

## **INDIANS, YOU HAVE ARRIVED! WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?**

Leela Ramdeen : Paper delivered on 17 July at Dattatreya Education Foundation Conference

**(Observe protocol) (speech = 11 pages. The rest are articles on CARICOM).**

I would like to commend Mr Ramesh Persad Maharaj for organizing this 2-Day Conference on this important topic. At this stage of our democracy, it is good to step back and take stock of where Indians, and indeed, all of us in TT, have come from and where we are going as members of a plural society in a globally connected, highly technological, rapidly changing world.

Indians form the largest ethnic group in TT (40.3%) and can be found in all strata of TT society and in many professions. Indeed, they dominate certain professions. As you know, Indians first arrived on these shores in 1845 (over 165 years ago).

**There were two major migrations of people from India:** the first group came between 1845 and 1917 during which time various ships (e.g. Fatel Rozack, Avoca, Allanshaw, Alwrick Castle, Brenda, Chenab, Clyde, Grecian, Mutla, Hereford, Rhone, Jarawar, and the Wiltshire) made **319 voyages** from India to TT, bringing **147,592** Indians to work in sugar, cocoa, and coconut estates. Some children came – but mainly adults. There were more men than women. Hindus, Moslems and some Christians were among those who came.

The struggles of those who came to TT on those 319 voyages are well recorded. The indenture contract was an exploitative one. The treatment of Indians under indentureship was inhumane. It is important to note that life was not easy for those who remained after indentureship or for the few who returned to India – some of whom returned to TT.

**“The second group arrived** after the abolition of indentured servitude in 1917. Most arrivals were skilled workers, Doctors, Businessmen, and other professions. Most of this "new" group of Indians maintained their original culture. Like many Indo-Caribbeans, many have roots from all over the Indian subcontinent, as the present-day states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh were all part of the British Raj. Indo-Trinidadians are a plurality of the population of Trinidad and Tobago (**40.3%**). An additional **18.4%** of the population describe themselves as being of mixed race (I am in that category); many of them are also of Indian descent.” (Wikipedia).

Where Indians go from here depends to some extent on the kind of individual we wish to nurture in our society – e.g. the kind of knowledge, skills and ability we wish the individual to develop. We must place the human being at the centre of development. Where we go from here also depends on the vision that we have for our nation. It is stated in Proverbs 29:18: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

Our vision for TT must be inclusive; one that embraces the various ethnicities, religions, and cultures that make up the rich tapestry that is TT; one that draws on the wealth of our human and other resources to build our nation. Each ethnic group in TT brings to the table of life here, specific gifts and talents. How blessed we are! The challenge is to develop shared values; “pull-together” so that these gifts can be used to build the common good. In simple terms, the common

good means creating conditions that will allow each person to realise his/her potential. In the Catholic Church, our Pope speaks about integral human development, that is, the development of each dimension of a person and of each person. We must strive to ensure that no one is left behind.

When we look around the world and see the suffering that is caused because of ethnic and religious strife, we should commit ourselves to work diligently to ensure that our beloved TT does not go down this road. It is important that the vision for TT is spelled out clearly by our leaders.

Sadly, we have created a Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism without a clear vision of the role and responsibility of such a Ministry within the **reality** of our multicultural context. Have we articulated what the concept of Multiculturalism means to us? We continue to hear cries of 'foul' as various ethnic groups perceive that they are not getting their fair share of the resources of the land. How is this Ministry and indeed, our Government, NGOs, FBOs, CBOs and all of us working to manage diversity? We need some commonly accepted values if we are to overcome fears and prejudices about 'the other' and embed this concept into our way of life in TT. We need to build TRUST, LOVE and RESPECT among our people and to acknowledge the inherent dignity of each citizen in TT.

The Preamble to our Constitution refers to the "equal and inalienable rights with which all members of the human family are endowed". Our National Anthem claims that every creed and race finds an equal place in TT. But in reality, there are inequalities and inequities that persist and cause grave hardship for some. And beneath a veneer of tolerance there simmers feelings of resentment and frustration. This highlights the fact that no piece of paper can bring about change.

Accepting and promoting unity in diversity is an active, on-going process. Unless we are prepared to work at this, we will remain a fragmented society. And as long as we fail to recognize the inherent dignity and human rights of all our people and we allow inequalities and inequities to persist, each ethnic group will continue to look over their shoulders and complain, and rightly so, that certain groups have more access to the nation's resources, employment opportunities etc. than they do.

As Roxanne Lalonde says, we can have "unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation". Sadly, she noted way back in 1997 that "The political and social climate that prevails in the world today emphasizes difference, disunity, and destruction rather than the qualities of unity and productive and constructive energy that are required to sustain human societies. These negative processes and forces have perpetuated our alienation from the basic material roots of our existence, the natural world of which we are a part."

As one of our speakers today, Stephen Kangal, says: "the achievement of real unity in diversity is a prerequisite for taking forward Trinidad and Tobago. Failure to do so will result in the preservation of the policy of rampant, divisive ethno-nationalism".

I lived for many years in the UK where I fought against policies that sought to assimilate or integrate migrants from various cultures into a white, Anglo-centric framework.

Policies/ideologies/conceptual frameworks, particularly in relation to the education of migrants and their children, shifted from assimilation in the 1960s to integration, to cultural pluralism/multiculturalism to anti-racism in the 1980s.

At the end of the day, what we need is a framework that would allow people to live aspects of the culture that they brought to TT with them and to be able to share their culture with others; a framework that would facilitate the promotion of mutual respect and harmony as citizens embrace the concept of unity in diversity. Sadly, this remains a dream. It is up to us to make it a reality.

To map out where we should go from here in TT, it is important to recognize that Indians, like others, did not arrive in TT as empty vessels. They brought with them untold wealth in terms of their long, rich history that spans over 5,000 years, and aspects of their culture such as religions, languages, literature, music and musical instruments, dress, traditions, food/seeds, plants, fruits such as mangoes, guava, tamarind, ochro and seime, cloves, ginger, saffron, dhal, peppers, mustard, spices, ghee etc. The dhantal, a musical instrument, was developed in T&T.

It is important to note the resilience and determination of those who came from India in the early days. Not only were living conditions inhumane, but lack of acceptance of traditions such as Hindu and Muslim marriages led to much hardship.

Bridget Brereton said in her book: *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870 – 1900*, Hindu and Muslim pundits and imams “were not recognised as marriage officers so that the religious ceremonies had no legal validity; Indian marriages had to be registered with the civil authorities in order to be recognised as legal. But the vast majority did not register their marriages, feeling, no doubt, that the age old religious rite was all that really mattered to make a marriage legitimate. In India Hindu marriages were recognised. In the eyes of the law, therefore, Indian marriages were invalid and the overwhelming majority of Indian children were technically illegitimate.”

Hindu and muslim marriages were not recognised by the State in TT until **1946** – over 100 years after the arrival of the first indentured, Indian labourers to TT. **Hindu marriages** were not recognised as legal until **May 13, 1946** (with the passage of the Hindu Marriage Act); and Muslim marriages were similarly not recognised until **December 1, 1964** (with the passage of the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act).

There were serious implications of this – could not pass on land to children when parents died. No legal right to pass estate. Estate went to the Govt. – robbed of their land. When elections – colonial powers did not want them to learn to read and write – so the law stated that one could only vote if one could read and write. Adult suffrage = in 1946. So Indians were denied the vote until 1946. Many were not registered.

I grew up in Chaguanas, seeing the hardship experienced by many Indians working in the sugar belt of TT. My father was an MP for Caroni East, an area in which there still reside today many from the Indian community. He fought for their rights. Today, many in this area and in other parts of TT still have no basic amenities.

Certain other communities in TT have also struggled e.g. the Amerindians, the indigenous peoples – see how they were treated during Colonial times – and indeed, even today; people of African origin after slavery - Slavery in British colonies was abolished in 1838 - full emancipation being granted on August 1 1838. “Upon Emancipation of the slaves in 1838, Trinidad had only 17,439 slaves, with 80% of slave owners having less than 10 slaves each.” (Trinidad was colonized by the Spanish in 1592 -passed into British control in 1797. By then there were also many French plantation owners in TT with slaves – see Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery).

Others who came to TT as colonisers include the Spanish, French, Dutch (The Dutch and the Courlanders (people from the small duchy of Courland and Semigallia in modern-day Latvia) established themselves in Tobago in the 16th and 17th centuries and produced tobacco and cotton), and English. The Chinese and Portuguese (Madeira) were brought to work on the sugar plantations – before the Indians. This did not work so Indians were brought in. “Emigration from Barbados, and the other Lesser Antilles, Venezuela, Syria, and Lebanon also impacted on the ethnic make-up of the country.” (Wikipedia). And we must not forget the presence of Americans in military bases on Trinidad during the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war. It is important for us to include this information in our deliberations in order to paint the full picture of the various influences in T&T.

We gained independence in Aug. 1962 and Republican status in 1976. So, for nearly 50 years we have had responsibility for paddling our own canoe, as the saying goes; for charting our own course. And although there have been areas of growth and development, we cannot say that we are anywhere near promoting sustainable development in TT.

If we accept the idea that in nation-building there are no passengers, and that each citizen is a member of the crew, we must commit ourselves to building our nation. A key characteristic to be considered, as I said earlier, is whether we wish to build a nation in which we truly embrace our plurality, multi-cultural, multi-religious reality. Will we achieve this if we continue to have separate National Holidays for Emancipation and Indian Arrival Day? Have we seriously considered the benefits of having one National Holiday to celebrate the arrival of the various ethnic groups who live in TT? We must ask ourselves if the current state of play is in keeping with plans for building a cohesive, harmonious, equitable society. How can we build a cohesive mother T&T which truly embraces the multiple strands in its rich tapestry?

The Bahai community in London produced a useful document entitled: **Social cohesion: Prospect and Promise** (<http://www.upliftingwords.org/Articles/socialcohesion.htm>) It speaks to our situation also: “Prof David Marquand has said: We live in a ‘*tense, mistrustful, anxiety-haunted society*’... Concerns about crime, persistent undercurrents of racism, and growing distrust of neighbour and government, have strengthened the attraction to many of affinity groups. Whether cultural, ethnic, or religious, each of these potentially offers a close-knit cohesion of common interest and shared loyalties. By their nature these can tend to encourage antipathy toward those outside their particular community.”

**As the writer, Zhang Yong-jun, said:** (Multicultural Education: a Rational Choice for Improving Social Cohesion in a Globalizing World (International and Comparative Education

Research Institute, Beijing Normal University, Beijing 100875,  
China) [http://www.ioe.ac.uk/about/documents/About\\_Overview/Zhang\\_Y.pdf](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/about/documents/About_Overview/Zhang_Y.pdf) ,

**“Social cohesion is an important foundation for a nation-state’s existence and development...”**

Social cohesion is widely used term in social policy, sociology and political science. Reitz, Breton, K. K. Dion, and K. L. Dion(2009) believed : “In general terms, social cohesion refers to **the capacity of a society to set goals and implement means for attaining them.** On the one hand, a cohesive society can act as an effective unit. On the other hand, in a society which lacks cohesion, individuals or groups fail to contribute to effective collective action.”(p.20). Social cohesion includes at least the following meanings: shared norms and values; shared identity and belonging; a harmonious society; a strong civil society. Lu Pingyue (1992) believed that social cohesion has four functions:

- a) It aggregates dispersive individual forces to overall organizational and social forces.
- b) It pays a vital role in social stability.
- c) It can generate driving force for social development.
- d) It is also a goal of organizational development in itself. (p.91)

To what extent can we work together to achieve common goals? While we squabble about which ethnic group is getting more crumbs than the other for Emancipation Day or Indian Arrival Day, there are those who are intent on running away with the entire cake and we are not focusing on the issues that should be of concern to us.

I believe that our **politicians** over the years have compounded the issue not only by pandering to emotions such as fear of those who are seen as ‘other’, but by dividing people, particularly according to ethnicity, religion and class.

And the issue of **class** has reared its head even in our Indian-led parties. Indeed, even during the recent elections for a new leader of the COP, the blogs were full of attempts to smear people who were considered to be knife and fork Indians. And while we squabble, we fail to take cognizance of how far behind we are being left in our rapidly changing world.

Many have sought the assistance of Shamshu Deen and have done their own investigation to trace their roots in India. We all want to feel that we belong and part of this feeling involves knowing where we come from – our heritage. However, armed with this knowledge, we must strive to move forward, to use our talents to strengthen our nation. Living and operating mainly in small cultural, religious, ethnic enclaves will not take us forward.

Much has been written about the achievements of individuals in TT/of TT origin who have achieved great heights in the Indian community – both here and abroad. I have a book here which was published on the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Indian Arrival Day. It lists the names of many in the Indian community in TT who have achieved over the years. While we celebrate their

achievements, we cannot ignore the plight of the thousands who live on the margins in our nation – from various ethnic groups.

We cannot turn a blind eye to the needs of those who are socially excluded. There is a need for more effective targeting of resources. The country yearns for distributive justice, commutative justice, social justice etc.

How are members of the Indian community faring in our oil and gas rich nation? How many are **poor and socially excluded**? There is no agreed definition for social exclusion. The UK's Social Exclusion Unit describes it as "*a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown*" (SEU 1997).

A key social justice principle is that people should be able to participate in the *economic, social, political, and cultural life of society*. Social exclusion marginalizes people and prevents them from participating effectively in society. As Walker and Walker 1997:8 stated, social exclusion is "the dynamic process of being shut out ... from any of the social, economic, political and cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society".

Our 2005 statistics of 16.7% (about 210,000 persons) living in poverty are out of date and do not reflect the reality of our situation. I heard Minister Prakash Ramadhar say on TV during the recent election for the leadership of COP, that about 37% of our people live in poverty. I stand corrected if this is not the figure he quoted. Lack of accurate information/statistics creates an obstacle to effective planning.

How effective is our Poverty Reduction Strategy(ies)? Some of our people lack the basic necessities required to live in dignity. Poverty reduction strategies must be linked to a cross-Ministerial/Government plan to create conditions that will enable people to live their lives in dignity and to realize their potential. Too many Ministries continue to work in silos – no overall plan e.g. how is our plan (if there is one) to promote food security, linked to our plan to empower people so that they don't develop a dependency on handouts? Too often, the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. National resources are being wasted.

And what about those living in **rural areas**, and those living in **urban areas**. An analysis of the state of play in rural and urban areas in TT highlights the glaring disparities in terms of services etc. that affect the lives of people.

Give example of **home for the aged** in Central TT where there is a corridor with about 12 persons – mainly of Indian origin - sitting watching an exterior wall – all 12 have had one of their legs amputated because of diabetes. The extended family has been eroded and since many individuals have to work, there is no one to look after the elderly at home, so we find many homes for the elderly mushrooming all over the country and there are no regulations in place to ensure that the care given to the elderly in these institutions is adequate/humane. And it's not cheap to secure a place at most of these homes. Of the few homes that I know of, the average monthly fee is about \$7,000 TT. We must act as advocates and speak out for better health care services for all. In our fast moving world, we seem to have forgotten our elderly.

And we must champion the cause also of the **differently abled** in our society – and there are many in the Indian community in TT. Give example of disabled Indian woman with ectopic pregnancy in Sangre Grande.

And then there are those who have “made it”/have achieved great wealth. How many of them look back and try to pull others up the ladder? In a world of rampant individualism, selfishness, and materialism, many fail to act as mentors or role models to others. They simply amass wealth for themselves and their immediate family. They fail to pull others up to “a higher, more noble” (Martin Luther King Jr.) level.

If we are to move forward, we must address the issue of **corruption** also. This exists at all levels in our society and among all ethnic groups in TT. Such a practice stands as a barrier to progress. When the resources of the nation are used corruptly, citizens are denied their human rights.

The causes of **crime** are complex, many and varied and require a multi-faceted approach. Part of our response must be to develop and implement programmes to regenerate the morals, values and ethics in society - at all levels e.g. our families, schools, universities, and workplaces.

Are we looking at the **root causes of crime**? How are human rights affected? Life seems to have little value in our society. We must explore the link between poverty and crime. Are we doing enough to address white-collar crime and to identify and prosecute the ‘big-boys’ who are bringing in the **drugs and guns** that adversely impact on the lives of our people?

**Faith communities** can and must do more to take our country forward. The **Inter Religious Organisation** should also step up to the plate and play its part by developing and implementing a strategic plan related to their aims and objectives. Most people in TT will admit to belonging to one or other faith community, yet how many are living by the tenets of their faith? How many are reaching out to assist others in their communities who are in need.

**Where do we go from here?** We must also factor in the impact of other aspects of **crime and violence**, including human trafficking on our society. **2259 reported missing since 2009, 81 dead, 94 never found.** Today the faces of 2 young Indian girls are emblazoned across the newspapers. They have gone missing.

We have finally acknowledged that TT is a country/point of origin, transit and destination for **human trafficking** - that vicious form of modern-day slavery. We must speed up action to meet at least the minimum standards required to counter all forms of human trafficking. We have recently passed some relevant legislation. Once again, we will need to ensure that we move from legislation to implementation to ensure that women, men and children who are affected are protected. Heartless people are making billions of dollars on the misery of those they traffic.

Like other communities, those of Indian origin are not immune to crime and violence. And within this category, the community needs to consider the impact of **incest, child abuse, domestic violence** – often linked to alcoholism and drug abuse, the causes and effects of infidelity.

The Children's Authority is still not up and running. Over the past few weeks there have been some horrific cases of domestic violence leading to the maiming/deaths of women and, in one case, a man. We must develop a multi-faceted approach to deal with these issues – including a plan that focuses also on prevention. How is our Police Service dealing with these issues? We don't even have a National Child Abuse Register or a National Child Protection Policy.

And then there are our youths. The plague of gangs and gang warfare in TT affect all of us - particularly our youths. We cannot ignore the fact that there are Indian youths among some of these gangs. New media can be used for good or bad. Give example of young Indian boy found in room watching porn on his computer. When mother scolded him he retorted: "You don't say anything when Daddy does the same thing!" We need role models at home and in the wider society.

Where do we go from here? We need to strengthen family life in TT and to create conditions that will support parents with their child-rearing responsibilities.

In moving forward we must not forget our socially displaced persons – adults and children – some of whom are from the Indian community? Give example of my experience as a Board Member of Credo Foundation for Justice – homes for 'street children'. We also need a strategic plan to develop and deliver appropriate services to the differently-abled. (See issues relating to children at risk).

And what about our farmers and the agricultural sector in general? A large proportion of those involved in agriculture is from the Indian community. The sad plight of farmers in TT is well known. Are we serious about feeding ourselves and reducing the \$4 billion US per annum spent on importing food?

And then there is HIV/AIDS. Latest figures show that of the 25,000 or so persons affected in TT, only 6,000 access anti-retroviral drugs. There are 4 new HIV cases daily. Are we doing all that we can for those affected and infected? How many people of Indian origin are within this group? We have no idea when the Statutory Body is likely to be established to replace the now disbanded National AIDS Coordinating Committee (NACC)? Will that body be responsible for developing a strategic plan in this area?

Where do we go from here as far as Indian culture is concerned? Our forebears must be turning in their graves when they see how some people, including Indian people, dress and dance at Carnival time/fetes, and when they hear the kind of Indian music that assail all our senses today. Is this the way to go – with a set of rum songs and chutney songs that are not uplifting? While alcoholism continues to be a major problem in the Indian community in particular, the lyrics of some of these songs seem to glorify alcohol.

See the following extract from: "**Phagwah, Chutney and the Rum Syndrome**" article by Ravi Dev (20.3.2011) in Kaieteur News online, Guyana  
(<http://www.kaieteurnews.com/2011/03/20/phagwah-chutney-and-the-rum-syndrome/>).



“A paper by a Trinidadian academic **Dr Joy Mahabir**, *The Poetics of Space in the Art of Mahadai Das and Adesh Samaroo*, – circulating widely on Indian social blogs for months and serialised by a local newspaper last week – rehearses the historical background of both rum and chutney and their nexus. Rum, not a feature of northern rural India, was deliberately introduced to the indentured Indians as a means of immiserisation and control on the sugar plantations in the Caribbean. The reaction to alcohol is socially constructed, and for Indians, they expressed their frustrations with plantation life by venting their anger violently on each other. Violence – especially against wives and children – and alcoholism became a feature of Indian plantation life that continues into the present.”

But we do not have to continue along this path. We must put our shoulders to the proverbial wheel and build our fledgling nation by working with our Government to develop legislation, policies, practices and procedures that will help us to build a model nation.

The cry that is heard in some quarters that it’s Indian time now, is abhorrent to those who wish to promote equality and equity for all. Too many people need basic amenities – food, water, electricity, housing, employment, health care, education, and transportation. These are critical areas to be addressed urgently. And we all need to feel safe and secure. Crime and fear of crime rob us of our freedom.

**Environmental issues** must feature in any consideration of the way forward for the Indian community. The rainy season is upon us and we still do not seem to have addressed age-old problems that make the lives of many misery. Earthquakes are devastating many countries around the world and we still have not introduced building codes that will alleviate some of the problems that we may encounter at any time in the future. Issues relating to our wild life, flora and fauna, quarrying, floods etc. affect us all.

**Education** must feature in our vision for the future of the Indian community in TT. Recently, on her return from a meeting of CARICOM leaders in St Kitts, our PM, Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, said that CARICOM leaders are concerned to promote education that promotes innovation and competition in today’s global culture. However, the kind of education on offer in TT is not going to cut it in our globalized, technological and complex world. How are we doing as far as production and competitiveness are concerned? Not too good.

Education can play a powerful part in promoting harmony and in building a cohesive society. Children have a right to **education** yet our legislation still records that a child can legally leave school at 12 years old. The Minister of Education stated some time ago that about **4,000 children** are out of school. These are human rights issues. Why are children dropping out of school and what is being done to address the needs of those in this category? How many are Indians? The system is failing too many of our children. Too many are illiterate. Quality Assurance systems are essential if we are to improve the quality of education in TT.

We say that there is universal education for all, but there are many who are unable to access education because of their circumstances. The early indentured labourers who came from India saw education as the way forward. (Give example of woman with ohrni in UK – graduation of son who had won island scholarship – son ashamed of mother).

What is our strategy as regards **diversifying the economy**? As **Tony Fraser** said (Guardian – 4 Aug 2010): “...economic diversification is not an option we can choose to engage or not; the economic survival of the country depends on it”. (And see the TT Chamber of Commerce’s paper on the 7 Sectors & Economic Diversification by Reay Greaves, 2011: [www.contact-tt.com/index.cfm?Content=419](http://www.contact-tt.com/index.cfm?Content=419) ).

There is a dramatic technological revolution going on; the world is transforming at ever-increasing rates on a daily basis, and we need to run fast to catch up if we are to take our place in this new world. The **G8** (France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, USA, Canada – EU is represented but can’t host or chair) and **G20** group of 20 countries ( “a group of finance ministers and central bank governors from 20 major economies: 19 countries plus the EU, which is represented by the President of the European Council and the European Central Bank. Their heads of govt. or heads of state have also periodically conferred at summits since their initial meeting in 2008. Collectively, the G-20 economies comprise 85% of the global gross national product, 80% of world trade (including EU intra-trade) and 2/3 of the world population which included Eurioean nations and the USA, are now contending with the **BRICS** countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).” (Wikipedia).

Goldman Sachs has said of the BRICS grouping, this new ‘club’/alliance is “converting its growing economic power into greater geopolitical clout”. Sadly, CARICOM seems to be stuck in a rut. The answer to the question: “Where we go from here?” must also include an analysis of where TT and CARICOM are going. While we contemplate navels, others are on the ball; they see the need for strong alliances; the need to diversify their economies etc. They are establishing frameworks of political, economic, and social policies that will help them to foster consistent growth. And where is TT in this brave new world?

As Gandhi said, it’s good to see ourselves as others see us. In TT’s Guardian last Thursday (14 July), there was a letter to the Editor by the Indian High Commissioner, His Excellency, Malay Mishra – entitled: India and its Diaspora – The T&T factor.” [www2.guardian.co.tt/node/18807](http://www2.guardian.co.tt/node/18807)

He reminds us that there are 28 million overseas Indians spread over 150 countries. They “plough in US \$55 billion annually as remittances alone to India, besides enormous stakes” in foreign financial investment in India.”

(It is interesting to note that in today’s Newsday there is an article by Dr Michele Reis, of the Institute of International Relations, UWI, entitled: The need for a T&T Diaspora Policy.” As she says: “One avenue in alleviating developmental problems lies in harnessing the skills of the Diaspora...In this era of globalization and instantaneous communication, it must be acknowledged that highly skilled expatriates have financial resources and expertise acquired in their various host countries, while maintaining a strong link with their home country.”)

His Excellency, Malay Mishra refers to the diaspora as “a world within a world.” Sadly, he had this to say about T&T: “...the so-called ‘old’ diaspora has continued to thrive on the margins of First World aura in a neo-colonial context and hesitate to (take advantage of) contemporary privileges of a global society.” He bemoans the fact that even after a “media blitz” and much planning (of which I was a part), there was little interest shown and poor attendance at the 2-day

Conference at the Hyatt in July on the Diaspora in the Caribbean – seeking to build bridges between the business community etc. in India and the Caribbean. He continues:

“...there could not have been a better location than T&T. And better timing too, in the aftermath of Indian Arrival Day, celebration of a time warp and a desiccated ancestry, the task to bring to greater focus the narrative of the present was hardsold...”

“History has galloped into contemporary times as 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial emigration has morphed into new horizons. There could be no better opportunity for an inveterate merging of the old into the new and looking at the brave new world...Yet, why is this reluctance to be a part of civilisational tremors that have shaken the foundations of old beliefs, nay societies themselves. Colonialism is a thing of the past...Yet the shibboleths of a new-colonial mindset and their adjuncts still cloud vision and pervade thinking. The challenge is to move on, be a part of the growth story that is being scripted in India many times over.

“The din of celebrating emerging global markets has just about begun. The 21<sup>st</sup> century will be witness to such paradigm shifts over and over again. Therefore, feel good about it and not diffident. Inhale the fresh air...Integrate into a fast encompassing knowledge society extending like a mushroom cloud in the horizon. Time is on the side of the diaspora to...feel confident of a sense of belonging. The moment is here, and now. Go all out, seize it...”

We may think that these are harsh words. However, in many ways he is right. But in seeking to seize the moment and to develop a knowledge-based economy, we must leave no one behind. We're all in this boat called T&T together.

In conclusion, I want to say that the issues I have raised above are just some of those that the Indian community needs to examine if it is to chart a way forward. There are also issues relating to the deficiencies of the criminal justice system, the Administration of Justice, policing etc. that must be addressed if we are to build what Ramesh Persad Maharaj calls “a model nation”.

The travel brochures paint a wonderful picture of our twin-islands. God has indeed blessed us in many ways and for this we must be truly thankful. The media reported on 3 July that **60 per cent** of Jamaicans would like their country to revert to the days when Britain governed the island. (See Rupert Johnson's letter to editor: <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20110703/letters/letters2.html>).

Sadly, I have noticed on the TT blogs that a few people support this idea. Let us never forget the inhumanity of Colonialism, of slavery and indentureship. Let us not insult the memory of those who have struggled to build our nation. Let us believe in our God-given ability to take our great nation forward. We will make huge strides if we would only learn to love each other. **LOVE** is the answer to the question: “Where do we go from here?” – Love of God and love of neighbour. Bhagavāna kē pyāra aura paṛōsī kē pyāra.

I thank you.

## 1. PM Douglas continues chairing day three of CARICOM meet

Monday, 04 July 2011 13:52

**BASSETERRE, ST. KITTS**, St. Kitts and Nevis' Prime Minister and Chairman of the 15-member Caribbean Community grouping, the Hon. Dr. Denzil L. Douglas and other CARICOM leaders Sunday morning and the early part of the afternoon behind closed doors as they continued their annual summit here that ends on Monday.

Host Prime Minister Douglas told the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC) that the leaders would go into caucus during early part of Sunday before their plenary sessions begin later during the day.

"I think over the last two days we have been able to realise to a large extent the agenda that has been planned for this meeting. We have had quite a number of caucus sessions because when we came into this meeting we took the position that heads need to spend as much time as possible among themselves to follow up on some of the priority issues that we identified when we went into retreat in Guyana a few weeks ago," he said.

Dr. Douglas, the longest serving Caribbean head of government, said as a result of this position "we have discussed at length how we are going to reposition the Caribbean Community given the challenging realities of the times."

He said with the economy for example, his regional leaders looked at areas where they felt they should concentrate on in relations "our goals of job creation and improving the quality of life for the people of the Caribbean.

"How are we going to ensure that tourism which has had a very hard hit during the recessionary period. How can we really create tourism in a way that it could continue to be a leading productive sector for the people of the Caribbean region?

"How can we given the challenges that there are in agriculture really make this sector a productive sector," he asked noting that the leaders had received a presentation from the University of the West Indies (UWI).

But he said while the "visionary statement "from the UWI was welcomed by the leaders, it was asked "very specifically questions ...(such as) how is the University of the West Indies going to help us in ensuring that those who are graduating with agriculture degrees actually become businessmen and entrepreneurs .

"How is the link going to be made between what is an academic exercise and what is truly an exercise that tends to create jobs and new opportunities...in agriculture for our people. And that is the kind of engagement that we have been involved in over the last two days.

“We have been questioning to a large extent whether our fore founding fathers of the integration movement had been too ambitious, whether the principles that were again reinforced with the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, whether those principles still hold true today”.

He said the leaders had come away “with the fact that yes, the principles hold true, our founding fathers have been right in their thinking and their vision, but the challenges that are unfolding today around the world and how they are influencing the region we now have to slow the pace a bit and take a much more realistic calibration of where we need to go in the integration movement.”

Dr. Douglas said that there is “total unity” among the leaders as it relates to the new direction for CARICOM.

“We are saying to the regional public that the road map that had been outline is a clear one that still needs to be followed, but the pace at which it has to be followed has to be slow,” he said, noting as an example the realisation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) that allows for the free movement of goods, skills, labour and services across the region.

“We realise that we are stuck to a large extent at the market stage. How can we advance to the economy stage when there are issues to deal with in terms of the realisation of the single market.

“And so we have decided lets put on hold for the moment the realisation of the single economy, let us get right all of the issues pertaining to the attainment of the single market and then we can advance to the single economy. That is why we believe very strongly that the review of the Secretariat, the review of all of the institutions of CARICOM is going to be critical in moving forward.

He said the pace at which the region moves forward “will be determined and what from results from a number of these analyses which are critical.

“That is why to a large extent we have insisted to the consultants who are doing the review of the Secretariat ‘get your work done as quickly as possible because we are at the point where maybe a crisis is unfolding and we need to be able to stop it in its track and move forward with some new vigour, some new action especially on the part of the people of the region,” Dr. Douglas said.

## **2. Douglas calls for Caricom overhaul**

Story Created: Jul 3, 2011 at 11:50 PM ECT (TT Express)

### **A COMPREHENSIVE overhaul.**

That's what Caricom Chairman Dr Denzil Douglas believes is immediately needed to get the regional movement in high gear.

Speaking to the media on Day Three of the Heads of Government conference, St Kitts Prime Minister Douglas said at the top of the list is a complete review of the secretariat and all of the related Caribbean institutions.

"The review of the secretariat and all of the institutions of Caricom is going to be critical in moving forward," he said yesterday.

The Caricom Chairman also endorsed the vision of the "founding fathers" of the movement but said there was a need to slow down their intentions.

"The challenges unfolding around the world called to slow down the pace a bit and look at a more realistic calibration of where we need to go in the integration movement. The road map outlined by founding fathers needs to be followed but the pace needs to be slowed down," he added.

He also noted that the proposal for a single market and economy of the region must be tackled in stages to become a reality.

"The issue of the realisation of the Caricom Single Market and Economy is another thing. We realised we are stuck at the market stage. How can we advance to the economy stage when we realised there are issues to be dealt with at the market stage?"

"Let's put a hold at the moment on the realisation of the single economy. Let us get right all of the issues pertaining to the attainment of the single market."

Giving an overview of the talks to date, Douglas said leaders mainly dealt with the reality of the challenges facing the world and the effects on the regional movement.

"The economy, for example, what sectors are we going to concentrate on in realising our goal of job creation and improving the quality of life for people of the Caribbean. How are we going to ensure that tourism, which has had a very hard hit in this recessionary period, and how can we re-create tourism in a way that it can continue to be a leading productive sector for the people of the Caribbean region," he added. —Barbados Nation

### **3. Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat**

**Press Release 242/2011**

**(01 July 2011)**

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY DESIRÉ DELANO BOUTERSE, PRESIDENT,  
SURINAME, TO THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE THIRTY-SECOND**

**MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY, 1-4 JULY 2011, BASSETERRE, ST. KITTS AND NEVIS**

Your Excellency the Honorable Denzil Douglas, Chairman of the Caribbean Community;  
Ambassador Lolita Applewhaite, Acting Secretary General of the Caribbean Community;  
Esteemed colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen,

Government and People of Saint Kitts and Nevis, let me tell you that Suriname's delegation is feeling at home in your country. We feel your warmth, your hospitality and we are grateful.

I congratulate Prime Minister Denzil Douglas on assuming the chairmanship of CARICOM. Prime Minister Douglas, we feel comfortable that you are the Chair of this organization and we know that we can count on your experience and your commitment to our Community.

Excellency, Prime Minister Tillman Thomas of Grenada we thank you for the efforts and energy you have demonstrated in guiding the Region in these difficult and challenging times.

I further heartily welcome my friend the President of the Republic of Haiti, H.E. Michel Martelly, who has recently been elected and is facing many challenges in giving the people of Haiti hope of a better future. Indeed he will need full support from all of us.

May I also extend a warm welcome to Her Excellency, the Honorable Paula Cox, Premier of Bermuda. We are pleased to welcome you as an Associate Member.

Excellencies, One of the effects of the present financial crisis is that we are witnessing tendencies by some to promote disintegration. We have seen this in Europe and the same goes for the Caribbean. It is almost like these nations feel that united they will draw and divided they will survive. Of course we know that this is not true, on the contrary we know that this is the time that cooperation and integration should be at the forefront of our minds.

Many of our Member States have suffered from the international financial crisis. This has had dire effects on their peoples and has deepened their vulnerability. Facing the challenge of emerging successfully out of this crisis makes it necessary to resort to creative ideas, meaningful programs and result oriented actions.

One of the important instruments in doing so is the CARICOM Secretariat. Unfortunately, a substantial amount of their time goes into resource mobilization. As a result little or no time is spend in implementing decisions and mandates issued by the Heads and other organs within this Community.

To me, it looks like we put a coin into the machine. We do all the necessary, but nothing comes out. We remain empty handed. And what do we do? Some of us start kicking the machine. We blame the Secretariat for everything that goes wrong within the Community.

**WE must break with this vicious circle.**

Excellencies, It is my firm belief that the time has come to bring forward ideas on how to mobilize the human and natural resources of our Member States, in a way that they provide for a solid economic basis servicing our peoples and at the same time guarantee a sustainable source of funding of the Secretariat.

May I give you an example:

So far Suriname has shared its vast resources in gold with Canada and the USA. The question we have been asking ourselves is, why is it not possible to share some of this wealth with our CARICOM sister Nations. At the same time guaranteeing a steady input of funds into the Community and its organs.

In order to give a feasible answer to this question we have taken the initiative to have a working group consisting of Surinamese and other Caribbean experts to produce a workable plan in this respect. Suriname intends to, in the near future, provide the Member States with the terms of reference of the envisaged study, since we would like to include your input into the final outcome.

The feasibility of the format to be applied to the gold sector in Suriname as a CARICOM based gold company with downstream activities could serve as a model to develop other CARICOM member states' linked companies. One could look at tourism, air- and maritime transport facilities as a Caribbean operation. One could also consider agricultural and horticultural production within a CARICOM network of producers.

In short, we believe that the process of integration we envisage, will have a solid basis, if a substantial group of CARICOM entrepreneurs develop CARICOM based lines of production and services.

Let's turn our attention to the **human factor**.

**Approximately 65% of our CARICOM population is below the age of 30.** I am happy to be the lead Head with responsibility for Community Development and Cultural Cooperation including Culture, Gender, Youth and Sport.

For my Government the development of this portfolio is a serious issue. To us sport is not just recreation and entertainment, but a vital element in fostering a healthy and harmonious Community, hence the concept of Sport for development. In this light it is worth mentioning the establishment in Suriname of the Regional Sports Academy, which we believe will give to our youth all the opportunities to channel their talents for the good of themselves and society at large.

This Academy will serve not only the CARICOM member States, but also neighboring countries.



Excellencies, **Child abuse** has become a major problem. The region must take urgent measures to protect the most vulnerable ones in our Community. In an effort to combat and prevent child abuse in Suriname, a task force has been created in order to coordinate all government institutions that deal with children and to advice on concrete steps to fully implement the provisions of the Convention on Rights of the Child.

The strengthening of the CARICOM Youth Ambassadors Program at both the national and the regional level should therefore be a priority on the agenda of us as Heads. I urge my colleagues to support these youth leaders who soon will have to carry forth our work. Investing in youth means securing a future in which society at large will prosper.

Suriname is also portfolio holder of culture both within CARICOM and UNASUR. We have a diverse culture and heritage which we must protect and develop. We acknowledge that culture is an important vehicle in achieving our socio- economic objectives. The 11th Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA) to be held in 2013 in Suriname will primarily be focused in achieving this objective...

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our Region has many opportunities. Our combined efforts will lead to the success of our integration process and to the realization of our development objectives.

As member of the Bureau of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, I intend to pursue the ideas I just shared with you and I call upon you to join me on this path towards national and regional development. I thank you.

#### **4. Commentary: Caricom or Cari-gone?**

Published on January 7, 2011 By Sir Ronald Sanders Sir Ronald Sanders is a business executive and former Caribbean diplomat who publishes widely on small states in the global community.

The New Year started with a great deal of frustration being publicly expressed over the Caribbean regional integration project which, this year, will have been in construction for forty-three years. Other integration efforts, such as the European Union (EU), which began after the Caribbean Community and Common market (CARICOM), have moved ahead much faster and much more effectively for the benefit of the people of their member countries.

It is understandable, therefore, that, in an editorial, one of the Caribbean oldest newspapers observed that a majority of people believe that “any official attempt to unite the region as envisaged in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) is nothing but reverie and doomed to failure”. To be fair the editorial did not trumpet this observation with glee or satisfaction. It said that “as we enter the second decade of this century, we hold fast,

nevertheless, to the idea of one region”.

So, on the one hand, this editorial, reflecting the views of many, still believes in the notion of a deeply integrated Caribbean – “one region”, but it expresses no faith that, after forty-three years, we will see a CSME anytime soon. The editorial identified four contemporary reasons for its lack of faith in any “official” attempt to unite the region.

These reasons were: an unfortunate statement last year by the Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister that her government would no longer be “an ATM” machine for other countries of CARICOM; an injudicious remark by the same Prime Minister that, in the provision by her government of assistance to the islands of St Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines she would expect some benefit for the construction industry of Trinidad and Tobago; the more recent suggestion by Prime Minister Bruce Golding of Jamaica that his government favoured setting up its own national final Court of Appeal rather than acceding to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ); and that CARICOM heads of government are yet to establish “any executive machinery to enforce” their own policy decisions.

All of these points are valid. There are many more besides. Among them are that instead of getting on with fashioning CARICOM into an effective vehicle to help with the improvement of their people’s lives and progressing development in their countries, some governments are busily trying to cultivate relations with other larger countries far beyond the region to try to get what they can while they can. The latter strategy is, of course, unsustainable. And, as has happened in the past, the governments now flirting, on their own, with bigger countries not on their doorstep will return to the regional fold which is not only their natural home, but also their best hope.

Fortunately, the statements by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, while indicative of an attitude to CARICOM held by many in that country, were made in the early flush of government. In the past, other heads of government have made equally hurtful (and not fully informed) comments in other contexts. The truth is that Trinidad and Tobago is the principal beneficiary of trade in goods and services to CARICOM – benefits are not a one-way street. This is the message that the government in Port-of-Spain should be delivering to its people. Also, to those who say that Trinidad and Tobago does not need the CARICOM market, they should be challenged to identify the alternative markets, how quickly could they be developed if they could be developed at all, and at what cost.

With regard to the statement that Mr Golding has made about establishing Jamaica’s own national, final court of appeal instead of joining the CCJ for this purpose, it really is time that someone bells the cat on this as well. As I pointed out in my last commentary (“Time to make up your mind”), by April this year Jamaicans will head five extremely important CARICOM-wide institutions. These are positions for which the Jamaica government fought and other CARICOM

countries agreed. What is the message that is being sent to the people of CARICOM by Jamaica? Is it that all is well when Jamaica holds the reins, but it isn't well when other CARICOM nationals are involved? This cannot be so, and Mr Golding is far too intelligent a man and too well informed to hold such a position. The time has come for Jamaica's leadership to cease pandering to the false notion of some special Jamaican capacity, and, instead, spread the true message that this region is one – and one to which Jamaica's contribution has been highly regarded by its Caribbean brothers and sisters.

The quicker that the CARICOM Secretariat, as part of an overall reform of all its activities, is given the resources and empowered to mount a sustained, multi-media campaign throughout the region on how membership of the Caribbean Community has benefitted, and can continue to benefit, the people of each CARICOM country the better. And, every government should regard it as its responsibility and obligation to carry out its own domestic programme of education and information.

Of the four points made in the Editorial to which this commentary refers, the most crucial is its observation that “the decade closed without the establishment of any executive machinery to enforce the implementation of policy decisions by heads of government”. This is – and has been for decades – the fundamental problem with the lack of progress of CARICOM in establishing the CSME and even in carrying out a range of activities that are routine in organisations similar to CARICOM.

In his New Year's address as Chairman of CARICOM until July 2011, the Prime Minister of Grenada, Tillman Thomas, said that “the cry for the ‘quickening of the pace’ was heard” and “active consideration of new governance structures” was given by CARICOM leaders. He offered that “one of the main ideas in taking the necessary steps will be tested in this coming year with the establishment of the Permanent Committee of CARICOM Ambassadors” which, he said, “heralds a new dawn for our Community”.

Mr Thomas is right to hold out hope, but it is difficult to see how another layer of national representatives will implement policy decisions of Heads, when ministers and the Secretariat were not able to do so.

The CARICOM vehicle needs an urgent overhaul, or it really will be a case of ‘CARICOM and gone’.

## 5. Where Caricom really going? By Reginald Dumas

Story Created: Jul 26, 2010 (TT Express)

At their just-concluded meeting in Jamaica, the Caricom Heads of Government once again trespassed on my patience. I must say something on two aspects of this latest intrusion.

First, much has been said about Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar's apparent hard line on Trinidad and Tobago assistance to Caricom. I certainly would not have used the ATM comparison. It came over as a putdown, and no one likes to be put down, especially in public. But I have no problem at all with the principle she raised. Let me first go back a bit.

In the late 1970s, just before its precipitous collapse, the price of oil reached a level then considered unimaginably high. For many in this country, distorting Eric Williams' actual words and meaning, money had already become "no problem".

Williams himself seemed to fall victim to the distortion, and his government began — there was a strong flavour of contempt in its conduct — to dole out money to Caricom governments beating a path to its door. I say "dole out" deliberately, and I will give you an example from my time as High Commissioner to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean (EC) in the latter part of the 1980s.

We had made available to an EC country a considerable amount of money as a loan. No repayment was being made, however, and with our revenue shrinking fast as the oil price rapidly declined in the 1980s, we were like Max Senhouse: we needed the money. On instructions, I raised the matter with the government concerned and was told, with a smirk, that we had not made a loan, we had made a gift. And so we had: we had handed over the entire sum without a signed agreement. T&T taxpayers' money had taken flight, never to return. And you wonder why people sniggered at us?

To my horror, I have learned that the last administration took the same approach to Haiti, and I expect to other Caricom states as well: we were "assisting" these countries with contributions and not asking how our money was being spent. Worse, I was informed that it was considered improper to ask, because one didn't deal with sovereign states that way! Our money! Do you believe that the World Bank, say, as donor or lender, would utter and practise such irresponsible foolishness?

So if the Prime Minister is introducing and tightening rules governing the use of our money, more power to her. Loans and grants must be made for specific, agreed purposes, and their implementation closely and continuously monitored. If necessary, sanctions should be applied. Nor must regular reports to our public be neglected. For all his laxity and largesse, Williams did put out a document called "Accounting for the petrodollar". I would strongly suggest that this government do something similar, going back five years in the first instance, and then on a continuing basis.

My second issue is governance. There is nothing new in the proposition that Caricom is inefficiently run: summit decisions are often inadequate, implementation of the worthwhile ones often non-existent. To address this shortcoming, the 1992 Ramphal West Indian Commission proposed the creation of a Caribbean Commission "with competence to initiate proposals, update consensus, mobilise action and secure the implementation of Caricom decisions in an expeditious and informed manner." The recommendation was rejected out of hand that year by the Caricom Heads.

Eighteen years later, things have only grown worse. All sorts of working groups and high-level committees have in that period studied the matter, which nonetheless remains unresolved. Now this month, our leaders, in another of their frequent non-decisions, set up yet another committee to, yes, study the matter.

You know what the problem is, don't you? Rickey Singh speaks of "a lack of collective will to overcome parochialism and a narrow sense of nationalism in favour of a shared vision of 'one people, one market, one Caribbean...'" But it is more than that. It is also, and particularly, that in these little places of ours self-importance is generally in inverse proportion to size and standing; office and title dominate and skew perceptions and behaviour.

Thus PJ Patterson, now an elder statesman, says that Caricom must have a full-time implementation mechanism. As Prime Minister of Jamaica, however, Mr Patterson was entirely dismissive of the Ramphal proposal for just such a mechanism. "I don't think," the Express of October 31, 1992 reported him as saying, "that when you are dealing with sovereign states compliance is necessarily secured...by some group laying down the law" (as if this was what Ramphal was suggesting) "without the capacity to enforce the law. We are talking about sovereign states; that must never be forgotten." (My emphasis.) Quite.

In our region, solicitude for sovereignty and political position has generally trumped good management and common sense. Nearly two decades after Ramphal, our leaders are still dithering over the fundamental governance aspect of the regional movement. Some leaders, even one of their number, Ralph Gonsalves, is unhappy.

Singh thinks that the announcement of the new committee "cannot seriously be regarded as anything of significance." I agree, although — the unrepentant optimist — I'm willing to be proved wrong. If not, the Caricom people will be left holding the short end of the stick. As usual.

- Reginald Dumas is a retired diplomat and former head of the public service

## **6. Let's prevent Caricom from becoming 'Carry go bring Come'!**

Sunday, April 03, 2011 Jamaica Observer

Ironically, before there was the Caribbean Community (Caricom), there was free movement of persons during the colonial era. But once we became independent, governments — intoxicated with the illusion of sovereignty — immediately instituted work permits and visas.

Now, Caricom is in an advanced state of fragmentation, riven by centrifugal forces born of economic implosion and petty nationalism. Absent is the salutary influence of far-sighted political leadership. The ultimate root cause is the lack of any genuine sense of community.

Fleeting moments of community existed when the West Indies cricket team were world champions. The University of the West Indies (UWI) clings tenuously to regionalism, and there are glimpses when we lose ourselves in the revelry of playing Mas around the Savannah in Port-of-Spain.

Our leaders meet twice a year to recite the Beatitudes of Caricom unity and chant the mantra of common purpose. But the people feel no connection to goals and few of us fully understand the platitudes of integration or the working of Caricom.

Haiti, Belize and Suriname know they are only included in Caricom in a formal sense. The Bahamas only wants formal membership in the community but not in the CSME. The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is moving ahead with its own sub-regional integration, convinced that the so-called Big Four — Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago — mean them no good.

Guyana longs for the days of preferential arrangements for sugar, and Trinidad longs to be free of its mendicant neighbours. Jamaica blames the implosion of the manufacturing sector on imports from Trinidad. Belize becomes more a part of Central America each day, and integration with Florida is a preferred option for The Bahamas.

Barbadians worry about the invasion by Guyanese, Trinidadians feel there is a swarm of Grenadians. Everybody fears the potential tidal wave of Haitians. And there is a region-wide apprehension about the violence-prone Jamaicans.

Nowhere is the lack of community spirit more evident than in the treatment meted out to Caribbean people as they try to move around the region. The immigration officials are among the most destructive elements undermining the goodwill for integration.

These often uncouth, abusive self-appointed guardians of national xenophobia perpetuate daily atrocities which generate hostility. They are not chastised for their offences because there is tacit support for their actions.

Admittedly, Jamaicans have a track record of violence, drug trafficking and illegal migration attracting visa requirements from which nearly all other countries are exempt. All Jamaicans are suffering because of the reputation and behaviour of the "bad" Jamaicans.

The latest example of the lack of community spirit is the furore of intemperate statements and appalling lack of diplomacy spawned by the complaint by Jamaican Ms Shanique Myrie that she was finger-raped in a cavity search by a female immigration officer before being thrown out of Barbados on March 14. There are numerous examples in every country, but incidents involving Jamaicans are particularly high.

The last thing we would want to see is all our countries resorting to a tit-for-tat behaviour. Because then it would no longer be Caricom but a 'Carry go bring Come' community.

We must move urgently to prevent other such incidents and restore our sense of a Caribbean community sharing a common heritage.

Read more: [http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/editorial/Let-s-prevent-Caricom-from-becoming-Carry-go-bring-Come\\_8619731#ixzz1RLuUduyC](http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/editorial/Let-s-prevent-Caricom-from-becoming-Carry-go-bring-Come_8619731#ixzz1RLuUduyC)