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**Janet Silvera**  
*Hospitality Jamaica Coordinator*

VETERAN HOTELIER and president of the Negril Chamber of Commerce Daniel Grizzle is adamant that the nation should resist any attempt by the Government of Jamaica to tax homeowners engaged in the Airbnb home-sharing enterprise.

According to Grizzle, who is a founding member of the Negril Chamber of Commerce, the Government should be more than satisfied with the returns from Airbnb hosts as their earnings, he contends, flow directly back into the local communities where they are located.

His comments come in the wake of indications by the Government to tax what they consider is a



**Daniel Grizzle**

lucrative business for untraditional operators benefiting from the tourist industry.

"I think we should strongly resist

taxing people [involved] in the Airbnb also small guest houses under 20 rooms. The reason why is the Government is not losing anything, simply because [of] the income that we receive in those small properties, 90 per cent of it is spent on things that carry GCT (General Consumption Tax). And therefore, the Government is collecting 16.5 per cent off of the gross. That's enough tax," Grizzle argued.

According to him, Airbnb homeowners are not in a position to benefit from tax returns on GCT, so there are net (earnings) for the Government.

"That should be enough," he exclaimed, asking why a young, growing business should be stifled with taxes. "There is nothing that

puts small people off business like the threat of taxes. So there is no advantage to the Government to impose taxes on small Airbnb business," he stated.

Grizzle said the Airbnb industry is now a vital part of not only Jamaica's tourism, but also the microbusiness sector, and is the catalyst to accommodating a "huge segment of people" who, because of costs, are shying away from the larger hotels.

Quick to point out that he was knocking the large hotels, owing to the fact that they play an important role by promoting the destination, he noted that although they bring more tour operators and more business to island, the contribution of the small players can't be ignored because their products are

what a large section of the travelling population wants.

"What visitors want is the experience – to experience the way Jamaicans live, work, talk. They want to meet regular, ordinary Jamaicans, and it has nothing to do with the money," Grizzle explained.

He argued that sometimes it is more expensive to go to a small property than a large one, and they are willing to pay the extra money to stay in small properties simply because they get to meet Jamaicans.

"Most people find Jamaicans a very fascinating, exciting set of people. Our personality, our character – everything about us is unique, plentiful and bright," he continued.

The chamber president, who operates the Charela Inn in the resort



town, said the Government should be pushed to turn its attention to mandating the Jamaica Tourist Board and the Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo) to assist Airbnb hosts to deliver a high level of service and to meet industry standards.

“I do think the Tourist Board could play an important role in going more into and being involved more in the small properties – not to go with a heavy stick like a policeman, but to give some kind of guidance and encouragement,” Grizzle advised.

“You could advise and help and let people see the Tourist Board and TPDCo as an enabling body, not as a policing thing that comes with a heavy stick to tell you all that you cannot do. That could be a great change. It (Airbnb) should be encouraged. Talking about taxing it is just about the worst thing you can do to stifle it,” Grizzle said.

Grizzle had unequivocally voiced his objection to taxation of Airbnb hosts during the regular monthly meeting of the chamber last week after one chamber member questioned whether there was a tax structure in place for Airbnb hosts and suggested that the *modus operandi* of Airbnb hosts amounted to “depriving the Government of badly needed revenue”.

Grizzle maintains also that unlike the foreign-owned hotels that are offered tax breaks and other perks, the Airbnb rentals and small hotels are not afforded these privileges, and so, a zero-taxation policy would “level the playing field”.

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# Cayman sees record visitor arrivals

THE CAYMAN Islands welcomed over 1.3 million visitors between January and June 2018, which represents an increase of 19.52 per cent, or 214,711 visitors, when compared to the same period in 2017.

While air arrivals were up 15.9 per cent for the first half of the year, demonstrating an increase of 34,693 visitors, cruise passenger arrivals accounted for 81 per cent of the islands' total arrivals.

This six-month performance comes on the heels of June's record-breaking achievement as the best June on record for stay-over visits and marks the 15th consecutive month of growth.

"I am very pleased that tourism performance in the Cayman Islands is registering consistent growth and continues to outpace projections," commented deputy premier and minister for tourism, Moses Kirkconnell.

"By applying the right marketing strategies, vision and spirit of collaboration to drive performance, the Cayman Islands tourism industry has maintained impressive, oftentimes double-digit increases for a sustained period," Kirkconnell boasted, explaining that this is helping to keep hospitality service workers employed throughout the summer and is also adding a significant boost to the islands' economy.

Preliminary estimates from the Department of Tourism (DOT) indicate that between January and May 2018, visitor spend from cruise and stayover arrivals contributed CI \$325 million to the national coffers – an increase of \$45 million compared to the same period last year – and this is expected to further increase through June,

revealed Kirkconnell.

Arrivals from the United States in June were up 13.89 per cent and were driven by growth in the Midwest and Southwest regions, which saw 23.67 and 21.56 per cent growth, respectively. The Northeast saw an increase of 6.59 per cent, while the Southeast and West Coast saw an increase of 9.82 per cent and 1.61 per cent, respectively.

## GROWTH

Canada saw its 12th consecutive month of growth with an increase of 20.36 per cent. Additionally, as a result of the growth, the Cayman Islands and several local partners have been recognised during the first half of the year with many accolades, such as mentions in TripAdvisor's Traveller's Choice Awards, USA Today and Caribbean Journal.

Over the past six months, the DOT has executed a multi-faceted marketing plan to increase brand awareness and flatten seasonality while also fostering opportunities for small businesses to play a part in the tourism product. In January, DOT launched its Summer Only in Cayman promotion, which this year leveraged the islands' position as the culinary capital of the Caribbean, and its Kid's Culinary Capital of the Caribbean promotion.

The promotion invited families to savour the endless array of food choices available on-island by an impressive roster of local chefs, who curated epicurean experiences for even the youngest of authentic culinary seekers.

In March, DOT signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Airbnb. The memorandum provided an opportunity for cooperation on key



RICARDO MAKYN MULTIMEDIA PHOTO EDITOR

Pedro St James Castle, Pedro St James, or Pedro's Castle is the oldest existing building in the Cayman Islands. Located on the southern coast of Grand Cayman Island, the manor is a reconstruction of an original 1780 house, and the home of plantation owner William Eden.

issues such as the sharing of aggregate data the provision of information on relevant accommodations laws and regulations, which help to ensure that all guests, regardless of accommodations, experience the same quality of product. There are now over 470 properties registered with Airbnb in the Cayman Islands, and that number is expected to grow

over the course of this year. Airbnb and DOT officials held a meeting for hosts on July 10 to engage this fast-growing sector of the local tourism industry.

"It is extremely encouraging to see growth in visits for the first half of the year at a speed we have not seen since 2004," remarked Director of Tourism Mrs Rosa Harris. "As a department, we are

always looking for new, innovative ways to drive arrivals while staying true to our commitment to creating sustainable tourism policies for the benefit of our people. Through continued engagement with local stakeholders and the wider community, I am optimistic that together, we can create a national tourism plan that provides a blueprint for further successes."

## \$33 million upgrade for Old Fort Craft Market

TOURISM MINISTER the Hon Edmund Bartlett says the Old Fort Craft Market in Montego Bay will receive upgrades valued at \$33 million. The work will be carried out by the Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo) and will include restoration to the heritage park at a cost of \$25 million and improvement of bathroom facilities at a cost of \$8 million.

Following a tour of the Old Fort

Craft Market last Thursday, Minister Bartlett said he is taking a holistic view of this upgrade and renovation and has instructed the technical team to come back to him with a design for a repurposing of the market's craft experience that will embrace aspects of the island's heritage, gastronomy and entertainment

Minister Bartlett added, "The aim is to fully build out the heritage park experience, and I

want it to be completely integrated and become a more attractive site for our tourists, who will get to know our story through a full cultural display which the market has the capacity to provide".

### ADDING VALUE

The upgrade to the Old Fort Craft Market will include refurbishing of the cannons, story boards and a wishing well, landscaping, and renovation of the

restrooms. The work is being carried out as part of the Ministry of Tourism's overall strategy to utilise historical sites to add value to existing products and attract more tourists who are interested in these sites. Work was expected to begin on Monday August 20.

In highlighting the strategic positioning and cultural importance of Old Fort Craft Market in the sector, Minister Bartlett concluded, "This is unique

from the rest of the craft-market experiences across Jamaica as Old Fort has the potential for a complete touristic experience through heritage, history, food and entertainment. The location is truly a gem, and when a cruise passenger leaves the ship and looks back at the sea from Old Fort with nice beautiful foliage, local designs, and some of our heritage, they will get a real taste of Jamaican paradise."



# Bartlett challenges Caribbean media to instigate positive debate on climate change

NOTING THAT most island economies in the Caribbean are based on highly climate-sensitive industries and sectors like tourism and agriculture, tourism minister Edmund Bartlett says the region's media have an important role to play as a contributor to the local, regional, and global discussion on climate change.

Bartlett was giving the keynote address at the CBU2017 Caribbean Broadcasting Awards on Tuesday night (August 14) at the Courtleigh Auditorium, New Kingston.

"Climate change is a complex issue with enormous political, social, and economic implications. There is much work to be done to shape public perception and understanding of this issue while helping to shape policies and encourage policymakers to act," Bartlett said.

"At the same time, effective mitigation of climate change is a process rather than an outcome, and media can play an integral role each step of the way. You must be advocates. You must be watchdogs. You must be the facilitators of change," he continued.



Jamaica and Belize swept the most Caribbean Broadcasting Union (CBU) media awards at the ceremony on Tuesday night (August 14) at the Courtleigh Auditorium, New Kingston. Here, Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett (centre) poses with TVJ General Manager Claire Grant (left), representing the RJR-GLEANER Communications Group, and Amelia Mai, CEO of Great Belize Productions Ltd.

He noted that Caribbean media organisations are in a powerful position to instigate positive debate and shape what people think, feel, and do about climate change and building resilience against its impact.

## ECONOMIC LOSS

Recalling the devastation of the 2017 Atlantic Hurricane Season, the minister said that it underscored the Caribbean's major stake in the climate change story. Economic losses exceeded \$100 billion, with GDP losses ranging from 10 per cent to 224 per cent in the case of Dominica.

He said that according to a World Travel & Tourism Council industry study, the 2017 hurricane season resulted in an estimated loss of 826,100 visitors to the Caribbean, compared to pre-hurricane forecasts. Those tourists could have spent US\$741 million and sustained more than 11,000 jobs.

In closing, Bartlett invited the CBU to partner with the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre in building the capacity of Caribbean islands to not

only withstand disruptions, but also, most important, to bounce back and thrive after a disruption.

The centre was one of the major outcomes of last November's UNWTO Global Conference on Sustainable Tourism in Montego Bay. It will assist with destinations preparedness, management of, and recovery from disruptions or crises that impact tourism and threaten economies and livelihoods. These include climate change and natural disasters, cybercrime, cyber-security, pandemics, terrorism, and war.

It will be located at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona, and will be operational in September and launched officially in January 2019.

"The most important function for that centre is going to be communication – getting the information out in a coherent fashion to be able to stay on message and enable the world to understand what is happening in the Caribbean when these disruptions take place," the minister stated.

As a precursor to the centre's soft opening on September 13, Jamaica will host a resilience summit with key global stakeholders and thought leaders at the UWI under the theme 'Tourism Resilience through Global Synergies'.

# Tourism enhancement funds can benefit all, says Caribbean hotel executive

THE ESTABLISHMENT of a private sector-driven tourism enhancement fund (TEF) has the potential to be a 'game changer' as Dominica rebuilds its vital tourism industry.

Addressing last week's open session of the Dominica Hotel and Tourism Association's (DHTA) Annual General Meeting, Immediate Past President of the St Lucia Hotel and Tourism Association (SLHTA) Sanovnik Destang said if implemented effectively, the TEF resources collected from visitors could generate nearly EC\$1 million to bolster tourism-related initiatives, creating employment and providing other socio-economic benefits for the island in the aftermath of last year's Hurricane Maria.

"With 500 rooms in stock, \$2 a night at 60 per cent occupancy, you would net about EC\$600,000 a year if there is 100 per cent participation," he stated in his keynote presentation. This amount, Destang estimated, could grow to "close to EC\$1 million in contributions" with additional rooms coming on stream, along with participation from the alternative accommodations sector. "There's a lot of good that can be done in society and



Sanovnik Destang of Bay Gardens Resorts

in the economy with that amount of money if spent wisely."

Having served as the first chairman of St Lucia's TEF from 2013 to 2016, Destang hailed its virtues, disclosing that the fund has generated more than \$7 million and fuelled more than 500 projects.

The executive director of St Lucia's award-winning Bay Gardens Resorts highlighted some of the TEF's key projects, including its agricultural linkages programme, workforce

development, and training programmes, SLHTA young leaders programme, sponsorship of the St Lucia culinary team and the "Chefs in Schools" programme, clean-up campaigns, as well as local and regional disaster relief efforts, including assistance to Dominica in 2017.

"Our award-winning Virtual Agricultural Clearing House programme has helped generate more than \$1 million annually in sales for farmers from hotels and has cost us less than \$100,000 a year," said Destang, addressing the meeting's theme, 'Beyond Resiliency – Reigniting Our Growth Engine'.

He stressed that SLHTA's success, which can be quantified in social and economic terms, has built tremendous goodwill and "has helped us to successfully argue that anything that helps improve the hospitality sector's performance can directly benefit society at large".

Noting that other Caribbean nations have previously set up TEFs, he advised his Dominican counterparts to extensively consult with one another before applying a TEF "to your own reality". One option, Destang suggested, may be to make TEF contributions mandatory given the intimate size of

the island's room stock. "My experience is that clients are quite happy to pay the fee once they understand what it is used for."

Commending Dominica for recent steps it has taken towards sustainability and resiliency (especially next year's ban on plastic disposables and Styrofoam containers), he noted that its citizens have "a real opportunity to build back better and stronger".

In closing, Destang said that the "Nature Isle" ought to leverage tourism's benefits and its linkages to lift its people out of poverty. Although tourism's resurgence must be driven by the private sector, he said that the government will need to provide important facilitation through policies, capital access, infrastructural investment and ensuring ease of doing business. However, government and the DHTA alone cannot reignite the country's growth engine, Destang counselled. Buy-in from civil society is crucial. "In Dominica, I see tremendous potential. Nature and eco-tourism is a growing niche that you have mastered," he said.

Describing Dominica as "authentic and unspoiled", he concluded: "We try to manufacture that now, and you have it naturally. You are literally the last of your kind in this part of the world and a critical part of Brand Caribbean. The entire Caribbean is rooting for you and eagerly awaits your comeback – but none more than your sister island, St Lucia."



# Everything you ever wanted to know about OTA customers

EVERYONE KNOWS, or thinks they know, a lot about online travel agency (OTA) customers: they're value-conscious, brand-agnostic shoppers who spend a lot of time searching online for the perfect hotel or vacation situation. While all true, when it comes to their impact on the Caribbean hotel business, here are a few more things you should know:

1. OTA customers are young. Half of Gen Z and nearly half of millennials say visiting an online travel agency website is how they prefer to book transportation and accommodations, according to a research study conducted by Expedia and The Center for Generational Kinetics. Thir per cent of OTA customers are between the ages of 25-39, a blend of Gen X and millennials. What do we know about these customers?

■ Nearly 50 per cent of millennials and almost 40 per cent of those ages 31-45 have planned and/or booked travel using a smartphone. In fact, only 18 per cent of people under 30 have NOT used a mobile device for travel.

■ Travel market reports tell us that millennial guests are accustomed to using mobile devices and rely heavily upon traveller reviews for both shopping and booking. They favour travelling in groups, often in pursuit of an interest. ■ Expedia Group data also show that millennials tend to be less brand loyal than their parents, although they do like loyalty programmes and will share personal data to receive perks and other bonuses.

2. OTA customers are tech-savvy. Currently, about one-third of Expedia Group transactions are from travellers using mobile devices, and over 50 per cent of Expedia's online traffic stems from mobile users. Simply keeping up with the digital expectations of today's tech-savvy consumer is no longer an option.

*Travel market reports tell us that Millennial guests are accustomed to using mobile devices and rely heavily upon traveller reviews for both shopping and booking.*

Exceeding those expectations is a travel industry imperative.

3. OTA customers value convenience when shopping for travel. Several Caribbean destinations saw high package share, such as Punta Cana (nearly 75 per cent share), Ocho Rios (more than 70 per cent), Montego Bay (almost 70 per cent), Aruba and Nassau (nearly 65 per cent). OTA customers are more likely to book where they can get a package deal, than customers who usually book directly with the brand. Additionally, customers who book their flight and hotel together in a package stay twice as long, book twice as far in advance, and cancel half as often as those who only book a hotel room.

4. OTA customers come from the four corners of the world. Expedia Group customers come from 200 countries worldwide. As of June 2018, growth of international arrivals (excluding the US and Canada) was recorded in 12 Caribbean destinations. Arrivals from the US and Canada grew in 11 and 10 destinations, respectively.

5. OTA customers from the Latin American region primarily travel on personal trips, not

on business. An Expedia Group Media Solutions study reveals that Latin American travellers take nearly twice as many personal trips as business trips. In order for Caribbean and Latin American hotels to be successful in today's business landscape, they must understand the needs and wants of leisure as against business travellers.

6. OTA customers recognise brand value. While they may not be loyal to one particular brand, 82 per cent of OTA customers like to book with familiar hotel chains.

7. OTA customers try new things. Sixty-two per cent of OTA customers report that they like to try out different hotels.

Rafael del Castillo, senior director, Mexico resorts & Caribbean market management, Expedia Group.



## New online bidding platform to increase direct booking for hotels

JAMAICAN HOTELIERS and their Caribbean counterparts for decades have relied on travel agents and tour operators to be the primary channel of attracting new guest to their properties; however, a new revolutionary platform is now at their fingertips.

**Privatedeal.com**, a bidding engine that hotels and attractions can integrate on their website to boost direct bookings, is now actively pursuing

business in the region.

According to Nigel Cooper, the platform business development executive for the Caribbean, hoteliers can easily implement this offering by adding a widget on their website and defining the negotiation rules.

"When guests click on the widget, they simply select their type of stay (day/night use) or type of tour, dates, number of persons, and then bid their own

price. The system automates the negotiation process, and when the deal is done, hoteliers and guests receive a confirmation e-mail."

Cooper, who has lectured on hospitality and tourism management to undergraduate students for over 20 years, said that although there is continued growth in the use of online travel agencies (OTAs), this does not mean that hoteliers and operators of attractions should not develop or

encourage strategies which increase direct bookings.

Urging hoteliers to try to promote direct bookings, Cooper said the reason is obvious, "You pay less commission and, therefore, there is a greater contribution to the bottom line."

Statistics out of Europe indicate that 72 per cent of guests would book directly with a hotel if they believed they could get the best rates.

**Privatedeal.com** was designed by hoteliers in Switzerland and is now popular in Europe.

Through Cooper, **privatedeal.com** now has a presence in the Caribbean.

"I want to encourage hoteliers

and operators of attractions to add **privatedeal.com** to their range of marketing channels," stated Cooper.

He was quick to point out that this is not in conflict with existing OTA arrangements, as **privatedeal.com** does not interfere with any rate parity clause, so the hotelier can offer lower price right on their website and enable a revolutionary guest experience.

The main advantage for hotels, he argued, is to get new bookings at a fair price, decrease OTA fees, as well as avoid rate parity.

"PrivateDeal has become a must-have system: define the rules, let guests bid their price, sit back and relax," he concluded.



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RIU staff who participated in the tourism language training pose with Tourism Minister Edmund Bartlett (centre), Spanish Ambassador Josef Maria Bosch (second right) tutors and managers of the hotel.

# Tourism language training kicks off

THE MINISTRY of Tourism, through a collaboration with the Jamaica Centre for Tourism Innovation (JCTI) and the Spanish Embassy, began a series of Spanish-language training sessions aimed at building the capacity of tourism workers. Through this partnership, the Embassy of Spain invited the experts in Spanish-language training from Spain, Cervantes Institute of Spain, to deliver a special three-hour introduction to Spanish for the staff at the RIU hotels in Montego Bay from August 16-17.

In highlighting the importance of language training in the sector, Minister Edmund Bartlett addressed a cohort of the participants at the RIU Palace hotel saying, "To build the capacity of our people to grow and expand beyond their professional activities in Jamaica calls for us to know other languages, but more so Spanish in our experience. "Most of the tourism partners and brands we have

in Jamaica all have establishments in the Spanish-speaking countries around us. It is critical for us to be able to hone our skills at communicating with our neighbours, especially as we seek to build multi-destination tourism arrangements with Cuba, Mexico and the Dominican Republic."

With Jamaica's geographical location and the importance of Spanish companies in the tourism sector, Spanish as a second language has become a necessity. The island neighbours Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Haiti, which speaks Creole and French.

The minister added, "This programme with the Cervantes Institute is part of a wider programme of collaboration we are seeking in building human capital, which will also include language training in French, Chinese and German, as these are the big markets that we have to respond to.

We also want to change the entire labour market arrangements for our workers who we are committed to training and certifying so they can be at the highest levels of their profession to demand the highest returns for their labour."

Spanish Ambassador His Excellency Josep Maria Bosch, who was also present at the training session, applauded the effort of Minister Bartlett and thanked the team for the seamless collaboration.

The internationally recognised Cervantes Institute of Spain, a flagship institution in the diffusion of the Spanish language, is on an academic mission from August 15-22, 2018. Outside of the introductory Spanish training sessions, the team also did a four-day intensive training course for teachers of Spanish as a foreign language to over 100 participants at the Shortwood Teachers' College in Kingston.



Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett and Sherine Gayle displaying how to properly button a chef's uniform.



Elinor Felix, chief of state protocol, with Myrtle Dwyer (right).



From left: Jamaica Centre for Tourism Innovation's Carol Rose-Brown, RIU Resorts' Niuurka Garcia-Linton and Victoria Garcia.



Carmen Pastor Villalba from the Cervantes Institute of Spain interacting with her students.



Kimorine Taylor and Horace Finlator.



Josef Maria Bosch (left), ambassador, Embassy of Spain, and Minister of Tourism Edmund Bartlett.



RIU employees (from left) Stacey Ann Reid, Janelle Malcolm and O'Neil Bingham.



Jamaica Centre for Tourism Innovation's Carol Rose-Brown is flanked by Carmen Pastor Villalba (left), academic assistant director, Cervantes Institute of Spain, and Victoria Garcia Ojeda.



# ENJOY JAMAICA, THE HOME OF ALL RIGHT



## Jamaicans celebrating at the Independence Day Grand Gala event

THERE'S A certain magic about Jamaica that cannot be experienced anywhere else. Many have tried to describe it in words, but have failed to adequately convey the island's unique aura. The truth is, Jamaica cannot be explained, Jamaica can only be experienced.

Jamaica's magic is found in the many nuances of her diverse culture. For starters, the island's warm and welcoming people are her most treasured asset, with a captivating disposition that is simply magnetic. It is little wonder the island continues to see record numbers of repeat visitors each year.

Visitors from diverse places, along with Jamaicans at home and those from the diaspora, plan itineraries of must-do activities. All agree that their best memories are made when they take the plunge to explore and enjoy the multifaceted tourism product that is available. The list of things to do and see is fascinating and, especially in the long days of summer, the island hardly sleeps. There are music festivals, cultural galas, gastronomic fares, family gatherings, day trips and good vibes that never end.

**JAMAICA** HOME OF ALL RIGHT



## The Jamaican Folk Singers in performance

THERE IS still time to enjoy the taste, sights and sounds of the island before the end of summer. The ISKA Martial Arts Tournament, the Jamaican Folk Singers concert season, the local theatre scene and road trips are just a few

suggestions for your itinerary. Reconnect and rekindle deep family and friendship bonds – be it an intimate family gathering or a mega music festival, you are invited to experience Jamaica this summer.



## Beres Hammond and Beenie Man at Reggae Sumfest 2018

SUMMER 2018 has been phenomenal, and it isn't over yet. The infectious Jamaican rhythms of reggae and dancehall music can be heard across the island any time of day. The island's music ambassadors were in impressive form at this summer's staging of Reggae Sumfest. Now in its 26th year, this must-go event took patrons on a mesmerizing musical escapade that can only be experienced in Jamaica. The Jamaica Tourist Board live-streamed the event on the Visit Jamaica Facebook page, providing a curated experience of main stage performances, along with interviews of artistes and specially invited guests.

The pairing of good food and authentic entertainment always makes for a great festival, and that defines the recently held Montego Bay Jerk Festival. Delectable jerk delights, scintillating live

performances and a kiddies' village make this a popular family event. Negril's Seven Mile Beach was the scene of five days of non-stop themed parties and live entertainment as Dream Weekend saturated the Negril air with a carnival-like atmosphere.

Young and old alike look forward to the August Emancipation and Independence celebrations, when the resplendent colours of black, green and gold decorate every nook and cranny of the island. From the Emancipation Jubilee to Denbigh Agricultural, Industrial and Food Show; from Mello-goroun to the Festival Queen Coronation; and from the World Reggae Dance Championship to Grand Gala, there was great celebration for Jamaica 56. Not to worry, if you missed these events, make plans to enjoy them next year.



# US Virgin Islands student tops FCCA Poster Competition

**T**YRONE LAKE of the US Virgin Islands is the winner of the junior division of the 2018 Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) Foundation's Children's Environmental Poster Competition.

The 11-year-old Alexander Henderson Elementary School honour roll student topped the regional competition with a poster titled 'Present and Future', which focused on disaster preparation and environmental preservation.

The theme for this year's competition, which was open to all students in primary and secondary schools across FCCA's partner destinations, was 'Weathering the Storm: Disaster Preparation for my Destination'. Students from 17 countries across the Caribbean participated.

Lake's piece was a comprehensive depiction of his vision for protecting the environment, specifically the waters surrounding the US Virgin Islands. He visualised concepts for removing debris from the islands' waters after a major disaster, and focused on the utilization of modern technologies and increased recycling.

Understanding the linkages between a healthy environment and tourism, the youngster from St Croix expressed the importance of maintaining clean beaches and oceans. "Many tourists come to



Tyrone Lake's award-winning entry

marvel at our crystal-clear waters. So if we protect it, we can ensure we have an island with pristine water for both locals and tourists to enjoy."

"We extend our utmost congratulations to Tyrone Lake, the Alexander Henderson School and the entire US Virgin Islands for

their commitment to not only this rewarding learning experience, but also to a level of excellence that will pave the way to success," said FCCA President Michele Paige, who added that she could not be prouder to recognise the talented and dedicated students participating in this year's competition.

Malcolm Edwards of Jamaica and Tefari Prevoo Francisco of St Maarten earned second and third place, respectively, in the junior division.

In the senior competition, first place went to Shannaz Horne of St Maarten, second place to Tana Valmond from Dominica, and third



Tyrone Lake

place to Shanique Perez from Belize.

Lake earned a scholarship of \$3,000 and his Alexander Henderson Elementary School an equal amount to purchase art supplies. Lake and his classmates were also invited for an upcoming award ceremony with a luncheon hosted aboard a visiting cruise ship.

Commissioner of Tourism Beverly Nicholson-Doty congratulated Lake on his outstanding performance and thanked teachers and staff of Alexander Henderson Elementary School for nurturing the gifts and talents of the territory's youth.

## ITF appointment of Howard Mitchell to the board

THE ISSA Trust Foundation (ITF) is pleased to announce the appointment of Howard Mitchell as a new board member. A lawyer by profession, Mr Howard Mitchell maintained a successful commercial law practice for 35 years, with concentrations in mining law and taxation, before retiring in 2010. Mitchell is currently the president of the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica and is also currently serving as chairman of All Jamaica Air Services Limited, chairman of the Council of the Institute of Jamaica as well as company director of TM Traders Ltd, Cari-Med and Kirk Distributors Limited.

Mitchell has demonstrated a strong commitment to public service for decades and was appointed to the board of the National Housing

Trust in 1987 and again served as chairman from February 2008 to June 2012. He serves as a justice of the peace (JP) and in 2017 he was awarded the Order of Distinction (Commander Class) for outstanding service to business and the public sector.

Diane Pollard, president & CEO of the Issa Trust Foundation, stated, "We are pleased to welcome Howard Mitchell as a new board member. Howard brings a wealth of experience and expertise in his field and will be a tremendous asset as we further our mission of impacting the lives of the children through our medical and educational programmes."

The Issa Trust Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation and is the philanthropic arm of the all-inclusive Couples Resorts.



Howard Mitchell





An artist's impression of the TRS Coral Hotel.

## Carol Hotel included in leading hotels of the world

The TRS CAROL Hotel, a member of the Palladium Hotel Group, which will open in November in Mexico, has been included in the exclusive hotel collection of the Leading Hotels of the World.

Located in Costa Mujeres, north-east of the Yucatan Peninsula, the new resort has fulfilled the demanding quality and service criteria that this prestigious group establishes.

The Leading Hotels of the World is one of the most prestigious collections in the world, consisting of more than 375 luxury hotels located in 75 countries, which are characterised by exceptional architecture and design.

The hotels that are part of the group share a passion and common commitment to providing extraordinary, unique and incomparable travel experiences.

Located a few minutes from the

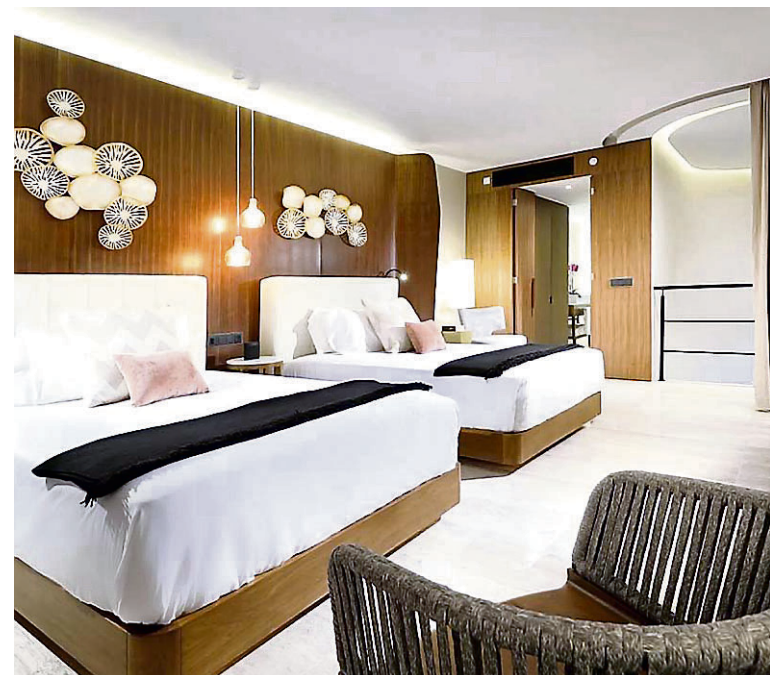
Cancun International Airport, Costa Mujeres is in a unique enclave of the Mexican Caribbean that contains some of the most beautiful beaches in the world.

The destination is now home to the TRS Coral Hotel and Grand Palladium Costa Mujeres Resort and Spa, two exclusive resorts that will offer guests the opportunity to experience a genuine holiday experience of freedom, comfort and connection with nature in the middle of a paradise of exotic vegetation and great variety of native flora and fauna.

### LUXURY EXPERIENCE

The TRS Coral Hotel has 469 luxurious rooms, each with a furnished balcony or terrace, a hydro massage bathtub and direct access to exclusive swim-up pools with stunning views prepared to offer an unexplored luxury experience without losing sight of the majesty of the landscape at any time.

One of the hallmarks of the TRS Coral Hotel is the fully customised premium services catalogued in a relaxed and intimate environment. Its exclusive butler service is designed to meet the needs and



A suite at the TRS.

demands of customers, complemented with 24-hour room service to ensure guests' expectations are exceeded.

Guests at the TRS Coral Hotel can also enjoy an incomparable gastronomic offer, said a media release from the hotel.

Six themed restaurants, including the spectacular Chic Cabaret and Restaurant, and access to all the services of Grand Palladium Costa Mujeres Resort and Spa, including its nine a la carte restaurants, are

included in the exclusive Dine Around programme.

The leisure offering is completed by an impressive Rafa Nadal Tennis Center, which will offer exclusive training programmes based on the personal values of Rafa Nadal and adapted to all ages and levels. The Zentropia Palladium Wellness and Spa, an oasis of wellness of more than 4000 square meters, that will allow guests to relax all their senses and experience physical and mental renewal.



One of the dining rooms at the TRS Coral Hotel.



# Digital technology highlight of this year's World Tourism Day

**T**HE IMPORTANCE of digital technologies in tourism, providing opportunities for innovation and preparing the sector for the future of work, is at the centre of World Tourism Day (WTD) 2018.

World Tourism Day, celebrated every September 27 around the world, is a unique opportunity to raise awareness on tourism's actual and potential contribution to sustainable development.

This year's WTD will help to put the opportunities provided to tourism – by technological advances, including big data, artificial intelligence and digital platforms – on the map of sustainable development. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) sees digital advances and innovation as part of the solution to the challenge of marrying continued growth with a more sustainable and responsible tourism sector.

“Harnessing innovation and digital advances provides tourism with opportunities to improve inclusiveness, local community empowerment, and efficient resource management, among other objectives within the wider sustainable development agenda,” said UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili.

The WTD official celebration will be held in Budapest, Hungary, a country enjoying steady growth of tourism backed by consistent policy support and a commitment to the digital future. Other celebrations will take place worldwide.

The official celebration will also see the announcement of the semi-finalists of the 1st UNWTO Tourism Startup Competition, launched by UNWTO and Globalia to give visibility to start-ups with innovative ideas capable of revolutionising the way we travel and enjoy tourism.



New UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili.

# Tourism human resource professional to plan strategies to build workforce

*CTO organises 9th Annual Tourism HR Conference in the Cayman Islands from 28-30 November, 2018*

WHEN HUMAN resource professionals from across the region meet in The Cayman Islands in November for the 9th Tourism Human Resources Conference, they will be challenged to develop effective strategies and plans to build a high-performance and motivated workforce.

The November 28-30 conference, organised by the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), in collaboration with The Cayman Islands Department of Tourism

(CIDOT), comes at a time when the Caribbean faces increased competition in the global, high-tech, innovation-driven industry and amid increasing calls for a total rethink of the way tourism leaders engage with the workforce.

“There is an urgent need for a high-performance, resilient workforce, which is critical for sustainability of the tourism sector in this ever-changing environment,” Sharon Banfield-Bovell, the CTO’s senior regional human resource develop-

ment consultant said as planning for the conference intensifies.

Building high-performance teams comes with challenges, she said, including employees’ unwillingness or lack of motivation to change; low employee productivity and morale; and the scarcity of relevant skills, as well as weak or outdated leadership thinking and styles.

## REAL VALUE OF TOURISM

However, Banfield-Bovell said that while technology can help drive efficiency, “the real value in

tourism is our human resources – the power of people – and the ability of a well-trained, highly valued, and fairly compensated workforce to transcend beyond process and profit”.

The conference, which has as its theme ‘Building a Resilient, High-Performing and Sustainable Caribbean Tourism Workforce For Global Competitiveness’, will feature experts in human resources, tourism, and labour, including Claudia Coenjaerts, director of the International Labour Organization’s decent work team and office for the Caribbean, who will deliver the keynote address on ‘The Future of Work – What Will Become the New Normal’.

The CTO team has been working with the CIDOT to produce a dynamic programme of plenaries, master classes, a students’ forum and a tour.

“As Caribbean nations, it is imperative that we make the necessary investments that drive visita-

tion in this globally competitive industry. While these investments often come in the form of property development or increased marketing, it is my belief that the greatest asset any tourism product has is its people,” commented Rosa Harris, director of tourism for The Cayman Islands. “The Cayman Islands has continued to develop our local tourism workforce through nationwide customer service training, tertiary education scholarships, and the establishment of a vocational certification programme through our School of Hospitality Studies. We are proud to host the 2018 Caribbean Tourism Organization’s Human Resources Conference and look forward to inviting professionals from across the region to share best practices on ways we can strengthen our tourism workforces for collective success.”

Registration and other information available at [www.onecaribbean.org](http://www.onecaribbean.org).





Three women done in clay are telling different stories with their faces.

## AROUND JA WITH PAUL H AMBOKELE'S IN YOUR FACE

**A** BOUT TWO years ago, I was in a bank in Port Antonio, Portland, when my eyes caught the sight of a tall, dreadlocked man in African-looking clothes.

He wore earrings and was barefooted. I saw regal, I saw art, I saw Africa, I saw wisdom. And the inquisitive storyteller that I am saw stories in his face. I got a strong feeling to go and speak with him, but my turn at the teller came, and when I was finished he was gone, with the stories that I felt he carries. Or, so I thought.

About a year after his 'disappearance', I went, upon the invitation of a friend, to an art show in New Kingston. He said a friend of his and others were putting on a week-long exhibition and sale. I love art, so I made the event a 'must-go'.

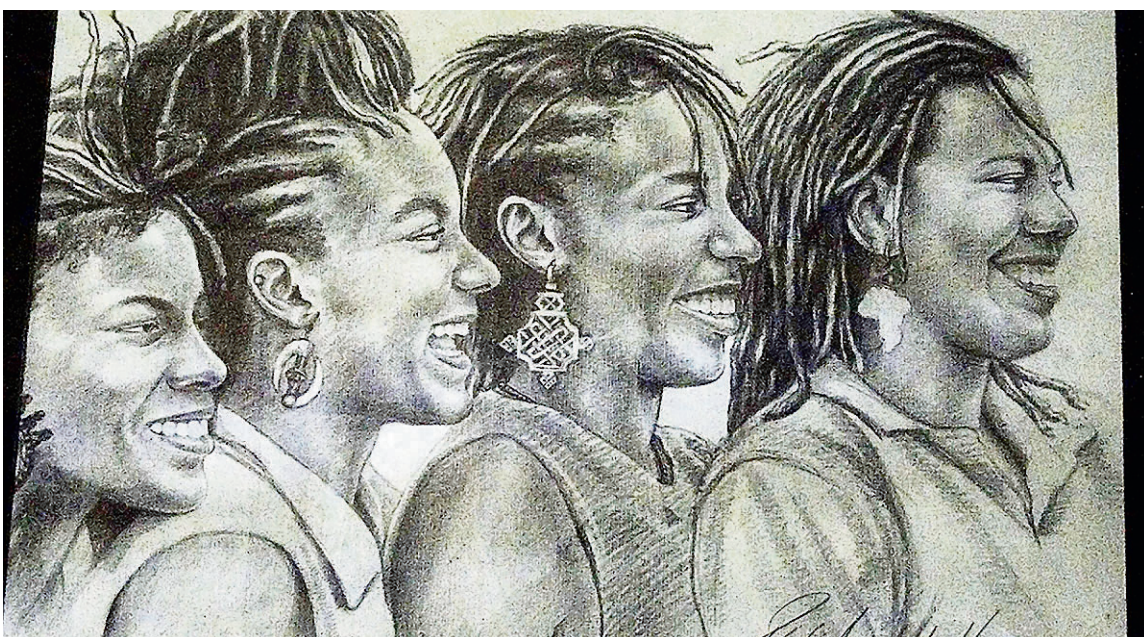
At the venue, when my friend brought me to introduce me to his friend who was putting on the show, I could not believe who appeared. It was the 'interesting person' whom I had seen in the bank. And everything I thought about him was spot on.

He is Phillip 'Ambokele' Henry, a versatile artist married to an artist, Marcia. Their variety of artwork was all over the space. Ambokele, his preferred name, and I struck up a conversation, but with stories as long and powerful as his, we didn't have time at that moment to tell and listen, so I promised to visit him at his home/gallery/studio in Portland.

Recently, while I was in the parish to attend a Marcus Garvey event, I called up Ambokele. I found his place, and again, it was what I envisioned it would be –



These musicians have lost themselves in their art. Look at their faces.



The happy faces of Ambokele's daughters.

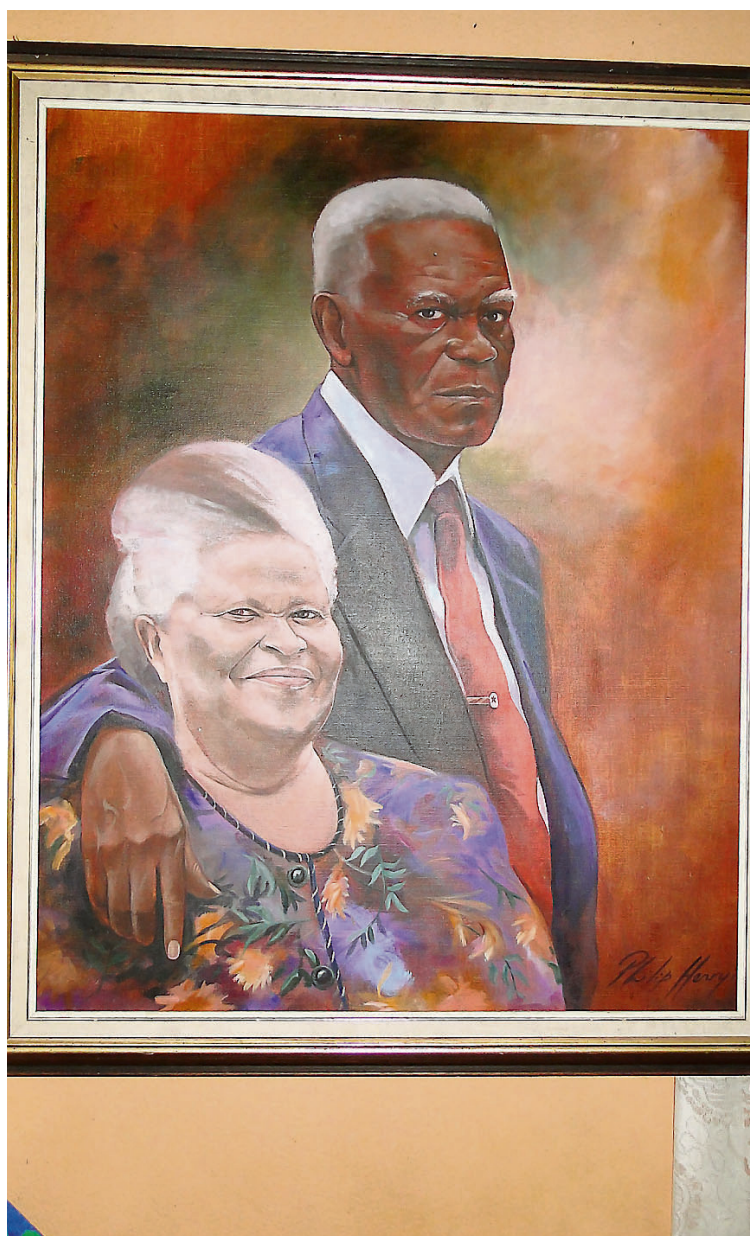


Artist Ambokele of Red Hazel district in Portland said he uses art to celebrate his blackness and tell the story of black people.





Artist Ambokele is preserving the stories of these men whom he actually knew with his art. They have all passed away.



Artist Ambokele's parents, evincing contrasting emotions.



Ambokele and his wife Marcia.

full of art, replete with stories.

There were many things to look at, many narratives to tell. I delved into the personal, the spiritual, the mystical, the metaphysical, the educational and the professional. He, undoubtedly, is full of depth and wisdom.

However, what I could not resist were the black faces, faces of people who look me and him, faces of his wife and four daughters, and his parents, faces of ordinary people. These faces are deliberate, he said, not done upon a whim. Our faces are like storybooks, and we have stories to tell. But mainstream media, it seems, are not interested in our faces, black faces.

It is also to identify ourselves, to say who we are. And because of that, he is encouraging parents of children who have artistic abilities to get them to do art, to represent themselves, to preserve family history, because art can convey the images and essence of our forebears. He recalled using a portrait of his parents to console him when they died. He was seeing them, remembering them.

And because he doesn't see many of our faces being represented in mainstream electronic and print media, he is using his art to celebrate our blackness, for as long as he can, he said. It won't be about the negative emotions. Our joy and laughter, too, will be shining through.

So Ambokele intends to spread the messages of triumph, redemption and happiness through the black faces in his art. By doing this, he said, he is establishing a foundation for his posterity. Art then should not be for the aesthetics, for decoration; it should have meaning.

Through his art Ambokele said, "Dem a go tiad fi see wi face, and if dem no like see wi face, dem a go see it anyway." And in his art, he will show the faces of his ancestors, bring them from the grave to tell their stories through sculptures, drawings, paintings – clay, etc.

"In whatever media I can use – clay, stone, concrete, charcoal, paint, I am going to multiply the images of ourselves," the Jamaica School of Art, sometimes on-the-spot portrait, multidimensional artist said.





The Akan Hut at Great Huts in Boston, Portland.

PAUL WILLIAMS PHOTOS



The Queen of Sheba at Great Huts in Boston, Portland.

# That Saturday-night show at Great Huts

**Paul H. Williams**

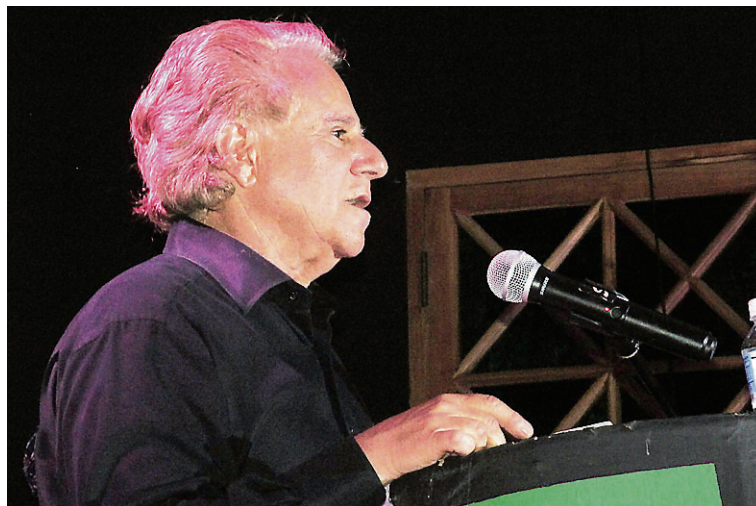
*Hospitality Jamaica Writer*

**L**IVE MUSIC entertainment is an integral part of the hospitality and tourism industry. It is a given. Expected. The band is expected to pulsate reggae and dancehall music. American soul, disco, pop, and R&B are also part of the staple. From time, to time some jazz is blown into the mix.

However, the live entertainment packages at the various hotels, especially the all-inclusive ones, are not very different from one another. Different singers, different bands, but the same songs are what guests might get. And where are the floor shows of yesteryear?

One place where the floor show is big on the entertainment platter every Saturday night is the Great Huts Resort in Boston, Portland. Except for when there are some special events, Richard Darby and his energetic young dancers and drummers in the Manchioneal Cultural Group from Portland take over the Safari Deck, where dining takes place.

In a very intimate setting, the diners, mostly overseas guests, are seated a few feet away from the



Dr Paul Rhodes, founder of Cinema Paradise.

dancing and the drumming. The stage is now a path on which the history of Jamaica traditional music is told through songs, drumming and movements. Guided by Richard Darby, who does much of the singing and narratives, the talented youngsters show the audience how Jamaicans used to dance years ago.

The various dances tell the slavery-era stories of master and enslaved with their hands, feet, bodies and faces. From bruckins to dinky minnie, quadrille, maypole

and kumina, the movements and the looks of intensity on the faces of the performers are engaging. They certainly know how to carry the mood and essence of each dance.

## ON FIRE

And the drums are the most overpowering of them all, the singers and the dancers depending on them to set the mood, and when the drummers and the dancers are on fire, all hell breaks loose, which perhaps only the water in a glass on Darby's head when he dances



CONTRIBUTED

A scene from the panel discussion on exploring links between Africa and Jamaica in the 21st century held inside Africana House, Great Huts, February.

the kumina can cool.

Darby, who has been dancing with his charges at Great Huts for over five years, stays in one place with the glass on his head and dances in sync with the climactic beats of the drums, saying, 'A di laas oh, a di laas oh!' until the last sharp beats to signal the end of Part One echo from the drum.

Part Two is fun time, dances down the memory lane of contemporary Jamaican music. It is time for the dancers to toss away their traditional costumes and don more contemporary ones, some rather raunchy, but true to the essence of the dances.

Music from the days of ska and rocksteady is played reminding the older Jamaican guests of their

young days, telling the younger ones what music and dances were like before they were even conceived, and informing overseas guests, especially first-timers, of the history of non-traditional Jamaican music.

Of course, reggae and dancehall music are also spun into the fun. This is the segment when guests are taught Jamaica dance moves and are expected to execute what they have learnt.

The Saturday show at Great Huts is in keeping with Great Huts' mission of showcasing Jamaica's rich performing and fine arts. Two of its signature cultural programmes are the Jamaican Arts Odyssey and the Cinema Paradise Portie Film Festival.