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Dr. Vangella Hazle Buchanan

The story of Lionel Romney, an Afro Caribbean man in World War II was presented to the West Indian public by his daughter Mary L. Romney-Schaab on Sunday, February 26, 2023 at the West Indian Social Club of Hartford (WISCH), 3340 Main St. as part of WISCH's Black History Month celebration,

The program was moderated by Dr. Vangella Hazle Buchanan, editor of the book *An Afro-Caribbean in the Nazi Era: From Papiamentu to German* by author Mary L. Romney Schaab.

The following is a brief excerpt from the book.

Lionel Romney: I was in a camp, a camp in Austria.

Mary Romney: In Austria? Not in Germany?

LR: No. In Austria. We came in from Italy. They took us to Austria.

MR: By train?

LR: Well, cattle cars. Everybody was bundled in there.

MR: And where in Austria?

LR: I was up in a place. . . . a concentration camp. One of those notorious concentration camps, Mauthausen. It's up on a hill. And they had the crematoriums, and the camps, you know, the barracks-like thing, you know. . . . So many people in a barracks.

MR: Were you ever in . . . what kind of danger would you say you were in during that time?

LR: Every day was dangerous. There wasn't a day that wasn't. Sometimes I said, "How the hell I going to get out of here?" And then we heard different things of the

atrocities of the Germans was committing in the camps, like before they leave, they kill everybody, you see, if they had to run away. But the place in Austria where we were was close to the Czechoslovakian border. You can hear the Russians, and the concussion from the artillery,

The audience was captivated by the tale of how Lionel Romney, a black man from the Dutch island of Saint Maarten, found himself a prisoner of war in Italy, and later as a prisoner in the infamous Death Camp Mauthausen, in Austria.

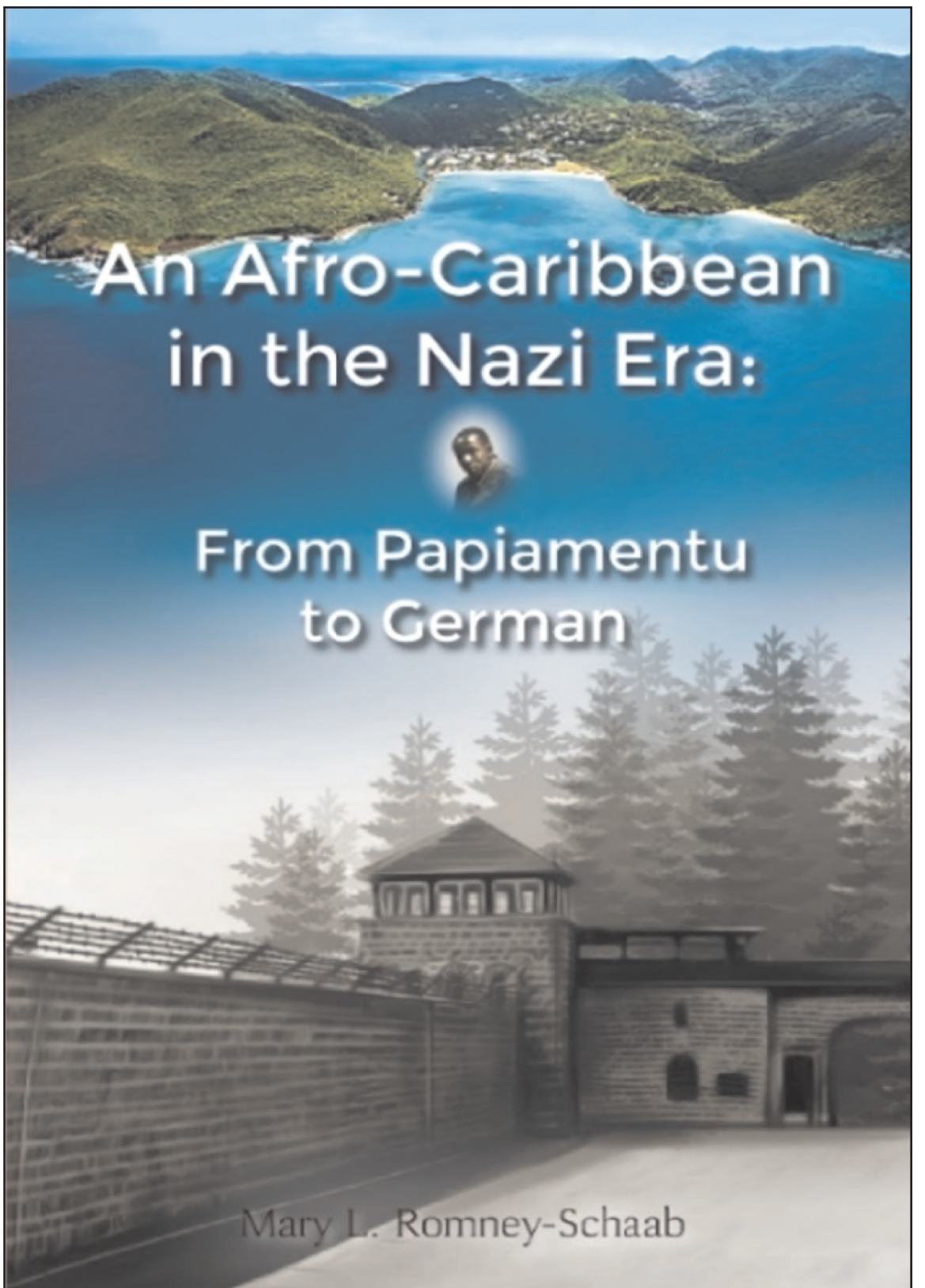
Prisoners transported to this camp were literally worked to death as they carried slabs of granite sometimes weighing over 100 lbs on their already emaciated bodies up the Stairs of Death, numerous times a day.

"How did he survive?" was one of the audience's questions. "How did he end up in a Death camp?" These and many more questions were answered by Romney-Schaab as she told the emotional story of a man who was almost lost to history.

She presented clips of conversations she had with her dad on his wartime experiences. Although Lionel Romney's name appears in some texts, little is known about him. Romney-Schaab's persistence paid off as she received one surprise after another in her quest to document her father's story in a series of recorded interviews.

Romney-Schaab encouraged the audience to embark on collecting their own oral histories and not to wait for others to continue telling our stories.

The author of the award-winning book explained how challenging it was to collect these stories because of the traumatic nature of the events her father had experienced during World War II.



Lionel Romney

She discussed her own painful journey of visiting Italy and Mauthausen and her initial fear of entering the chambers; however, she found a certain amount of peace when she finally did enter.

Lionel Romney knew seven to eight languages and had

traveled widely on merchant ships. When he embarked on what he thought was a routine trip on a merchant ship, he accidentally found himself caught in the middle of a war and he found various means to survive. Fortunately, his incarceration in Mauthausen ended when the



Mary L. Romney Schaab

Americans liberated the camp. His story after that is a subject for another time.

Mary Romney-Schaab was born in New York City, but her roots are in the Caribbean island nation of St. Maarten. She is a retired educator

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Health & Wellness

Diabetes And You



Dr Laurice Howell

Did you know that people of color have the highest rate of type 2 diabetes? Did you know that the obesity rate is highest among people of color, especially among women of color?

Did you know that obesity is one of the main factors that increase your risk of getting type 2 diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes is related to lifestyle habits such as unhealthy eating habits, inactivity, and genes. Uncontrolled blood glucose increases your risk of developing kidney disease, heart disease, and hypertension.

Managing your blood glucose can also help to reduce your risk of amputations, and diabetic retinopathy (nerve damage). It is important to recognize how lifestyle and self-care can help delay or prevent type 2 diabetes and its complications.

When it comes to lifestyle, the American Heart Association rec-

ommends 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity a week, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity. You can spread these activities during the course of one week.

A healthy diet helps in preventing weight gain and diabetes. An increase in the use of carbonated beverages, foods high in sugar, such as baked products made from white flour, processed and packed ready-to-eat foods, and fried foods, contribute to an unhealthy eating pattern.

An excessive intake of these foods can lead to obesity and type 2 diabetes. **You're at risk for type 2 diabetes if you:**

- * Have pre-diabetes (A1C greater than 5.4).
- * Are overweight.
- * Are 45 years or older.
- * Have a parent, brother, or sister with type 2 diabetes.
- * Are physically active less than 3 times a week.

* Have ever had gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy) or given birth to a baby who weighed over 9 pounds?

* Are you an African American, Hispanic, Latino, American Indian, or Alaska Native person? Some Pacific Islanders and Asian American people are also at higher risk. (Source: CDC)

You can prevent or delay type 2 diabetes with proven lifestyle changes, for example: Lose weight if overweight; adopt healthy eating habits, and get regular physical activity.

What to know if you already have diabetes?

Get tested and begin managing your disease to prevent or delay complications.

Take the diabetes risk test to determine your risk. <https://www.cdc.gov/prediabetes/risktest/index.html>

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with over 40 years teaching English as a second or foreign language in Madrid, New York, Barcelona, and Connecticut.

She has an Ed.M. in Instructional Technology, and an M.A. in the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), both from Columbia University; an M.A. in Spanish, and a B.A. in Spanish, both from Middlebury College.

Romney Schaab is interested in languages, culture, African Diaspora history, and oral history. Her book *An Afro-Caribbean in the Nazi Era: From Papiamentu to German* won a 2021 International AAHGS Book Award and a Best Caribbean History Book of All Time

Award.

The event garnered much attention from a diverse group from the West Indian/Caribbean community and the African American community, as well as curious young people who desired to know more about their history.

Overall, the presentation was appreciated and the audience appeared eager for more as they kept the program vibrant and engaging.

The Education Committee of the West Indian Social Club of Hartford Inc. must be commended for continuing to promote educational and entertaining programs within the community. Kudos to Claudette Graham and her team.

We Are Here To Serve You

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Health & Wellness

Jamaicans Urged To Get Routinely Screened For Glaucoma

Consultant Ophthalmologist at the Cornwall Regional Hospital, Dr. Valence Jordan, is urging Jamaicans to get routine screenings for glaucoma, so that the necessary early interventions can be made to preserve vision.

Speaking at a JIS Think Tank on Tuesday (February 28), Dr. Jordan noted that glaucoma can severely hamper an individual's quality of life and that all efforts should be made to prevent this from happening.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness worldwide and that open angle glaucoma, which is the most common form, results in increased eye pressure.

Fifty per cent of persons who are afflicted with glaucoma are unaware that they have the disease, as there are often no early symptoms. Dr. Jordan noted that while there is no cure for glaucoma, if caught early, persons can prevent further vision loss and preserve their sight.

Dr. Jordan explained that with glaucoma, "the optic nerve or the eye nerve that carries information from the eyes to the brain gets progressively damaged and as it gets damaged you lose vision." He highlighted the likely effects of the progression of the condition.

"It starts with your side vision and then eventually your central vision goes as well and when your vision is going, this affects your ability to carry out common daily activities like driving or reading or getting dressed, so essentially, when you're losing your vision your quality of life



Dr Valence Jordan

is affected," he noted.

"Because the optic nerve damage is irreversible, so there's nothing that we can do to bring back the vision that is lost, all we can do is try to slow down the damage. So, get screened early," he stressed.

The ophthalmologist further implored persons diag-

nosed with glaucoma to take their medication as prescribed, noting that missed medication could put the optic nerve at risk.

Dr. Jordan received the award for Most Impactful Oral Presentation at the 13th National Health Research Conference in November 2022.

He presented research on

'Vision-related quality of life in Jamaican glaucoma patients: Economic perspectives,' which evaluated the economic factors affecting a population of Jamaican glaucoma patients at one health facility and to determine the association with vision-related quality of life.

The study found that most

patients had low monthly income, and many were either retired or unemployed, which impacted their ability to purchase eye drops and to do investigations required for glaucoma management. (Source: JIS, Written by Peta-Gay Hodges).

<https://jis.gov.jm/media/2023/03/Winner-3.jpg?v=1677686687>



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Culture

Jamaica’s Heritage In Dance

Music and dance have always been integral elements of a people’s culture; in Jamaica this is no different. Jamaica’s musical and dance forms are rich, powerful, and vibrant and reflect both the high and low points in the society.

They are aspects of Jamaican life which represent the general sentiments of the working class and generate feelings of joy and national pride.

In fact, Jamaica has gained much of its earlier international acclaim through the popularity of musicians such as Bob Marley and the Wailers, Byron Lee and Willard White and iconic dancers like Rex Nettleford, L’Antoinette Stines, Tony Wilson and Ivy Baxter to name a few.

Jamaica’s musical and dance heritage has gone through various stages of transformation over a relatively short period. Evolving from the deeply Afrocentric Kumina and Revival through Mento and Ska, Jamaican music and dance have always had its own distinctive sound and rhythm.

With heavy influences from jazz, rhythm and blues and the Rastafari movement, Reggae and Dancehall music have become internationally known as musical expressions indigenous to this small island in the Caribbean.

In addition to the information on Jamaica’s musical and dance heritage provided in this article, the Jamaica Information Service (JIS) also has for sale a few publications which have been designed to provide more comprehensive information on Jamaica’s musical and dance history.

One such publication entitled ‘Rhythms: Jamaica’s Heritage in Music and Dance’ celebrates the nation’s rich cultural heritage with a



Traditional Dancers

detailed account of the evolution of Jamaica’s music and dance throughout the years while the activity book “Wheel An’ Tun: An Introduction to Traditional Jamaican Dances” introduces children aged six to twelve years to the origins and features of ten traditional dances.
Source:Jamaica Information Service (JIS)

Dear Neighbor,
I am thrilled to announce that Speaker Ritter has appointed me as a Deputy Speaker. The Deputy Speaker will assume the duties of the Speaker in their absence.
Serving as Deputy Speaker is an enormous responsibility, and I am honored that Speaker Ritter has appointed me to be part of his leadership team. I look forward to serving in this position during the legislative session.



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