of their bodies. The psychological trauma suffered by the students remains largely unknown. During the visit, the families were encouraged, household supplies were presented to them and tablets were given to the students to aid the completion of their schoolwork from home.

The students, each with their own stories, dreams and talents, made an excellent impression on the visiting team. One female student when asked what she wanted to become, boldly proclaimed- a doctor! Her mother, a healthcare professional, laughed and nodded supportively after the pronouncement. The young lady then disappeared into her home and emerged again carrying her report card. She showed the team how she performed exceptionally well at school and had secured first place on several occasions



Ms Olive Sampson CEO of IDPADA-G engaging with one of the families

portunities that he didn't and therefore puts his various talents to work to provide for his family. The list of services that he offers, advertised outside of his home, spoke volumes about his level of commitment to this purpose.

To date, the students have all successfully recovered from their physical injuries. And while the visiting team was not able to examine their emotional state, the organization does hope that the children will receive the psycho-social support they need to make holistic recovery. They encouraged students to become Ambassadors of Peace even in the midst of violence and racial profiling, to continually rise above their challenges and to use their stories of survival as motivation to reach their highest potential. IDPADA-G will maintain contact with students through a mentorship program and hopes to be able to continue to lend support to the families in tangible ways.

## AFRICAN HISTORY MONTH

# Exhibit and Lectures: IDPADA-G at the National Library

**T**HE IDPADA-G exhibit, *Paragraphs of African History* opened on January 27, 2020 at the National Library and remained on display throughout African History Month, February 2020.

This informative history exhibit consists of twelve “books”, each presenting a glimpse or “paragraph” of a larger body of the work of internationally renowned researchers, including Guyanese George G.M. James and Ivan Van Sertima. Numerous credible independent researchers continue to participate in the effort to depict the true contributions of the African People to world civilization. The exhibit highlights some of their findings.

The historical period of the display stretches from 1966, the era of Guyana’s Independence, back in time to the African beginning of the human species and includes a review of the African contributions to Guyana, Europe, contemporary and ancient Nile Valley regions, and the Americas.

In conjunction with the exhibit at the National Library, IDPADA-G hosted two lectures on the pivotal post-emancipation period. Lectures by Ms. Kizzie Kitt, a researcher from the National Museum on *“The Management of Villages”* and the *“Village Movement: its Significance in Guyana’s Economy”* by Ms. Johnnell Henery, a researcher, allowed guests to not only view the exhibit, but to focus on and learn more about the struggles that forged the Movement.

The presentations set out some of the factors that shaped the very foundations of African Villages in the British Guiana post emancipation era. Included were examples of archival documents illustrating the purchase of Plantation Northbrook (Victoria) and Plantation Cotton (Plaisance) and primary source documentation of the challenges emancipated Africans confronted as they sought to establish villages and governance systems. The audience learned about some of the legislation implemented by the colonial Government to control and often stymie the management of African village communities during the 1840s to 1860s.

*Paragraphs in African History* and the lecture series at the National Library have ended but thanks to the Ministry of Social Cohesion, the exhibit is now permanently displayed in the National Museum which provides access to the general public.



Exhibits on Display



IDPADA-G Chairman, Mr. Vincent Alexander, addressing the Meeting



Participants at the January General Meeting

# Election of Committee Chairs and New Co-ordinating Council Members

*...General Meeting – January 26, 2020*

**D**uring the January General Assembly Meeting, member organizations selected committee members for IDPADA-G's revamped committee structure. Chairman – Mr. Vincent Alexander reminded members that the committees reflect the central pillars of IDPADA-G's work and keep it focused on serving the interests of the African community in the areas of Education, Employment, Economics, Equality and Expiation.

Meetings were subsequently held to elect chairpersons of each committee. The newly elected Committee Chairs form the IDPADA-G Coordinating Council alongside the Chairman, CEO and co-opted members. The 2020-2022 Coordinating Council members are:

- Mr. Vincent Alexander - Chairman
- Ms. Olive Sampson – Chief Executive Officer
- Dr. Simpson Da Silva -Chair, Economics Committee
- Mr. Gladston Alert – Chair, Education Committee
- Dr. Norman Ng-A-Qui – Chair, Employment Committee
- Mr. Tom Dalgety – Chair, Equity Committee
- Mr. Royston Peters- Chair, Expiation Committee
- Dr. Patsy Francis – Co-opted Member
- Mr. E. Lance Carberry – Co-opted Member
- Ms. Miryom Levi– Co-opted Member
- Ms. Ayanna Mc Calman– Co-opted Member

## IDPADA-G CREDIT UNION



**T**HE IDPADA-G Credit Union was registered on February 7, 2020. The Credit Union, by law, is required to convene its first general members meeting within one month of registration. However, due to preventative measures in place to stem the spread of COVID-19, the Credit Union has postponed scheduling its inaugural General Meeting. Members will be informed as soon as it is safe to convene the meeting.

At the inaugural meeting, members will ratify policies for the operation of the society and elect officers to serve on the management committee for the first year of operations. The current membership stands at eight hundred and fourteen persons from all coastal regions of Guyana, and Region 7.

# EMPOWERING YOUTH

## 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL YOUTH CONFERENCE



Members of IDPADA-G's Youth Committee



Participants in the Youth in Business Break-out Session



Products of Small Businesses owned by Youth Participants on Display during the Conference



**I**DPADA-G hosted its 2<sup>ND</sup> Annual African Youth Leadership and Empowerment Conference under the theme, “Youth in Guyana’s New Economy: Opportunities for Success.” The conference, held on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at the Arthur Chung Convention Centre, addressed over 300 youth between the ages of 18-35, from 8 of the 10 Administrative Regions in Guyana.

Young entrepreneurs displayed their products in the Conference Marketplace, networking with their peers and establishing beneficial linkages. Participants were excited and inspired to learn about their products and eagerly supported them.

Inspiring presentations on African and African Guyanese history, careers, training opportunities along with cultural segments such as drumming, national songs and spoken word motivated and enlightened attendees.

The programme, hosted by Youth Committee members Ms. Zoe Frank and Mr. Yuborn Allicock, featured addresses by Ministers of Government, Hon. Catherine Hughes, Hon. Tabitha Sarabo-Halley and International Guest Speaker Ms. Atlantis Browder. IDPADA-G’s Chair, Mr. Vincent Alexander, explained IDPADA-G’s vision and plans to fulfill the mandate of the UN mandated Decade for People of African Descent. Youth committee Chair, Mr. Matthew Gaul, shared about the genesis and work of the youth committee and invited participants to become engaged in the process.

Ms. Atlantis Browder- African American Egyptologist, Author and Educator, spoke on the topic of African history, pre-enslavement. She boldly proclaimed the fact, that if African History was a 1000-page book, enslavement would be only one page. This reinforced the fact that African history is rich and that we should all take pride in who we are, our contribution to civilization and the need to take up our rightful place in the development of our society. She reiterated that “before there was any other history there was African History.”

Minister Hughes in her address drew the audience’s attention to the message on her t-shirt - “History has its eyes on you” and reminded the youth that “we came here with our ancestor’s blood in the oceans and now . . . because of their sweat, because of their pain, because of their vision, because of their sacrifice, all of us can sit here . . . to talk about where we want to go.”

Minister Halley inspired youth with a message urging them to take collective action for greater impact. She encouraged each person to bring their best to the table in the aim of making Guyana a better place and noted that youth do not have to be in high office to make an impact, since every decision that they make now impacts their lives and by extension the society.

Breakout sessions provided youth with useful and timely information about the business and employment opportunities available under Guyana’s new Decade of Development, including the new energy sector.

Mr. Eric Phillips, Chair of the Guyana Reparations Committee presented the case for reparative justice for Guyanese of African Descent. He specifically recounted the invaluable contributions made by African Guyanese to the development of Guyana and the centuries of unpaid labour that our ancestors gave to build this nation. Mr. Sharma Solomon, former Chairman of Region 10, spoke about political history and the responsibilities of youth in a democratic Guyana. Having lived through several injustices endured by African Guyanese such as the 2012 Linden struggle and having risen to the occasion himself, to offer leadership to his region- he made an impassioned plea to youth to make their own contributions to Guyana.

**Ms. Elsie Harry, Master’s student and 2017 valedictorian of the University of Guyana, brought the conference to a powerful close with a call to youth action - to prepare themselves to become leaders of their communities and to help shape Guyana’s development trajectory.**