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Spirit Airlines: Direct Flights To Jamaica, Third Largest West Indian Immigrant Population In CT

Mark D. Milward

State Representative Bobby Gibson together with Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont, Spirit Airlines and the Connecticut Airport Authority (CAA) announced direct nonstop airline service from Hartford, Connecticut (Bradley International Airport) to Montego Bay, Jamaica beginning December 15, 2022.

A coalition led by Rep. Gibson and Andrew Lawrence, President of a Caribbean trade advocacy group, the Caribbean Trade Council gathered for the press conference announcement held at the Bradley International Airport Sheraton Hotel, Thursday, September 1, 2022.

Hartford, Connecticut maintains the third largest population of Jamaicans in the United States behind Miami and New York and the Caribbean population is the largest immigrant population in the state. While the effort to establish direct flights between Connecticut and Jamaica has been ongoing for a number of years, its timing is quite significant as both communities begin to emerge from the COVID-19 post pandemic crisis.

Spirit aims to provide service year-round four times per week and is the first airline to offer this nonstop service to Jamaica.

Much of the discussion has been about the convenience of enabling these direct flights to accommodate citizen and family travel, however there is a significant potential economic business gain from cargo and brand Jamaica prod-

ucts that can now be shipped directly to the Connecticut community and avoiding additional transportation costs for goods and services coming in from the New York and Boston traditional shipment routes. Parallel to this socio-economic development opportunity is the sister city relationship now under development between Groton/New London, Connecticut whereby a business relationship between the port cities of Kingston and Groton/New London was being forged.

Consul General Alison Wilson led a Jamaican delegation to Connecticut in December 2019 just prior to the pandemic to begin discussions on the sister city relationship and returned in February 2021 to sign the agreement with the Mayors, City Council and local authorities in the Groton/New London area.

These direct flights will most certainly enhance and contribute towards the development of that social, cultural and economic exchange opportunity.

A quote by Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont stated, "Today's announcement with Spirit Airlines not only makes it easier for our state's residents to directly travel to Jamaica, but it also strengthens Bradley's reputation as one of the best and most convenient airports available.

Bradley is a key economic driver for Connecticut, and the more airlines and destinations that we can add from the airport, the more attractive our state becomes to com-



State Rep. Bobby Gibson (L) receives Spirit airplane model from John Kirby (R), Spirit VP of Network and Planning. Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont (C) in background looks on.

panies that are seeking to grow their own operations here. I am excited that we are partnering with Spirit Airlines to make direct travel between Connecticut and Jamaica a reality, and I look forward to the airline's continued growth in our state."

David Lehman, commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, commented, we are excited about the economic opportunities this new service unlocks for Connecticut and

look forward to building on our relationship with the country of Jamaica,"

The Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development can look to include in its economic development strategies, opportunities within the Jamaica Logistics Hub (JLH) initiatives. The JLH project is aimed at growing Jamaica's economy and developing the nation as a logistics-centered transshipment point. The transshipment of goods and services globally requires air, land and sea

transportation capabilities and the addition of air transportation by Spirit can directly and indirectly support that initiative which Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness stated was Jamaica's number one investment project back in 2019.

Violette Haldane, Jamaican born, and president of the West Indian Foundation (WIF) commented, "The direct flights will be a great benefit to elderly Jamaicans wanting to travel back home and now will be able to avoid going through airport connections that make travel more difficult and challenging for them."

Establishing these direct flights to Jamaica is another example of harnessing the economic value of the Jamaican Diaspora. In particular the northeast Diaspora has demonstrated its leadership in a big way and should be commended. Rep. Gibson, along with the leaders of the West Indian Social Club of Hartford, past and present were instrumental in getting the Connecticut Jamaica direct flight service to materialize.

It is the most significant accomplishment of a US Jamaican Diaspora community in the past twenty to twenty-five years that with a collective effort pushed for and helped to establish a socio-economic benefit for both communities. The move undertaken by Spirit Airlines should give a much-needed boost to this market potential and cause other airlines to follow suit with alignments on Jamaica's transshipment development aspirations and social, economic and cultural exchange agreements.



Mr. Kenneth Bennett, Sr., Centenarian and a founding member of the West Indian Social Club

Kenneth Bennett Sr., Centenarian, Receives WISC Meritorious Service Medal

By Mark Milward

Mr. Kenneth Bennett, Sr. was celebrated at the West Indian Social Club of Hartford, Inc. on Sunday, August 28, 2022, in honor of his 100th Birthday. Bennett's actual birthday is August 31, 1922.

As the oldest member of the West Indian Social Club and one of its founding members, Bennett, fondly referred to "King Bennett" is a true pioneer and hero in the Greater Hartford community. He has served as a leader in the US upon his arrival in 1943 and is an example of courage, hard work, dedication

and community service that should be emulated by all. His is a tough trail to follow.

Bennett's service includes Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission- town of Bloomfield, CT, member of the Bloomfield Town Council, member of the Bloomfield Commission on Human rights, and has been honored by the Secretary of the State of Connecticut for his continuous years of public service. He is a member of Excelsior Lodge #3

Continued on Page 2

Centenarian Receives Meritorious Service Medal

Continued from Page 1

and is a 33rd degree Mason in the United Supreme Council, and is a member of Tamar court No. 1 Heroines of Jericho and Illustrious Grand Prayer for Hartford Consistory No. 80. And has held numerous positions in the Prince Hall family.

Bennett has also been recognized by the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) in 2022 and is the recipient of the Badge of Honor, Meritorious Service Medal. The award is being presented in recognition of Bennett's contributions in the US Diaspora. The award will be presented on Heroes Day in

Kingston, Jamaica, October 17, 2022.

What is not known by many is the journey recounted by Mr. Bennett when he appeared on "The Jamaica Diaspora Show" during Black History month, February 14, 2019, when he was 96 years old. He told the story of his travel to the United States on the USS David C Shanks, a Naval Transport vessel that departed Kingston Harbor on May 7, 1943, with 4000 Jamaicans on board.

At the age of 20 years old, he was one of the passengers on this over crowded vessel. The story that he told of the travel was researched

and much of what he recounted with clear descriptions and unknown at the time of the broadcast was later verified.

The USS Shanks transported Jamaicans to the US, and there was also the USS George Washington transport vessel that carried a lesser number of passengers (over 1000) but the details he shared were incredible and shocking.

When we hear the story about how the Jamaicans came and worked in the tobacco fields to help with the labor shortages that occurred during World War II and hear stories of their treatment in the

US and the founding of the West Indian Social Club of Hartford, we do not know or hear stories about the journey itself which was rocked with danger, dogging sea explosive mines, German enemy aircraft overhead, sleeping in the dark at night and not being allowed to strike a match or traveling west in the Caribbean and through the Gulf of Mexico to avoid German U-Boats, or zigzagging as they travelled with US Navy destroyer escorts to protect them from being attacked.

He told these stories of the danger these young men faced. We now research the archives to find out how many of us did not reach US shores. Research tells us about the ship where Jamaicans engaged even in mutiny when being deported back to Jamaica. (i.e., USS Bienville). Indeed it was a dangerous journey and the Jamaican immigrant workers who traveled to these shores were "soldiers of the sea," before they became "soldiers of the soil."

After hearing Bennett's story and researching the archives, this writer found his own father's name on the passenger list on the

USS George Washington transport vessel Bennett told us about at that time. It had left Kingston Harbor June 7, 1943, taking the same route and risking the same dangers as the USS Shanks.

We are greatly honored, proud and blessed to have Mr. Bennett among us. It was a great and historical event to honor him at the WISC on that special day. Many hundreds were in attendance, and they came from far and wide. It was also the first occasion of a WISC Centurion birthday at the WISC.

Bennett has been a faithful servant as a member of Horace Bushnell Congregational Church (now Liberty Christian Center); for 50 years, serving as chairman of the Trustee Board, senior deacon and chief deacon, and served on various committees. He is a great father and a man of God. He is currently an active member of the First Cathedral Church in Bloomfield, CT.

Brother Bennett, or "Sweet B," a distinguished community servant and a magnificent Masonic Man, congratulations for a job well done!

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Election Season Reflection



Leon Fraser

Whenever the election cycle gets in gear, especially for governor, senators, and some mayoral races, I always wonder where is the “talented tenth” that should be in the wings, groomed and waiting for the opportune time to step into the breach? What does it take to address the breach and secure the long-awaited equality that was, and still is, said to be part of the dream of America? Is the unspoken caveat connected with being Euro-Americans?

The focus of the questions is directed to members of a group stating that they are the advocates for the “advancement” of a particu-

lar group of people. The narratives of the past inadvertently bring into prominence the lack of preparation and grooming that ought to have occurred as a matter of “advancement,” and deal with the points of progress.

At this juncture, there should have been sufficient time to have individuals prepped with the right stuff and ready to jump into the breach to make some things a reality with economic strength to supplement political will.

I make these comments as I watch the buildup to the governor’s race here in Connecticut, the opponent of the incumbent making a big deal about his grandfather arriving in this country with meager resources, and being processed through Ellis Island.

It makes me laugh, in a sarcastic manner, at the ability to be able to accumulate sufficient wealth in two generations to become a stable, affluent individual with enough pizzazz and confidence in wanting to become the CEO of a state that has a longer tradition of Afro-Americans residing, toiling and building up, but not having enough

wealth to be able to invest in an election bid that can guarantee a suitable return on such an investment.

Where are the economic prospective and political will of Afro-Americans who have generations of family on this land long before Ellis Island was given a name by the Euro-Americans? Are they (Afro-Americans) only good for entertainment value?

Without access to the minutes of the meetings held in Niagara back then, and no notes, comments or letters from the only black woman present, it can only be speculated as to what the conversations were about back then, and seeing their progress at this point in time.

This reality leaves little to the imagination that they are in line with the requests made when they were given their original “seed money” to get their “advancement” group started. It was designed to be a deterrent to the other “uplifting” organization.

The presence of two dominant political parties in this country has been the mainstay for as long as we all wish to remember, and there

are times when we all feel betrayed and disillusioned by either party in the manner that the folks of African ethnicity have been treated and the minimum concessions that have been tossed in our direction.

I dare to postulate the emergence of a third political party that would be formed by people of African descent encapsulated in a party of “advancement.” Is there a specific reason why an organization has not seen it fit to break away from the apron strings of their benefactors and become a true force for change in this country that have taken their ballots for granted?

Again, it begs the question: Was there an agreement made when they were inoculated in Niagara with startup funds? There are many who will dismiss this suggestion as obnoxious, but the truth is staring them in the face. There are smaller groups of Euro-Americans that have been around less than half the time as Afro-Americans with a vested interest in securing everything for an expansionist country and with more economic power.

Where are the startup corporations and places of entertainment to co-fund efforts to garner wealth to advocate for, and to finance party politics and help us get a seat at the table? Is there a plan in place?

The need for a third party is a reality because there are many who are discontented with the existing parties, but there is no alternative and they do not have a seat at the table.

The Democrats did everything to keep folks like us off the ballots for a long time and have now reformed.

The other party is still seeing us just as a bloc of votes to unseat the other, and we just keep going from pillow to post. There is one group right now that is poised to take on the political fight and get people of color properly seated at the table of equality in this country.

Now is the time to take on that role of “dual consciousness” and make it a reality if the mantra of using the “talented tenth” for betterment of the people they say they represent, rather than continuously stretching the hand out with the hat in it.



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The Queen, The UK Monarchy, Untold Wealth: Destitution For Many Colonies

By Leon Fraser

In the context of education, the educability of younger generations requires thoughtful teaching and attentiveness to prevent blurring of facts and past actions, pitfalls to be avoided; and should mistakes occur corrective actions are essential to avert repetition of the decision or act, thereby enhancing quality of living standards.

Thus, individuals and systems charged with nurturing spongy minds must also have the capacity for choices with a disposition that guard against perpetual misguidance, mis-education and deception, and against the reoccurrence of unwanted behavior.

To many people of African ancestry on this side of the Atlantic, the recent demise of the titular head of the UK monarchy was not greeted with any solemn subservience, but rather a high degree of jubilation. This perspective is coupled with the knowledge that the sun is about to set on the empire of the imperial dynasty that has perpetuated death and destruction of millions of people across this planet in the name of a monarch. It propped up its hegemony on the valuable minerals as well as ill-gotten fortune that leave many countries desolate, in peril, and destitute.

For a country that does not have gold mines, the UK has a vast storage of gold commodity, and no clear source of their riches rather than the spoils of wars that they have promoted and from which they benefitted.

From early days, they saw the need to use pirates and buccaneers/robbers to achieve their riches, and along with the Vatican, they trampled on the rights and necks of folks from across the globe as they pursued the ultimate goal of establishing an empire. The Crown Jewels are also spoils of war, yet the UN or The Hague will not question their possession, nor will they question those countries about their wealth and the methods used in its acquisition.

I love James Bond's movies yet I am well aware that his espionage and skulduggery as per his title when he was OHMS (On Her Majesty Service) duty; he sought to destabilize other countries in the name of goodwill for the

queen. Many countries were left in shambles when they sought to, and were successful in terminating the lives of many heads of state across the globe just because they had the backing of other subject countries that were not strong enough to counter such actions. This was done on the advice of Her Majesty, as well as the tacit approval of the so-called global first-world agencies, UN, WHO, and others.

It is very interesting to hear platitudes and words of grief from her loyal subjects, especially those of Afrocentric ethnicity wishing that the monarch could have lived another 100 years. That just crystallizes the fact and power of the mis-education that has been ingrained in the minds of the little ones that were inculcated in the indoctrination of subservience and in complete ignorance of their particular tradition of the African culture. Garvey and Malcolm, and later Martin, as well as many other notable leaders of the past have extolled the need for suppressed people to begin the process of awareness by teaching their own children and to tell their own storyline.

There is no way the minds of the future generations should be left to the creativity of their oppressor, that is not the way forward or more clearly the process of insanity—doing the same thing and expecting a different result.

So, for all the “loyal Subjects” that are in mourning at the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, ask yourself this question: Did my (afrocentric) tradition begin with the arrival of ships registered under the flag of the British East Indian Company or part of Com bo lus's, not Columbus, convoy of ships? Or is my tradition part of that great race of people that travelled and peopled the globe from Egypt to the Cape of Azania, from Timbuktu to all Asia, all of the Americas, and lands in between?

For example, Jamaica became a British colony from 1707 and a Crown colony in 1866. The Colony was primarily used for sugarcane production, and experienced many slave rebellions over the course of British rule. Jamaica was granted independence in 1962. A constitutional monarchy, the Queen

was Sovereign. In all of her official duties relating to Jamaica, the Queen speaks and acts as Queen of Jamaica, quite distinct from her role in the UK. Jamaica is part of the Commonwealth and the British monarch remains head of state. The Governor-General appointed on advice of the Jamaican Prime Minister represents the Queen on the island.

The island of Barbados was a British colony from 1625 until 1966. From 1966 to 2021, it was a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy, modeled on the Westminster system, with Queen Elizabeth II as head of state. Barbados gained its independence from the United Kingdom on November 30, 1966, and on November 30, 2021, Barbados became the world's newest republic, ending the nearly 400 years of British rule and relationship with the British monarchy.

Though its leaders no longer swear loyalty to the crown, Barbados remains a part of the British Commonwealth, a voluntary association of 54 countries with roots in the British Empire.

Reflecting on Barbados as a republic, John Perkins offered a comment published in the December 2021 edition of *The West Indian American*. He said: “Barbados was one of England's first slave colonies. English settlers first occupied the island in 1627 and under British control. It became a sugar plantation economy using enslaved people brought in from Africa. Slavery was abolished in Barbados in 1834 and the island became fully Independent in 1966.

The birth of the republic, 55 years to the day since Barbados declared independence, unclasps almost all the colonial bonds that have kept the tiny island tied to England since an English ship claimed it for King James I in 1625.”

John Perkins cited a poignant quote from the island's first Prime Minister: “Barbadian leaders had mooted a Republic since the run-up to independence in 1966, when the island's first Prime Minister, Errol Barrow, told a British Minister his nation would ‘not loiter on colonial property past closing time’”

Perkins, noted that Prince Charles was the guest of honor at the handover ceremony at midnight on Tuesday, November 30, 2021 when Barbados became a republic. “In his speech, Prince Charles reiterated the continuing ties between the two nations despite the constitutional status change. He acknowledged the ‘appalling atrocity of slavery’ Barbados suffered. The new era for Barbados ends Britain's centuries of influence, including more than 200 years when the island was a hub for the transatlantic slave trade.”

Yes, Britain controlled at least a fifth of the lands of this planet at one point in conjunction (not conspirator) with the Vatican which had its own one fifth, and promised not to step on each other's toes by the separation of “church and state,” showing that there was collusion all along to garner the wealth of the planet for their sustenance using devious and callous methods along the way. I really do pity those that mourn “her Highness” because learning of about the past is such a blob of saliva mixed with clay on a linen sheet, terrible and ugly.

As time moves ever forward, the ascension of King Charles III to the throne brings into focus his actions and reactions to global events

that will certainly affect how he relates to his position on the stage of affairs. King Charles III ought to bear in mind that his predecessors have been dethroned and beheaded, and the UK about to exit from its protectorate of unity in the Brexit process.

Britain is looking at its horizon of global leadership decline. Most of the once-loyal colonies have seen the ruse used over the centuries, none of the African countries are crying, neither the country of India, the crown jewel of the Empire in tears, and most certainly for the once-loyal island colonies Jamaica and Barbados, the time for colonization has gone; enough is enough.

Will the monarchy respect the wishes and requests of the independent countries that were once colonies and return some of what was taken? Will the jewels be returned to the people of Ethiopia and India? Will the gold be returned to the countries of Africa? Just like how Antwerp is considered the Diamond capital of the world, yet does not have a single mine, in a similar way will it be said to become with Britain?



In an overnight ceremony in the capital, Bridgetown, Dame Sandra Mason, fourth from right, was sworn in as President. Prime Minister Mia Mottley, Sir Garfield Sobers, Barbadian singer Rihanna and The Prince of Wales, attended the event, which coincided with the country's 55th anniversary of Independence. (Photo Courtesy: John Perkins)



In his speech, Prince Charles acknowledged the “appalling atrocity of slavery” Barbados suffered. The new era for Barbados ends Britain's centuries of influence, including more than 200 years when the island was a hub for the transatlantic slave trade. (Photo Courtesy: John Perkins)



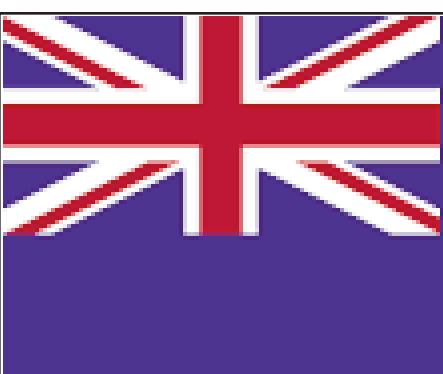
To signify the official change of power, a final salute was made to the British monarchy and the Royal Standard flag was lowered and replaced (Photo Courtesy: John Perkins).



Queen Elizabeth's pre-independent Jamaica visit



Queen Elizabeth invested Jamaica's Gov-General His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen as knight.



Jamaica became a British colony from 1707 and a Crown colony in 1866. The Colony was primarily used for sugarcane production, and experienced many slave rebellions over the course of British rule. Jamaica gained its independence August 1962, and Jamaica's flag replaced the Royal Standard flag.