

## GCNC Newsletter

GCNC Quarterly

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### Points of Interest

- Adebisi Akinrimisi's take on Settlement Day L.A. style.....
- "My Life between the Cross and the Bars" - a profile of Chaplain George Castillo.....
- Lan Sluder's Rules - Part I.....
- Crispin Mejia continue to make contributions in his own way.....

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## 19TH NOVEMBER RECOLLECTIONS

### An Upclose Review

William R. Cayetano

So another 19<sup>th</sup> November celebration has come and gone. As celebrations go, those held this year were either heavily criticized or greatly appreciated, depending on who was talking or more importantly who was listening. One thing can be said for sure – the celebration is here to stay and despite the odds, has grown by leaps and bounds over the years in ways, means and places not even Thomas Vincent Ramos could possibly have imagined. Having made that

observation, there are a few more I feel compelled to share with those willing to take the time to read the remainder of this column.

**Dateline** Dangriga: The weather was absolutely perfect as our Continental 737 touched down flawlessly at Goldson International greeted by a balmy 75 degrees. It was tropical temperature almost every day of the week leading up to the 19<sup>th</sup>. I spent an enormous amount of time under the 'shed' in the Manawalrugu area of Grigadang.

The shed was the place to meet and greet many of the visiting arrivals from Belize City, Toledo district, Cayo, Corozal, Orange Walk, the Cayes, many of the states of the United States, Honduras and Guatemala. I'm sure there are other places I've not mentioned. Among other events, there was an all day affair at Holy Ghost School, which I bypassed in favor of a concert held at Sacred Heart School featuring Jason Guerrero and the Governor General of Belize

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## Mejia — AN ECUMENICAL DIFFERENCE

by Crispin Mejia

Before leaving for Dangriga in September I had contemplated taking some school materials from here with me to issue them out as I did in July of this year. I rode my bike from Lakeland through Sabal Community, Backatown to Ghans, Wagierale to Benguche Area issuing out pencils, pens and rulers with the Times Tables on them to school children. This gave me the chance to see my Town and familiarize myself with my people, plus take note of the expansion taking place daily. This time I refrained from carrying any materials, and decided to buy them in Dangriga, to patronize the local economy.

On Sept. 30th midnight beginning Oct. 1st morning 12:50am. I started my flight to

Dangriga on Continental from San Jose to Houston. Arrived in Houston at 6:15am and waited for my 11:55am connection to Goldson International Belize. During my wait, I saw some Belizeans slowly starting to accumulate around Gate 20 at George Bush International.

Dinsdale Sampson's nephew was one of them. I did not know him, but we struck up a conversation. I found out that he'd heard about me before, and had printed my name on some T-shirt Jerseys for Ghans the under 21 Basketball Team I co-sponsor in Dan Griga. He was coming in from Las Vegas. We also took the same flight on Tropic Air from Belize International to Dangriga.

On Oct. 2nd I went to Oscar Ramirez's

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# GARIFUNA COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

...promoting the cultural and socio-economic well being of the Garifuna people...

## Garifuna Settlement Day in Los Angeles: Alive And Well

By: Adebisi Akinrimisi



In the weekend of November 16th 2002, I traveled to Los Angeles to attend the Garifuna Settlement Day celebration. It was wonderful to reunite with old friends whom I had not seen in years. The November 2002 celebration was well attended by Garifuna people who traveled as far away as the East Coast. Garifuna Settlement Day celebrates the arrival of the first Garifuna people who landed in Belize in 1796.

The Garifuna Settlement Day committee held two different Settlement Day ceremonies. The ceremonies began with a church mass. After the mass there was a cultural event. Several Garifuna bands and dancers performed at the cultural event that took place after the mass. Mr. Roy Young the consulate of Belize also spoke at the event. The Consulate expressed his highest honor to Mr. Thomas Vincent Ramos the original founder of Garifuna Settlement Day. He also, congratulated all the performers at the Settlement Day event for the commitment and hard work it took to host the event.

During the entertainment part of the ceremony, I had an opportunity to speak to Garifuna people who traveled all the way from New York to

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Angela Mejia, Independent Beauty Consultant  
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attend the Settlement Day event. Some of the Garifuna individuals who I interviewed traveled to Los Angeles for the first time. They came to Los Angeles to experience what it was like to celebrate Garifuna Settlement Day with the California Garifuna community. One woman told me that compared to the Settlement day celebration in New York, the Settlement Day celebration in Los Angeles was much more elaborate. She was amazed that the Los Angeles Garifuna Settlement Day committee was able to host two separate ceremonies on the same day. Still, other New York Garinagu did not think it was a good idea to divide Garifuna Settlement Day celebration into two separate ceremonies. These particular Garinagu believed that all Garinagu should join together as one and only celebrate one Garifuna Settlement day event.

I also had the privilege of speaking to Garifuna singer/musician Mr. James Lovell. In a brief discussion with Mr. James Lovell he told me that when he performs on stage, he always tries to encourage the Garifuna people to maintain their traditions. He stated that "the lyrics in his music discusses the traditions of the Garifuna people in its' holistic form". Mr. Lovell's music was inspired by the turtle shell period which first evolved in the 1980's in Belize. In the turtle shell music the performer mainly uses the drum and the guitar and sings in the Garifuna language. Mr. Lovell pointed out that before the turtle shell period the only music that was widely played on the radio stations in Belize

was country western music. Mr. Lovell emphasized that our language, music artifacts and food need to be retrieved. He believes that it is important for Garifuna people to work together as one community so they can preserve their culture and address their common social needs.

Other New York guest who traveled to Los Angeles included Mrs. Dionisha Amaya the founder of the New York based organization Mujeres Unidas Garinagu en Marchas. (MUGAMA). (MUGAMA,) is one of the few non-profit organizations in New York, which provides direct services to the Garifuna community. Several other prominent leaders from the New York area were also present at the event.

*Overall, the New York Garinagu were glad that they connected with their Southern Californian brothers and sisters. They expressed an interest in traveling back to Los Angeles to participate in future Settlement Day ceremonies. I was happy to see the large numbers of youth who participated at the Settlement Day ceremony in Los Angeles. It is a matter of fact that some of these youth set up information booths in order to promote the culture and educate other Garifuna youth as well as, adults about resources that are available in the community.*

On the following weekend of November 23rd, the Northern Californian Garifuna committee hosted their Settlement day ceremony at the Caribbean Gardens located in Burlingame, California. The cultural part of the ceremony began with a speech lead by Mr. Egbert Haginjo (President of

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# NORTHERN CALIFORNIA GARIFUNA COUNCIL

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*(Continued from page 2)* **GSD in LA**

GCNC). Mr. Haginio discussed the history of Garifuna Settlement Day. He emphasized how the Garifuna people were recently recognized by UNESCO for their intangible heritage and appreciated for their ability to maintain their culture. Mrs. Carla Martinez sang the Garifuna National Anthem. Later on a Punta Dance con-

test was lead by Mr. Ernez Ramierez. The Settlement Day event in Northern California attracted a large crowd of Garinagu from San Jose, San Francisco and Hayward as well as, many non -Garinagu participants.

The Garifuna Council of Northern California periodically sponsors cultural events. The next cultural event is

scheduled to take place sometime in April of 2003. Garifuna Vocalist Mr. James Lovell will perform in the Bay area. Information about the dates and time of this event will either be updated on the Website at a later date or you can contact the Garifuna Council of Northern California directly. For more information you may e-mail [bisi6@cs.com](mailto:bisi6@cs.com)

*(Continued from page 1)* **Crispin Mejia**

bookstore to check out his inventory of school supplies. It was not plentiful for what I needed, but I decided on some assignment books. I bought all the ones he had with the Map of Belize on the front cover and Math Equations on the back, also, some with the Belize Flag called assignment on the front and Math Equations on the back.

A few days later between my activities I stopped by Ecumenical College to see the Principal Francis Humphreys. I asked him how many students were enrolled at the College. He said 420 counting staff. That made me realize that I had to gather much more material. Since I had cleaned out the ones at Oscar Ramirez, I went to the Beverage Store in Sabal Community, and bought out the ones from there also. I circled the town for some more books but I did not find enough. I went back to ask Oscar when he would be able to get some more of the same materials. He said he had to order some from Belize, and it would take a few days. I went back and bought some more books from him a few days later when he received the shipment from Belize City. I bought out his stock again and was still short. I had some business to do in Belmopan the following day. I drove to Belmopan early that morning to conduct some business, after that I went to the bookstore to buy some more assignment books. I was able to purchase a total of 391 assignment books between Dan Griga and Belmopan. It took me until the 14th of October to accumulate that amount. This was mostly because I did not want just any assignment books.

On Friday morning the 18th of Oct. at about 4:45am I called Francis Humphreys right after I made my coffee. I took a short walk every morning to the seashore to swim in salt water between 5 & 6 o'clock to start the day off. I also loved to see the Sun rising over the horizon. I apologized to Francis about the timing of my call, but I felt comfortable in doing so because I had dealt with him often when he was the Mayor. I had donated a Bullhorn to his council in order to notify the driving community of Dangriga about road closures in areas of the town where roadwork was being done. I told Francis how many assignment

books I had and that I would like to set up a time to issue them out that day. I explained to him I only had until noon Monday before leaving for the States. He said great, right after the 10 o'clock recess would be fine. I was there with the books and my Video Camera. I touched base with Francis again, he said that he had informed his staff. Some of the staff I knew, like Rev. Jerris Valentine, Steven Serano and Kenrick Francisco whom I had just met in July. The rest of them said they'd heard about me before, and a few were total strangers.

After recess Francis recruited five young men to carry the books from classroom to classroom. We started from the Lower Form and worked our way up. Francis started out by introducing me as a Good Samaritan from our home of Dangriga who had been abroad for some time. He stated that I had assignment books to give to everyone, and that this was the first time anyone had done that. He then asked that the class President acknowledge the gifts by saying a few words of thanks on behalf of the class. This went on from classroom to classroom while I took some Videos.

My pitch to the class was not to under estimate the power of a pen, stay focused in class, and stay away from drugs. I told them about the 20 plus years I spent in the U.S. Army. I'd seen many ups and downs because of the power of a pen. I emphasized not to take it for granted that they are in a position many young people would love to be in. The opportunity to go through College. Some started College but could not finish for some reason or another. And some could not afford to start. Often the experience of graduating from College has to be postponed for later years if you maintain the desire.

I said to them that everyone is smart in their own way but they needed to have education to be able to nurture their skills to the fullest. That is what its all about. I mentioned opportunity, but you have to realize when you have it. The class President thanked me for the assignment books and the message about staying focused in class. I responded: 'you all are welcome,' and the entire class applauded. The reaction from the youngsters and their teachers was true

*(Continued on page 4)*

# GARIFUNA COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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by Stephen Palacio

## Lifestyle Upgrade

As members of the world's greatest Armed Forces, we are encouraged to take care of ourselves, which, from a military perspective makes lots of sense. Lacking good health, we would not be able to adequately defend our country. We are encouraged to take preventative measures to maintain good health. These measures can also work for the general population.

**Exercise-** on a regular basis; 30 minutes a day, a minimum of 3 days a week. Exercise is a key ingredient for good health. It tones the muscles, makes the heart and lungs work more efficiently, increases physical reserve and vitality, eases depression, assists the function of the bowels, leads to sound sleep and aids in every activity of daily life. Exercise helps prevent heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke and many other diseases.

**Diet-** is another major factor for a healthy life. Cutting back on our intake of fatty foods and decreasing our cholesterol level, goes a long way toward decreasing the incidences of heart disease and stroke.

**Do not smoke-** Cigarette smoking kills over 300,000 people in the United States each year. Lung cancer and emphysema are the best known among the most miserable outcomes. Pipe and cigar smoking can lead to cancer of the lips, tongue and esophagus. It is never too late to quit. Only two years after your last cigarette, your risk of heart attack returns to average. The immediate rewards of not smoking include better-tasting food, happier friends, less coughing, and better stamina

**Alcohol in moderation-** Excessive alcohol intake is a serious problem for some people in every age group. Drinking too much lead to depression and damage to the liver.

More importantly drinking and driving kills.

**Weight control-** Excessive body weight stresses the heart, the muscles, and the joints. It increases the likelihood of hernias, hemorrhoids, gallbladder disease, and varicose veins. It makes you less effective in personal encounters, and lowers your self-image. If you are fat, you are more likely to have heartburn, more surgical complications, more cases of breast cancer, more high blood pressure, more heart attacks, and more strokes.

**Avoiding injury through common sense-** More than half of all deaths before age 45 are due to avoidable injuries. We can avoid injuries by wearing seat belts in automobiles, helmets while bicycling or skating, and preservers while on small boats.

**Professional prevention practices-** As much as we encourage taking care of yourself, we should also stress that we should still consult our trained medical professionals. We should obtain periodic health examination or checkup, Screening for early problems, early treatment for problems, Immunizations and other public health measures, and Health risk appraisal.

Of all the things that we consider to be important in life, maintaining a healthy life style should be our number one priority. At a minimum, a vigorous lifestyle, a continuing sense of adventure and excitement, the exercise of personal will, and the acceptance of individual responsibility are essential to – and benefits of – a healthy life style. On a broader level, when we take care of ourselves we serve as example/inspiration to our families, our love ones and society on a whole. We decrease our reliance on our nation's healthcare system.

**Stephen Palacio, the youngest son of Ted Palacio is a Technical Sergeant in the United States Air Force. Currently, he is assigned to the Medical Operations Squadron at Davis Grant Medical Center in the immediate vicinity of Fairfield CA. We are fortunate to have him aboard as a contributing writer to the GCNC. Be sure to let him know you want to read more of his articles in the future!**

(Continued from page 3)

gratitude. I felt good to be able to do that for my community, and was elated to see the joy in the youngsters receiving their assignment books. Even though I would have liked to ride thru town and issue them out as I did before, I was too busy. After issuing all 391 books, Francis and I went to his office and he gave me a huge thank you hand shake. He mentioned that more Dangrigans from abroad should do a little towards the future of their community. I replied that most people from the States would like to do so but do not know how to. This was the first time I had done something on this scale even though I had been donating to Dangriga from time to time. This could have been anything small for some youths in the neighbor hood also. Its just the thought that counts. If you can, then why not?

My trip to Dangriga in October was a success. As usual it was a short three weeks, but my experience at Ecumenical College was unforgettable. One Love:

by Crispin Mejia Sr.

# GARIFUNA COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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## Profile of a Garividual GEORGE R. CASTILLO

George Ramon Castillo was born in Dangriga, Belize. He came to the United States in 1952 at age 21, served in the U.S. Air Force for over nine years, and was honorably discharged to continue his education. He earned his B.A from the University of Maine and Master of Divinity degree from Bangor Theological Seminary, Bangor, Maine, and was ordained at the First Congregational Church United Church of Christ of Brewer, Maine, in 1967.

Pastor Castillo served churches in De-



troit, Michigan, and Shaker Heights, Ohio. He earned another Master of Divinity degree in Pastoral Psychology and Counseling, from Ashland

Ohio, before entering the Federal Bureau of Prisons system in 1973. His life for over 20 years was devoted to ministering to the incarcerated.

He is married to Muriel Jermain and is the father of three children and grandfather of three. Reverend George Castillo is available for speaking engagements nationwide by arrangement. He will introduce your audience to a world that ultimately touches everyone...a world where former senators and captains of industry exist side-by-side with violent criminals. And where faith in God is the only thread prisoners can grasp for sanity and survival.

On Oct. 20 2002, he preached at three Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday services at the Dangriga Methodist Church in Dangriga, Belize, the church where he grew up and learned

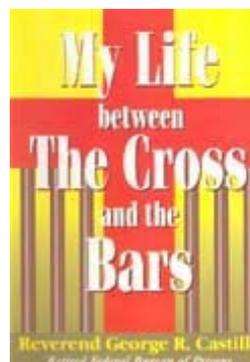
his morals and values. To pay tribute to the church and its people and their role in shaping him, he titled the sermon "Back to Basics." Harvest Thanksgiving service 'was important, as a cultural and spiritual event that I enjoyed as a child and young adult,' he said.

While in Belize, he also was the international guest speaker at a meeting of the Belize chapter of the Full Gospel Business Fellowship International. At this gathering, he took the opportunity to talk about the thing that is closest to this heart these days, prison reform. He also visited Hattieville prison, the only prison in the country, a dreadfully overcrowded institution with many needs.

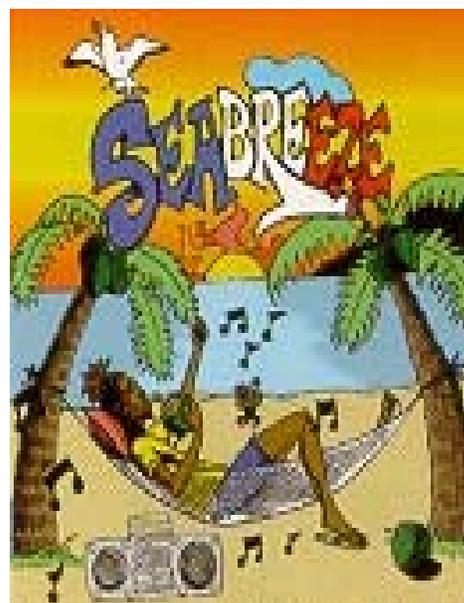
And he was interviewed by reporters from two newspapers in Belize. One of the reporters, Adele Ramos is the granddaughter of T.V. Ramos, who had been Castillo's Sunday school teacher when Castillo was a child.

After the interviews, speaking engagements and six preaching engagements, he took some time for personal reflections about the half-century that has passed since he left his native land. He said he was proud of the moral and ethical background that Belize provided him as a youth, and he also felt blessed for the opportunities to get an education, job, family and advancement that he found here in the United States.

Much of his philosophy that prison reform is urgently needed is reflected in his book, "*My Life Between the Cross and the Bars.*" In his presentations, Castillo explains why prison reform is necessary and how it can be accomplished. He firmly believes that 'faith in God is the only thread prisoners can grasp for sanity and sur-



vival.' He also believe they must learn marketable skills, morals and values to succeed on the outside. He offers steps to accomplish successful prison reform beginning with rehabilitation rather than more punishment. Chaplain Castillo can be reached at (850) 651-3103 or by fax at (850) 651-8597.



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## Belizable Quotes – reprinted from Ch 5 Belize News

### Myrtle Palacio

"You walk in, there is a poll clerk and a presiding officer. For general you'll encounter those officers first and you announce your name as usual. If you have an ID card, you can present your ID card. The law says you can vote without an ID card. Your name is checked to see if it is on the list, the presiding officer pulls out a ballot paper, initials the ballot paper-that is very important, that the presiding officer initials the ballot paper-you dip your right index finger if you have a right hand, into the ink right up to the bone. That is the law.

### Dean Barrow

I hope that I am ascribing this prop-

erly, but I believe it is Mose Hyde, who says on Krem Radio, who says, if you don't have a vat, rain water is just mud.

### Roy Cayetano

"The fact is that we were not welcomed at the settlement at the mouth of the Belize River, and so we came south of the settlement, south of the Sibun, and we settled these lands along the coast."

When they first arrived, the Garifuna people were primarily fishermen and farmers, living off the land in a tightly knit group, a stark contrast to today's communities. President of the National Garifuna Council, Roy Cayetano, says the people can adjust

and still maintain their values.

### Roy Cayetano

"We are not saying that our people should simply stick to the drums and cassava bread making. We have to recognise that literacy is important and technological literacy is important. We have to make adjustments that will enable us to participate effectively in the global economy."

### Sylvia Flores

"I was disciplined from a very early age by both my stepfather and mother. I learned from very early on that life is duty and that life is responsibility.

# GARIFUNA COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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## THE RULES ARE DIFFERENT IN BELIZE

By LAN SLUDER

### Part I of II

If you're looking for a place to live or to retire that's just like back home, only better, for the United States on the cheap, for Florida with ruins, reef and rum, you may get a rude awakening when you move to Belize. Because Belize just isn't like the U.S.A. Or Canada. It does have cheap rum, awe-inspiring ruins, beautiful Caribbean seas, and much more. But the rules are different. The people who make and enforce the rules are different. Sometimes there are no rules. Sometimes there is a set of rules for you, and a different one for everyone else. In a June 19, 1994, letter to the editor of The Reporter, a weekly newspaper in Belize City, a U.S. citizen, John Zelenih, who bought land in Corozal, does 700 words on the trials and tribulations he faced trying to build a house. Zelenih writes about the delays, bribes, and political shenanigans of daily life in Belize. He and his wife, Zelenih says, spent 13 months in a "living hell instead of the paradise we thought it would be." Zelenih came to the country "to retire and live our lives in peace because we thought it was a beautiful and laid back place. We have since found out it's not what it looks like on the surface."

Zelenih continues: "We've since sold our house and belongings at a great loss and are going back to the States. The last straw that broke the camel's back was last month, when 20 armed men made a gun & drug raid on our home. Nothing was found, but my wife could not sleep since it happened."

While the experiences of John Zelenih may not be typical, just about every expat resident of Belize has some story to tell about problems he or she faced in adjusting to life in Be-

lize - or, in not adjusting. Let's look at some of the differences, and what they mean to you as a potential resident or retiree.

### Population of a Small City

First, Belize is a country with a population hardly bigger than a small City in the U.S. Even including recent illegal and uncounted immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, the population of the entire country is hardly more than 230,000. My home town of Asheville, North Carolina, is about that size, with a county population of almost 200,000. The metro area population, at more than 325,000, is considerably higher than Belize.

Imagine the difficulties my home town, or yours, would have if it suddenly became a country. Belize has to maintain embassies, establish social, educational and medical systems, raise a little army, conduct affairs of state and international diplomacy, all with the resources of a small city. You can see the difficulties Belize faces in just getting by in a world of megastates. It lacks the people resources, not to mention the tax base and financial resources, to get things done in the way North Americans expect. If you're a snap-to-it, get-it-done-right kind of person, you're going to wrestle with a lot of crocodiles in Belize.

*Best advice: Go with the flow. Don't worry. Don't sweat the small stuff, or the big stuff, either.*

### Angst of Powerlessness

Most people seeking retirement or residency in Belize are white middle-class North Americans, from a

society still run by white middle-class North Americans. Belize, on the other hand, is a truly multi-cultural society, with Creoles, Mestizos, Maya, Garifuna, Asians, and what in the rest of Latin America would be called gringos, living together in complex and changing relationships, living together in probably more harmony than anyone has a right to expect. In several areas, Creoles dominate; increasingly, in other areas Spanish-speaking Belizeans and immigrants dominate.

One thing is for certain, though: In this mix, North Americans, Europeans and Asians have very limited power.

Money talks in Belize, of course, as it does everywhere. Most of Belize's tourism industry is owned by North American interests. Much of its industry and agriculture is controlled by U.S. multinational companies.

Politically, however, the typical North American resident of Belize is powerless. He or she has no vote and is truly outside the political process.

That's the fate of expats everywhere, but some who come to Belize, seeing a country that is superficially much like back home, are shocked that they no longer have a power base and are, in a political sense at least, truly powerless.

The North American or European is not so much at the bottom rung of Belizean society, as off the ladder completely. If you like to pick up the phone and give your congressional representative a piece of your mind, you're going to miss this opportunity in Belize.

*Best advice: Put your energies in charity or volunteer work where you can make a real difference.*

# GARIFUNA COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

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(Continued from page 1) William R. Cayetano

performing a four-part orchestration entitled 'Ode to Independence.' The piece was quite obviously well rehearsed resulting in a virtually flawless performance. After the show, I was led to believe some event was supposed to take place at the Pablo Lambey Center. Inexplicably the Center was closed. I'm not sure why the PLC was closed on such a beautiful day. The 19<sup>th</sup> parade, such as it was, seemed rather poorly organized, judging by comments from the locals and I'm still not quite sure what was supposed to take place at the Elejo Beni Park, which is where the parade ended. Mercifully, the rains finally came ending the festivities for the year 2002 somewhat abruptly.

**Dateline** San Francisco: The GCNC staged its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual celebration at the Caribbean Gardens on the night of the 23<sup>rd</sup> November. It was a cold night though with a brisk breeze blowing in from the Pacific Ocean. Almost single-handedly, Ernest 'Pala' Ramirez put this event together, calling on all his managerial skills to make it happen. The brother deserves all our gratitude and kudos, particularly those of us living in this part of the State. It was beautiful listening to Carla Miranda sing the national anthem a capella, and in Garifuna no less, followed by a brief speech from the GCNC chairman Egbert Higinio. Then the drums took over. Yeah, it was all good.

**Dateline** Other Cities: I got feedback from Houston, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, Miami and New York. You see, all the above-mentioned States have significant numbers of resident Belizean families. In particular, I was encouraged by reports of the Honduran turnout in Houston. I was told on my way back to San Francisco that the scope of the celebration in Belize City had surpassed that of Dangriga. Make of that what you will. I'm told even the town of Labuga has a celebration in the works now, although it's not entirely clear its directly related to the Belizean 19<sup>th</sup> event. Adebisi Akinrimisi covered the L.A.'s celebration.

So I ask the question again, as I've had for the last five years. Now that we're done with celebrations, why are we, as a culture, still so stagnant economically? Please don't rush headlong into hasty answers. Think and rethink your responses, because you'll quickly find there are no easy answers. I took careful note of a lengthy study done by a group including Ted and Joseph Palacio relating to the scholastic decline of the Garifuna children over the past two decades or more. Final results of the study are still pending, I suspect we won't be too surprised by the eventual outcome. On the 19<sup>th</sup> November morning, Fred Garcia treated radio listeners across the country to a scathing attack of current political and Garifuna leaders. Copies of his speech are making the rounds of the Internet as I write. I've included a few juicy excerpts below. You will definitely want to read the complete article to capture the full essence of what he had to say:

*"The truth of the matter is that we have not prospered as*

*the propaganda of our leaders would make the world believe and in recent times we have descended into such decadence that no one respects us anymore. Our leaders are, for the most part, men of straw who look out for their friends and family only and preach of a unity that they themselves have helped to destroy..... I am of the considered opinion that there is nothing to celebrate except our resilience, (what with a somnambulant economy and projects that we do not participate in) and if I had my way I would silence the drums of my fathers until there comes a time when we are once again a proud and enterprising people..... But the irony of it all is that the people who were considered to be the best teachers in the country now have the worst schools. AND STILL WE GO OUR MERRY WAY..... We have not fared well in the economic development arena either..... Prime Minister Said Musa visited with persons of the multi-million dollar Soya Bean Project in Yo Creek Village, Orange Walk and had lunch with them last Friday. When Prime Minister Musa comes to us on the 13th November, he will be bringing a National Hero Award for the late T. V. Ramos while the son of this national hero languishes in poverty, as did the other son when he was alive.....In closing, I would want to emphasize that I ask no one to follow me. I am no T. V. Ramos and do not pretend to be. I am sure, however, of the following:*

- 1. I was born here not in St. Vincent or Roatan**
- 2. I am better read than T. V. Ramos ever was**
- 3. I am angrier than T. V. Ramos ever was**
- 4. I am meaner than T. V. Ramos ever was**
- 5. I am, like Glenn Godfrey and Harry Courtney, not constrained by the teachings of the bible."**

So there you have it! I was privileged to dialogued at length with the Mayor of Dangriga – Cassian Nunez. I've known Kenny for quite sometime now, having played basketball with and against him in the Los Angeles area for a number of years. I came away with the most positive impression he was making tremendous strides as Mayor in a town long overdue for a leader with foresight, selflessness, dedication and a sense of elder statesmanship. One cannot possibly overemphasize the importance of civic infrastructure and that is indeed being accomplished under his present stewardship. A growing town must have a good drainage system. It becomes a priority when the town is situated below sea level. Fact is, he has a vision for the town, and the residents would do well to see the vision come to fruition.

Those are my thoughts and observations over a 19<sup>th</sup> period that was much too short, went by quickly and left us wondering about events for next year. As a culture we can't afford to wait around and 'see' what happens. We've already 'seen' what does happen when all we do is wait around. Somehow, someway, we need to be more proactive. No doubt Crispin Mejia is leading the way in that respect. I'm going to be challenging the GCNC to follow suit.