



**David Rudder:
7.0 concert
will happen in
spite of
Parkinson's
Diagnosis**

Jamaicans loving Soca Music



**Jadel at WI Fete in Sibana
Park, Kingston, Jamaica
for the island's annual Car-
nival celebrations on
Easter weekend.
Story on Page 22**



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Prison for Pras

Fugees singer found guilty of international corruption

Former Fugees rapper, Pras Michel was found guilty of his role in a massive international corruption scheme that involved allegations of money laundering, campaign finance violations, and fraud in one of the biggest scandals in the United States.

The verdict was handed down in a Washington, D.C. court on April 26 after three weeks of testimony from a number of witnesses who all accused Pras of using his influence to assist foreign interests to sway the American government, including making campaign donations to Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump while collecting \$100 million from a Malaysian businessman to interfere with and lobby American authorities to call off a criminal investigation into him.

Michél was on trial with a co-defendant-Malaysian financier Low Taek Jho who Prosecutor Sean F. Mulryne said orchestrated the theft of \$4.5 billion of Malaysia's sovereign wealth fund and fled to the United States, where he lived wantonly and lavishly on the money and when authorities were creeping up on him, he shelled out hundreds of millions to "fixers" and illegal lobbyists to sway authorities to call off the investigations.

Prosecutors say Pras was a struggling musician turned entrepreneur who was approached in 2012 by Low to organize a photo op with President Obama for which he paid him \$20 million.

Their relationship later developed to include Pras buying tickets to political events under a number of fake names and donating \$1.1 million to an Obama political action committee, all illegal and done to secure an opportunity for Low to meet President Obama, prosecutors said.

Pras was represented by defense attorney David E. Kenner who voiced that his client was innocent.

"Mr. Michél did not willfully and deliberately funnel campaign contributions. He was trying to make money, a lot of money. And you know what? ... It is not illegal to make money," the attorney said, the Washington Post reported.

The prosecution also alleged that Pras knew



Fugees singer Pras faces decades in prison for conspiracy

his actions were criminal when he chose to assist Low, who was being investigated for the theft of Malaysia's sovereign wealth fund.

An official who helped to raise funds for Donald Trump, Elliot Broidy, testified that he was hired to help Low avoid criminal charges by swaying the government from pursuing an investigation into Low, and it was agreed he would be paid \$50 million or \$75 million to assist.

Broidy said he asked Trump to join then-Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak to go golfing. They were to discuss quashing the investigation under the cover of maintaining US-Malaysia relations, but the White House stepped in and blocked the golfing session. The former Malaysian president Razak is currently imprisoned in Malaysia for his role in the fund embezzlement.

Pras is accused of traveling with Broidy and others to meet with Low in China, where they discussed efforts to get the American govern-

ment to extradite a Chinese dissident, Guo Wen-gui, to China in exchange for China helping Low with his problems.

Broidy and another person were accused of and pleaded guilty to conspiring to violate the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). He was later pardoned by Trump, the Washington Post reported.

During his testimony, Pras shared that he became an FBI informant. He denied wrongdoing noting that he was not aware he had to register under the FARA Act to lobby for a foreign national.

Despite his testimony, the prosecution successfully argued that he had broken the law and ought to suffer the consequences.

Low, on the other hand, is a fugitive who is said to be residing in China.

Pras faces decades in prison when he is sentenced later this year.

Deal with death in the way you live your life

Disclaimer: The content of the Ask Di column is for information purposes only, and the author is not responsible for the actions taken or performed by the reader. No individuals, including those under medical care, should use any of the information provided here to self-diagnose or self-treat any health-related condition. No assurance or warranty regarding the accuracy, timeliness or applicability of the content is given.

Today's column will be different. It is a sensitive topic and may resonate with many or not however it is okay to have reservations about the topic in general. Although I am training to work with people to help them get through difficult times, there are times when I, myself have questions.

Recently, a friend lost their spouse literally overnight. They were there the night before, and in the morning sadly passed. Gone at a tender young age. Many will say, why so young, they had their whole life ahead of them.

The reality is that we have no say in the matter. When I received the call I was not emotionally dramatic. I was more concerned about my friend and their kids. I am not here to apologize for my reaction, as I understand that we have no control over our own life. We have no say as to when we will take our last breath or when our time will run out. We should not say I will do it tomorrow for this is an example that tomorrow may never come.

If we knew the date when we will take our last breath, what would you do differently? You probably will make resolutions, apologize, do your best to live your bucket list, or at least create a list of the things you always wanted to accomplish. This might give you a few added years, however, what would you do in those last moments? Generally speaking, many people may live a purposeful life while others just live it up and enjoy the rest of their days — which may or may not come for a long time. There may even be others who do not bother with the whole idea and just sit around. What I do know is that life is what you make it. Your emotional states, beliefs, and habits create the behaviors that drive your outcome. So basically you become what you eat. You become what you are.

Why am I writing this today? It's because we

do not have our life planned out and then at the end, you hear heart-breaking stories that Tom or Mary was so smart and had so much potential and they wanted to do X, Y, and Z and never did.

The reality is that we are here to make this life a better one for ourselves, our family, and your contribution to our community and the world ecologically. We are here to mend the past and in the NOW, that is today in this very second to make the future a better place to be for one and all. The most important part of the statement is for you to leave a legacy and feel good about the contributions you have made. I always say (it is not my quote) that you have two birthdates, the first is when you are born in this life as you know it (not about religion) and the second, is the day you discover what your true life purpose and mission is. Happy Birthday!

I did not know my friend's spouse personally, as strange as that sounds, but my friend has a heart of gold and gives unconditionally. My friend will have



to speak on their behalf and so will each of us for others when the time comes.

Why did I react in this manner which I believed surprised my friend who called me and asked me if I saw the message? It's because I have reached a place in my life where I understand many things on different levels and through different eyes. Thirty years ago when my father passed away unexpectedly, I remember saying, thank goodness or God that he did not

have a blackout and had another accident as I saw him driving that morning. Twenty years prior to his passing he was in a severe car accident and he mentioned that same day that he was ready to go home.

In following up with my friend who is still asking the question as to why? Why was their loved one taken away? Why did we not have more time? So many why questions however how do you comfort someone who is still in shock because the memories and feeling are still very fresh.

So my last words today to you are to live life to the fullest, enjoy every moment, and turn around your life if you are not happy. Never let anyone take your Joy away and by the way, no one can do that to you unless you allow them to.

Keep smiling, have fun, and live your true life's purpose so your tombstone will say, Tom/Mary DOB, lived their life, DOD.

If you are in a place where you believe that the world was and is not fair to you for any reason, then please feel free to connect with me at info@TheExperientialCoach.com



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Jamaicans Steely & Clevie going after Drake's "One Dance"

Toronto hitmaker is latest name added to copyright lawsuit

Drake's mega-hit "One Dance" was added to the ongoing Steely & Clevie's Fish Market copyright lawsuit. The Jamaican duo Wycliffe 'Steely' Johnson and Cleveland 'Clevie' Browne says one of Drizzy's biggest hits infringed on their copyright work.

Drake and dozens of artists, including Justin Bieber, Stefflon Don, Luis Fonsi, Pitbull, Karol G, Rosalia, and many others, along with dozens of record labels and distribution companies, have been named in a sprawling lawsuit for copyright infringement by two Jamaican producers.

The plaintiffs, Steely & Clevie Productions, filed an amended claim in a California court this week, naming Drake and dozens of additional defendants in the ongoing lawsuit for copyright infringement and vicarious and/or contributory copyright infringement.

The lawsuit concerns the 1989 work referred to as 'Fish Market' composition and sound recording, the Dem Bow composition, and the Pounder sound recording, which it claims were copied by the artists named in the lawsuit in violation of the ownership and/or exclusive rights in the aforementioned compositions and sound recordings by Cleveland Browne and the beneficiaries of the estates of the other producers.

In legal documents, Drake's song "One Dance" is listed as an infringing work in the 228-page lawsuit, which alleges that the song copies the exact drum pattern of the Fish Market riddim. He and his label, OVO Sound LLC, are named as defendants.

"Drake and a plurality of the defendants, the corresponding defendants for each song named therein, have released the song entitled One Dance. One Dance (the "Drake Work") was released after the 1989 release of Fish Market... incorporates an unauthorized sample of the Fish Market recording and a verbatim copy of the Fish Market composition as the primary rhythm/drum section of each work," the lawsuit said.

The lawsuit continued, "A comparison of Fish Market and the Drake Work establishes that the Drake Work incorporates both qualitatively and quantitatively significant sections of the Fish Market recording and composition."

Drake nor his label have not reacted to the lawsuit publicly, but the Plaintiffs said that they have made an ex parte motion in regards to Service on the artist and his company.



Drake (above) has been sued by Jamaican duo Steely & Clevie, below



Rudder battling Parkinsons

In spite of diagnosis, singer goes ahead with plans to celebrate his birthday with “Rudder 7.0”, ‘the most important show of my life’

In 1986, David Rudder did something that may never be repeated.

With his songs “The Hammer” and “Bahia Girl,” Rudder cemented his place in calypso history after he captured the Young King, Calypso Monarch, Road March title and wrote the winning Panorama tune that year.

And while his performances nowadays may not be as energetic as they were 37 years ago, they remain a must-see for many.

However, fans may be seeing him for the last time in a major performance next month, as Rudder, affectionately known as “King David,” has revealed a recent medical diagnosis which is changing the course of his future.

Rudder went for a medical check-up following the death of several loved ones, including his brother.

“The first thing I did was go do some tests and check myself and I have been diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease,” Rudder revealed.

Rudder made the announcement at the Kafe Blue (formerly Kaiso Blues Cafe) in Port-of-Spain, which is owned by his long-time friend Carl Jacobs.

“With that I said you know what, this concert may not be my last, I will keep playing and doing shows but no more marathon four-hour-long shows again. It brought me into a kind of space where I had to focus on me for the first time,” Rudder said.

“So, for Wayne, Barry, this one is for you. For the people of Trinidad and Tobago, this one’s for you and until I can’t do it anymore. Years to come, I could always look back and say I’ve done what I have to do, and I’ll keep doing it but nothing is promised,” he added.

Barry Howard was Rudder’s long-time drummer and Wayne Bruno was his musical director, writing partner and friend.

Rudder turns 70 on May 6. And on that day, he will be marking the occasion with an event titled “Rudder 7.0: Come and Celebrate” at Sound Forge in Port of Spain, the city of his birth.

Rudder currently lives with his wife and children in Ajax, ON.

The singer invited people to come out and enjoy the “livingness of life.”

“This particular show is more important than any show that I have done. I would be around for years hopefully, but this May 6 is the most important date in the calendar for me,” Rudder said.

Even in the midst of dealing with his own health issues, Rudder sought to reassure his



David Rudder: battling Parkinson’s but still doing the 7.0 concert

fans. “Life is what it is. I am not going to drop dead tomorrow...knock on wood. But I will be around making music, it is just something that happens in life, and there is nothing you can do about it.

“When it reaches the point where I cannot do it anymore, well that is it. But in the meantime, everything I have inside of me, I will seek to share with the people,” he said.

He, however, admitted that Parkinson’s disease has been taking a toll on him.

“I feel like I have to slow down...the energy is still there but physically, I have to actually take it easy because it is just the way you get affected with this thing,” Rudder said, speaking slowly, as his eyes watered on some occasions.

Apart from his music, Rudder said he has also started penning his autobiography, painting and working in copper, as he had previously been trained to do.

He also has a song called “Rising,” which he started to write for Carnival but has not completed as yet. It is his favourite song at this time, he said.

“I always tell people when they ask what is my favourite song, it is the song I am writing right now because I put everything into that song. I did that vocal (for the Rising) after two years of silence, my voice sounded strained because I hadn’t been singing. I didn’t write the lyrics, there are some songs where the lyrics write themselves and that is one of them,” Rudder said.

der said.

He said he felt satisfied with his journey.

“If I have to do it all over again, I want this same journey,” he said.

Rudder lauded his loved ones for their continued support. When he was only a year old, he was paralysed by polio. He still limps as a result of the after-effects of polio.

Parkinson’s disease is a brain disorder that causes unintended or uncontrollable movements, such as shaking, stiffness and difficulty with balance and coordination. Symptoms usually begin gradually and worsen over time. As the disease progresses, people may have difficulty walking and talking.

Other famous Canadians battling the debilitating illness include Michael J. Fox, the actor from “Back to the Future” fame.

When news of Rudder’s diagnosis was revealed, hundreds of citizens took to social media to offer their support. The Trinbago Unified Calypsonians’ Organisation (TUCO) posted: “Let’s continue to lift up our calypso legend David Rudder in prayer.”

In spite of it all, Rudder’s excitement over 7.0 is palpable.

“As I started to put the list of songs together, I could feel the momentum growing. Today I have 40 songs on the list, old ones, and songs you’ve never heard before. Some will be a taste. Others will be the full version offered up in a different way.”

More time with the Birds



Trinidad's famed Asa Wright Centre reopens after \$14M renovation

Trinidad's Hadco brand, known for its line of imported food and beverages, is taking on a new role of mixing business with environmental consciousness.

On April 6 part of that realisation came though with the re-opening of the Asa Wright Nature Centre Eco-Lodge, north of the Eastern Borough of Arima.

The board of Asa Wright manages the 495 hectares of land as a wildlife sanctuary in the Arima, Aripo and Guanapo valleys. A field research station and a lodge which attracts visitors from all over the world is also managed by the board as a not-for-profit venture.

In October 2020, travel restric-

tions imposed during the Covid19 pandemic led to the closure of its eco-lodge.

The following year a request for proposal was sent and Hadco Ltd won the bid. The proposal by the board of the Asa Wright Nature Centre wanted a company with a "mission-aligned tourism development" strategy that was able to support the lodging at the facility.

After a \$14 million investment by Hadco Experiences, the three-year hiatus ended on April 6, with an Argentinian tour company Trogon Tours bringing in 13 bird-watchers.

Hadco has a lease to the lands and lodge for 10 years.



The Asa Wright Nature Centre: revamped

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\$222 million sports fraud

Chug It promoter Andrew 'French' Wright arrested in Jamaica

Chug It promoter Andrew 'French' Wright is among three people who were arrested on Wednesday afternoon by the Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency (MOCA) for allegedly defrauding a government institution of \$222 between 2011 – 2017.

French is famous for his parties French Connection and Chug It and is even more well-known after his infamous feud with Queen of the Dancehall Spice, who alleged a few years ago that his party collected fans' money and allegedly falsely advertised that she was to perform at his event in 2021.

According to Jamaican police, Wright, along with Rudolph Barnes and Oneil Hope, whom police say worked at the government organization INSPORTS during 2011-2017. They are accused of writing, signing off, and encashing fraudulent cheques to persons that were allegedly employees or contractors. However, an audit that began on the organization in 2017 has unearthed hundreds of millions of missing money that police say was given to people who had no contractual relationship with INSPORTS.

INSPORTS is an organization that is created by statute, and according to a description by the body, its main function is to "promote and develop sports at the grassroots."

The Sports sector is a major investment and income earner for Jamaica and is considered to be an avenue for many, especially the underprivileged, to escape poverty and live a life of prosperity, as seen in many of the country's stars like Usain Bolt and Shelly-Ann Fraser Pryce.

In the meantime, the three men are said to be the first to be arrested, as MOCA has a list of warrants still to be executed. The men are charged with conspiracy to defraud, acquisition, and possession of criminal property, engaging in transactions involving criminal property, and larceny as a servant.

French has retained popular King's Counsel Peter Champagnie, who confirmed he was approached to represent the promoter.

On Wednesday night, fans of Spice recalled the incident in 2021 where the artist told them Chug IT promoter Andrew French had allegedly "scammed" fans by falsely telling them she would perform at his event in Miami, Florida.



Andrew "French" Wright is involved with INSPORTS, a Jamaican organization to help athletes to escape poverty

Spice shared videos on her Instagram account of fans who claimed that the promoters announced that Spice would be performing, leading to many of them buying expensive cabanas and VIP tickets to be as close to the Queen of Dancehall as possible.

However, Spice fans said the 9 PM time advertised for the performance was the time the event was to end based on the venue rules. Also, the promoter did not buy tickets or fulfilled other obligations that would create a binding relationship, leading to her not being at the event.

Despite knowing she wouldn't be there, fans claimed the promoter still advertised she would be performing, causing many to bash the artist.

The promoter also claimed Spice was paid in full but failed to show up, but the dancehall artist refuted those assertions providing her own evidence to dispute the same. The parties eventually hired respective lawyers, with French threatening action for breach of contract and Spice threatening to file a defamation suit.

It's unclear how the matter transpired or whether it was resolved.

The High Life

Snoop Dogg, Buju Banton release new single celebrating ganja

Snoop Dogg and Buju Banton celebrated 4/20 with a new collaboration, “High Life.” The song was released on April 21.

Long before April 20 is celebrated worldwide as international weed day, fans of the herb first began using 4/20 as a code for smoking in the wee hours of the morning decades ago. In recent years, marijuana users have used the day to show their appreciation for the herb.

Among those who celebrate their love for weed are Snoop Dogg and Rastafarian reggae artist Buju Banton who released a new song to celebrate the day. “Pass me chalice/ Real ganja baby inside Buckingham Palace,” Snoop raps over a laid back breezy beat.

The artists chopped it up on Instagram Live to premiere the track while also smoking on some impressive-looking blunts during the IG Live. Thankfully the video was not banned as the Jamaican and American artists expressed appreciation for each other.

During the Live, the new Death Row owner shared that he had big respect for Buju Banton. Snoop Dogg also shared that the collab was a dream come through and is his second foray into reggae music. Snoop released his reggae album, Reincarnated under the name Snoop Lion in 2013, which caused quite a stir as many felt the rapper was converting to Rastafarianism.

On the live, he told Buju Banton that he would have been glad to have him on the project, which included artists Collie Buddz, Mr. Vegas, and Mavado. At the time, Buju Banton was incarcerated and was only released in late 2018.

The two legends previously collaborated on the song “Big Dogs,” released nine years ago. The song was a hardcore rap song where they individually also expressed their love for marijuana in their respective verses.

In the meantime, Snoop also released a new track for 4/20 with Bebe Rexha called “Satellite.”



Snoop Dog: teamed up with Buju Banton for the new single



Mercedes E-Class

Same name, new concept

The 2024 Mercedes-Benz E-Class sedan has been unveiled. Mercedes' midsize sedan offering comes in with more room and tech than ever.

The new Benz sedan has dropped the V8 for the first time since the 1980s, now offering only 4 and 6 cylinder hybrid models.

The redesigned luxury sedan has more room than the previous generation with a lengthened and widened frame, leading for more room inside the cabin.

Mercedes-Benz has freshened up their powertrain options, with an E350 Sedan featuring a 2.0-liter turbocharged 4-cylinder coupled with a hybrid system to make 255 horsepower, whereas the E450 retains its 3.0-liter straight-six engine from the previous generation, however it is paired with the same hybrid system in the E350, bringing the horsepower figure up to 375.

The 4-wheel steering system from other Mercedes-Benz models has been introduced on the E-Class, allowing for the sedan to take tighter corners and turn easier.

Mercedes-Benz has brought several new updates to the interior of the car, the most obvious of which being the large infotainment screen in the centre, dubbed the "Superscreen."

This screen contains many new features like the ability to make video calls with the camera on the dashboard, watch Tik-Tok vi-



The new Mercedes E-Class features several updates but the same name

deos, among other features. The front passenger seat also has a screen, however this is a paid option from Mercedes.

Around the interior, you'll find the E-Class

is covered in high-quality materials, maintaining the elevated standard that Mercedes-Benz is known to bring to the table.

Pricing hasn't yet been announced for the E-Class, however we expect the updated model to start in the \$60,000 range. High-Performance AMG models have not been revealed as of now, but Mercedes has confirmed the E-Class will get a spicy 6-cylinder AMG model rather than the V8 models we are used to.

Mercedes have changed the formula for this new generation E-Class, leaning towards tech rather than, however it still retains the same luxurious standard that Mercedes-Benz is known to offer.

Photo at left: The "Superscreen" dominates the interior and allows for video calls and watching videos



Rocking Mama's Brand

Not yet 1, Rihanna and A\$AP Rocky's son already a fashionista?

Rihanna and A\$AP Rocky's baby boy is already standing and a young fashionista.

Baby Fenty is just about a month away from his birthday, and he's already standing and possibly walking, his mother shared on Thursday. Rihanna shared an update for everybody's favorite internet nephew showing his latest taste for fashion, but fans noticed the inadvertent change as baby Fenty is seen standing and holding onto a chair to stabilize himself.

Rihanna has graciously shared updates with her son despite nasty criticism from people who commented on the child's looks. Still, she has shared his cute milestones with the rest of her large community that loves and adores the baby.

Last week, she shared photos from his Easter celebration showing him sitting down and reading and petting rabbits. Rihanna and A\$AP Rocky's baby boy seems ready to go places as he was spotted standing up and holding on.

All of the recent photos of him, including recent outings with his parents, show his dad holding him up. It's unclear if he's walking as yet, but that wouldn't be too far away as he's getting to celebrate his first birthday within a month.

The photo taken from the back shows baby Fenty wearing some cute jeans and what looks like a custom Fendi jacket with the words "Trouble" emblazoned on the back. His jeans are perfect as they end right below his ankle, showing off his little feet covered in a pair of white socks but no shoes.

Rihanna did not caption the photo, but fans of the artist gushed about his cute little fashion gear. In another photo which fans say was taken



Rihanna Instagram

Rihanna's baby boy is rocking fashion and standing, though he's not turned 1 yet

at Cesar restaurant in Paris, Rihanna is seen holding her baby boy with his jacket details more prominent in the light.

The jacket is actually green and appears to be made of some type of felt or velvet material. Mama Bear is also fashionably dressed in an oversized jeans jacket with bead details and a

waistcoat unbuttoned halfway and showing off her pregnant tummy. She wore a matching denim skirt, studded shin-high pointy-toe boots with a Dior purse, and she and the baby had big smiles as paparazzi photographed them.

Both Rihanna and Rocky were also spotted at the restaurant recently.

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Celebrating Indigenous cuisine

Recipe Book, other plans in the works at Guyana's Carnegie School

THROUGH the International Fund for Agriculture Development, the Government of Guyana has collaborated with the Carnegie School of Home Economics to embark on a six-year project for the Hinterland Communities of the country.

The name of the project is called Hinterland Environmentally Sustainable Agricultural Development (HESAD) Project.

This project aims to improve Indigenous Peoples' livelihood through income generation and create an Indigenous Recipe Book.

Principal of the Carnegie School of Home Economics, Sharmaine Marshall, disclosed that the project seeks to improve their livelihood and resilience through income generation, access to assets, improved nutrition and adaptation to climate variability and change in the Indigenous community.

She also said, "Through this project, Carnegie School of Home Economics is creating history here because it is the first documented book of Indigenous recipes, so what we did was to have a call for recipes. Those recipes were sub-



Students of Carnegie sharing some of their traditional foods

mitted and we conducted a testing kitchen and standardised the recipes," Marshall was quoted as saying during her interview.

Marshall further added that, once the recipes are standardised, there is a further aspect to it and that is to have the taste kitchen, where persons from the Amerindian community have to buy in while at the same time raising nutritional awareness among the Indigenous community.

Marshall noted that the response to the publication of the Recipe Book has been overwhelming and traction is being gained as we go along thus far.

Both Marshall and Deputy Principal, Tandika Griffith, made it quite clear in their interviews that because of the historical nature of the recipe book, the recipe of traditional values cannot be changed.

"What we can suggest, for example, tuna, if you add anything to tuna, it becomes a soup, and we don't want to do that. What we suggest is that this meal can be eaten with steamed vegetables and that is what we are trying to encourage among the indigenous nations," Griffith explained.

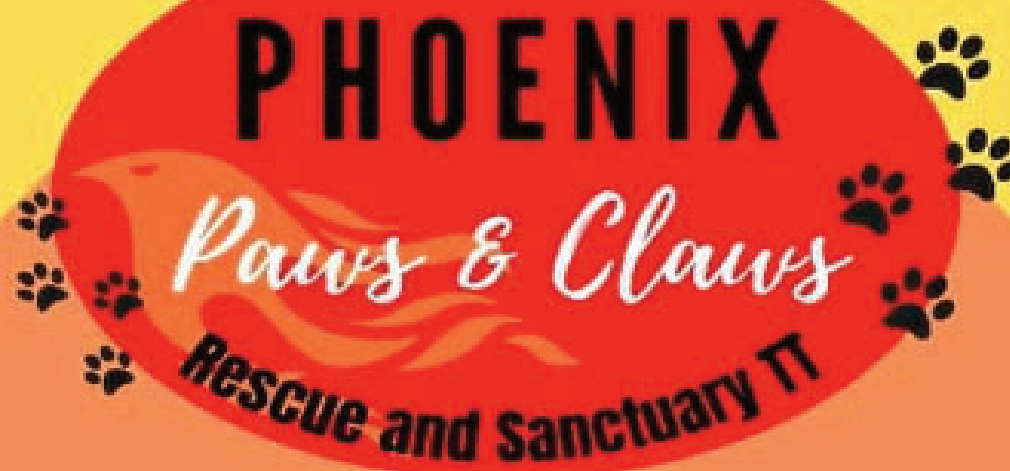
She noted that these vegetables could be grown in the Amerindian villages, but our primary focus is to show how vegetables can be used to enhance nutritional value.

It was noted that each recipe has its own traditional value.

The project recently developed a Nutrition Strategy and Play book that outlined the nutritional problems of the beneficiaries of the HESAD Project in Regions 1 and 9 to make awareness interventions in nutrition especially concerning women, youth and children.



Principal Sharmaine Marshall



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It Was Him!

Shaggy hands over \$100M donation to Jamaican hospital

Shaggy has handed over \$100 million to the Bustamante Hospital for Children almost five years since raising the funds through his Shaggy & Friends Benefit Concert to assist the hospital in procuring critical equipment to help the nation's children.

The move came following a bitter spat between Shaggy and hospital officials after they appeared to change the purpose for which the funds were to be used, and the artist refused to hand over the money because hospital officials were to use it to procure specialty equipment and beds.

On Sunday, the Jamaica Gleaner reported that Shaggy handed over the funds, which will help to “facilitate upgrades” and aid a “slew of initiatives.”

The move comes following hardened efforts by the hospital officials who made several insinuations that the artist might have either misused or refused to hand over the funds.

However, last year Shaggy addressed the core of the dispute, which is that his foundation, Shaggy's Make a Difference Foundation, has never in the history of operation handed over cash or money to any institution. Rather the organization raised funds and procured the goods needed, and handed them over to the organization in need.

“We never hand over money to anybody. If you look at the model of Shaggy & Friends we do not hand over money, we always buy equipment, and if there are repairs we do repairs,” he said. Shaggy also gave an example of previous help to Bustamante that the hospital built the lab, and the foundation undertook the task of furnishing the lab.

During an interview with the Jamaica Observer last December, Shaggy said he was waiting on the hospital to get several things done- a budget, drawings are done, and outsourcing a contractor at a competitive cost before the Foundation released the funds.

The Foundation had planned to build a brand new facility, but there was no availability of land. Shaggy explained that they then contemplated a plan to build a ward. Still, the singer and actor said that his Foundation was prevented from doing that because the Charities Act pre-



Signing the cheque: Shaggy donates proceeds from a concert to hospital

vented the money from being used for any other purpose than for which it was raised.

A decision was later taken to refurbish and expand the existing ward to hold seven specialty beds. The ward will include a lounge and waiting area and a new pharmacy to make the space bigger since it currently only holds five beds.

Shaggy has received much flack from members of civil society who bashed the artist for not hastily releasing the money to the hospital, but others defended the artist noting the rampant corruption that was present in government organizations which included funds being missing or monies siphoned off from projects. There has been no proof any corruption is involved in the process of this project between Shaggy and hospital officials, although many Jamaicans felt the artist was right to ensure all safeguards were in place.

During his interview last year, Shaggy ex-

plained he had been donating and handing out cheques to needy families for almost a decade before him starting his foundation. However, it was when he met a young patient who had a bullet lodged in her head that he realized that giving her parents a cheque was a short-term solution and that a longer-term solution might be to help to build out a better facility to help future children given the high rate of crime and violence in Jamaica.

The last Shaggy & Friends featured Shaggy's friends – international performers Sting, Wyclef Jean, and Doug E Fresh.

However, the concert may never be held again as Shaggy addressed the “character assassination” that took place over the years, noting that his “friends,” which included myriad corporate sponsors, were turned off by the way Bustamante hospitals carried on over the money.

Police Raid!

Vybz Kartel's baby mama, sons traumatized by armed cops at home

Police converged on Vybz Kartel's baby mother Tanesha 'Shorty' Johnson's home on Friday morning prompting her to go live sharing the ordeal.

There was a brief standoff between security forces who tried to gain entry to the home of Tanesha 'Shorty' Johnson, the mother of three of Vybz Kartel's children.

A family member of Johnson shared a live video showing half a dozen officers attempting to gain entry to the home without a warrant. The Jamaica Constabulary Force has not commented on the incident.

However, fans of the artist shared their outrage at the way the police handled the matter. In the live, the resident accused the police of harassing them.

"From unnu hear the last name one whole heap ah excitement and all kinda something. Ah sleep me a sleep and unu wake me up. I hope say when unu hear gunman unu run go and lick down boy and excitement... Unu make people look bad. Yah crossis. The blood of Jesus against unu," Johnson passionately tells an officer who is seen wearing a brown uniform.

The same police officer is heard telling Johnson, "Mi knock on the door...alright have a nice day," before leaving.

Another woman named Britnay said to be a relative of Johnson, can be heard talking to the officers. In the video, Tanesha Johnson and Vybz Kartel's second son, Likkle Addi, is seen shirtless.

The officers all carried firearms, and one officer was seen holding a long rifle and could be heard telling the woman she could not video them in the home.

"It nuh illegal fi video. This is not a working place, this is a house. All now mi nuh see the warrant. Where is the warrant?" Johnson was heard telling the group of police officers.

It's unclear why officers were at the home of Johnson and her sons. Days ago, her son Likkle Addi shared on a live video that he was threatened by a security guard in Ocho Rios when he went to buy breakfast. The young man said the security guard harassed him and threatened to harm him. He said he did not know why the security guards may have wanted to harm him and appeared shaken by the incident, which he live-streamed for his safety.



Vybz Kartel's baby mother Tanesha 'Shorty' Johnson and their sons, Likke Vybz and Likkle Addi, aka UTG

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Ice skating in the Caribbean

The first ice rink, complete with a small real snow indoor play area, has opened in the Caribbean nation of Trinidad And Tobago.

Christened the Ice Caribbean Entertainment District (or 'ICED' for short), the facility is located at La Romaine.

A sizable crowd are reported to have gathered outside the facility ahead of its scheduled opening.

The ICED building has three levels with ice skating rinks on the second and third floors and the snow playgrounds on the ground floor. There are two of these playgrounds in temperature-controlled rooms where the snow is delivered from chutes in the ceiling.

For most visitors it is the first experience of ice and snow, with the ice skating a key attraction for teens and adults and rentals and professional tuition available.

Canadian World Figure Skating champion and Olympic medallist Elvis Stojko is an ICED brand ambassador and commented, "Canada has a rich heritage in winter sports like hockey and figure skating, so for me to have the chance to share my passion for the ice with Trinidad and Tobago is an amazing opportunity."

Some of the people who came to the opening were dressed in full winter clothing, with heavy jackets, boots, gloves and hats. Others came dressed for the typical local climate, not knowing what to expect inside.

The facility has three floors. The second and third floors have ice-skating rinks for teenagers and adults respectively.

On its website, ICED said it offers ice rink experiences for teens and adults. Each of these can be purchased at \$85 per 20 minutes of ice time.

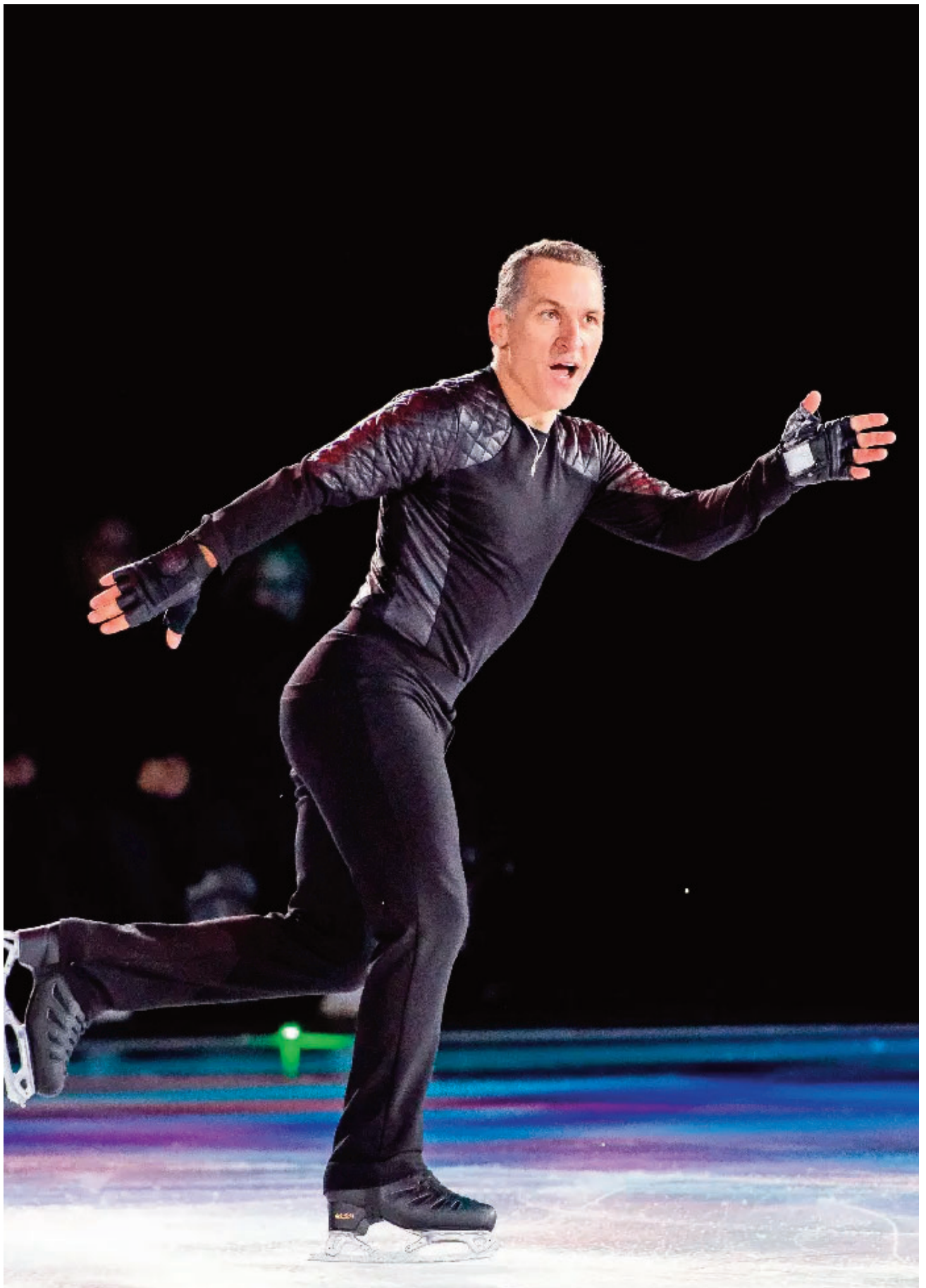
For \$75, customers can enjoy a winter wonderland experience at the facility's snow playground. There are two such playgrounds located on the ground floor in sealed glass rooms which are filled with ice delivered from chutes in the ceiling.

The surface of both rinks are also real ice.

Among the amenities being offered to customers at ICED are a premier beverage station, convenient parking, rental gear and equipment.

ICED also said it has experienced instructors to teach customers the basics of ice skating.

The company has also laid out several rules



Canadian Olympic skating champion Elvis Stojko is the venue's Brand Ambassador and guidelines for customers at its facility.

ICED states that it will offer free membership for one year as part of its launch.

But membership will be valued on an "ICE credit system," where members purchase credits that can be used to access different activities. Credits are added to membership cards upon

purchase.

Through the use of cards and associated ID bands which are specific to each customer and cannot be used by anyone else, credits on the former are used to purchase services at the facility.

Exploring real-life stories

Bocas Lit 2023 showcases regional talent

Life writing – in books ranging from memoirs to family histories – is set to be a major focus at this year’s NGC Bocas Lit Fest, with readings and discussions featuring a fascinating line-up of Trinidad and Tobago authors.

A rapidly growing, popular genre with locally-based writers, life writing records real-life personal and community stories. A special programme of events at the annual festival – running from April 28-30 and based at the National Library in downtown Port of Spain – puts a diverse array of memoirists and biographers under the spotlight, a media release said.

The line-up includes the winner of this year’s OCM Bocas Prize for Non-Fiction. Ira Mathur, well known as a journalist, who will discuss her category-winning memoir, *Love the Dark Days*, alongside Brian Samuel, Grenadian author of *Song for My Father*, and Simone Dalton, Trinidad-born, North America-based winner of the 2020 RBC Taylor Emerging Writer Prize for non-fiction. The session starts at 11 am on April 30.

Other writers, with backgrounds ranging from the airplane cockpit to the banking boardroom, have recently made their mark in life writing, and are eager to share their stories at the 2023 NGC Bocas Lit Fest. Wendy Yawching, the first woman captain of TT’s national airline, will present passages from her memoir *The Courage to Fly* in a panel also featuring retired managing director of Republic Bank Ronald Harford (*Nil Illegitimi Carborundum*) and professional life coach Angela Laquis-Sobrian (*Breaking Free: A Journey from Trauma to Empowerment*), at 4.30 pm on April 30.

Linking larger-than-life soca stardom to the NGC Bocas Lit Fest is Elizabeth “Lady” Montano, manager and biographer of her multiple award-winning son Machel Montano. In her book *King of Soca*, published to acclaim in 2022, “Lady” reflects on Machel’s supernova path to success. She is slated for a one-on-one session in conversation with veteran music producer and radio host Keron “Sheriff” Thompson, on April 29 at 2 pm.

A crucial aspect of life writing centres family histories: their legacy, history, and development through TT’s growth as a nation. Three beautifully produced non-fiction books of this nature will be highlighted at the festival. Cheryl Bowles,



Author Ira Mathur: finalist at Boca Lit

founder of *Cher-Mère* and representative of the Waldron family, will highlight the Waldrons’ achievements as documented in *The Ladder We Ascend*. Joining her is anthropologist Dylan Kerrigan, whose *Growing Up Woodbrook*, written with Ken Jaikaransingh, has already achieved bestseller status at independent Port of Spain bookseller Paper Based Bookshop. Rounding out this panel is Beverly Scobie, whose *Via the Round About* chronicles the achievements of the Scobie family from 1819 to the present day. They appear on April 30 at 3 pm.

Members of the NGC Bocas Lit Fest eager to

try writing their own life stories also have a chance to benefit from expert advice, at a workshop to be led by veteran Jamaican publisher and editor Ian Randle. In the session, *What makes a Great Memoir?*, Randle will delve into the key elements of any good memoir, and what publishers look for in an autobiography, the release said. Running from 3.30-5.30 pm on April 28, the workshop has a fee of \$100 and requires pre-registration at www.bocaslitfest.com/workshops.

The full programme for the 2023 NGC Bocas Lit Fest is online at www.bocaslitfest.com.

Sharing the Soca

Jamaicans show love for Trini music during JA Carnival

Soca music is definitely loved and appreciated by many people in Jamaica and the events of Jamaica carnival on Easter weekend demonstrated this. Thousands of Jamaicans joined regional and international tourists who participated in numerous Carnival and soca-themed events over the past two weekends in the land that's renowned for reggae and dancehall music.

Kes The Band's live concert hosted by Sun-Nation at Sabina Park on April 13, and the first-ever WI Fete at the same venue on April 15 attracted thousands of patrons, even as Trinidad's staple events such as Private Ryan's Soca Brainwash, Scorch's Duck Work and Caesar's Army's AM Bush J'Ouvert also drew huge crowds to different locations in and around the capital city Kingston.

Creative carnival decor, themes, customs, aesthetics and soundscapes prevailed throughout the festivities with sprinkles of dancehall and reggae for good measure, similar to the mix experienced in Trinidad Carnival as it has evolved over the past two decades, said a release from Overtime Media.

Soca superstar Machel Montano made note of this phenomenon on April 15 during his first performance with a full band on the island in many years, and 2023 Road March winner Ian "Bunji Garlin" Alvarez also shared a story of a time when soca artistes were not so readily accepted on the island.

"The year is 2023," he related after applauding the massive crowd for singing his hit song *Differentology*, word for word. "The last time I set foot inside here it was 2000. I didn't understand Jamaica dem times and ah come here with muh arrogant self and feel ah coulda do wha ah want. Delano from Renaissance gimme de microphone and ah say gimme that dancehall riddim and ah woman in de crowd say 'come offa dat, who is you' and boo me straight off de stage. Ah fly back home to Trinidad that night and ah say ah never coming back to Jamaica again..."

Garlin freestyled the second half of the story in time with his hit song and the crowd's response was tremendous. Performing with his live



Patrons feel the music during Bunji Garlin's performance in Jamaica

band, Garlin showed masterful crowd control, stage presence and potent delivery, alongside his trademarked freestyling (extemporaneous) skills, the release said.

The 2023 Road March runner-up, Nailah Blackman and Gamal "Skinny Fabulous" Doyle, also enjoyed their time onstage, as did three-time Soca Monarch Aaron "Voice" St Louis when he appeared during Montano's closing set.

Jeffrey "Agent Sasco" Campbell, who sings on the new Caribbean Airlines theme song, *Welcome Home*, and rising star Raheem "Valiant" Bowes were among the few Jamaican, non-soca performers on the night and both were greeted warmly by the audience, but the soca stars were definitely the highlight and main attraction at WI Fete.

Similarly, at Kes' concert, recent collaborator Reanno "Busy Signal" Gordon was welcomed and enjoyed by the masses assembled, but it was Iwer George's 2020 collaboration with

Kes, *Stage Gone Bad*, that sent the crowd into a frenzy – jumping, wining and waving rags and flags.

Event co-ordinator Damian Archie, who has been producing events with Caesar's Army and others at Jamaica Carnival for over a decade, says the cultural integration is still a work in progress. He said, "The Jamaicans have their own ways of doing things generally, but over the years, they have observed us and taken stock of how we do things and so now they are more willing to collaborate and trust us more to handle certain aspects and there are still things that can be improved on all sides, but the music is there – soca is at a level now where we have two and three different generations of talent who are professionals and have hits and catalogue and varying degrees of stage experience, so there are about two generation who have grown up loving them and loving soca music as much as they love any other genre."

Taking cooking to a new level

“Islam means peace, and I’ve grown up with the teaching that you must always be uplifting to not only your Muslim brothers and sisters, but everyone in society.”

So says Sharaz Mohammed, a chef for more than 25 years.

Today, Mohammed’s schedule is a hectic one, as he has a lot of dishes to prepare. He had been fasting throughout the month of Ramadan, which he said is “a reminder to all Muslims how disciplined the Islamic way of life has always been.”

But being a chef surrounded by food all day and maintaining a fast must be a bit challenging, right?

Mohammed admitted maintaining a fast is difficult for him as a chef but: “Again, it’s a mindset and discipline. As Muslims you have to appreciate seeing another month of Ramadan.”

Mohammed has been in the food industry for over 25 years, and has worked at all levels, from dishwasher to executive chef. He has travelled to various continents in an attempt to understand the culture, traditions and cuisine of others.

Mohammed has also mentored many people in the industry: he’s taken dishwashers and trained them to become cooks, chefs and business owners.

“As a young adult many years ago, I couldn’t afford to go to culinary school, so I chose the path of hands-on training, which was very difficult, demanding and involved long hours, while seeing the highs and lows.”

Thanks to this exposure, Mohammed has trained and worked alongside some of the best local and international chefs.

In the past year he started offering cooking classes to people of all ages, from professionals chefs to the average food lover, children, business owners, executives and others. Due to the success and positive feedback he received, Mohammed has since started the Chef Sharaz Culinary Academy, upstairs at Ramsingh Plaza 1 in Chaguanas, Central Trinidad.

“My goal and vision is to continue giving back my experience and knowledge over the years to enhance the culinary and tourism development of our country, the West Indies and anyone who is interested in their own development.”



Chef Sharaz Mohammed: teaches people how to cook

The Birthing Goddess

Former T&T Diplomat set to launch new book on joy of natural, painfree childbirth in Toronto on June 9

Trinidadian-born Laila Sultan-Khan Valere has been a prominent counselling psychologist, diplomat, conference leader and educator.

Being a mother, however, has afforded her her most prized legacy. When she became pregnant at 45, after having experienced menopause, she set out to prove a belief she had always held—that childbirth is a beautiful, divine gift which is meant to be natural and painless.

She seeks to pass on her revelations to other women in her recent book, *The Birthing Goddess—Reclaiming the Legacy of Natural, Pain-free Childbirth*.

"I'm 83 and very proud of it. I'm also proud of this book. While I'm here I must have something to contribute. God has me here because He wants me to contribute. I want to pass this on to other women. If I could do it, other women can do it," she said from her Florida home.

Thirty-seven years ago, Valere and her husband, Mike, sat blankly in a doctor's office in Florida. They were shell-shocked after being told that Valere, 45 and already into early menopause, was two-and-a-half-months pregnant.

Her first three children—Marcus, Emile and Angelique—were already in their early teens, so conceiving 13 years after her youngest child while completing her Master's degree was furthest from her mind.

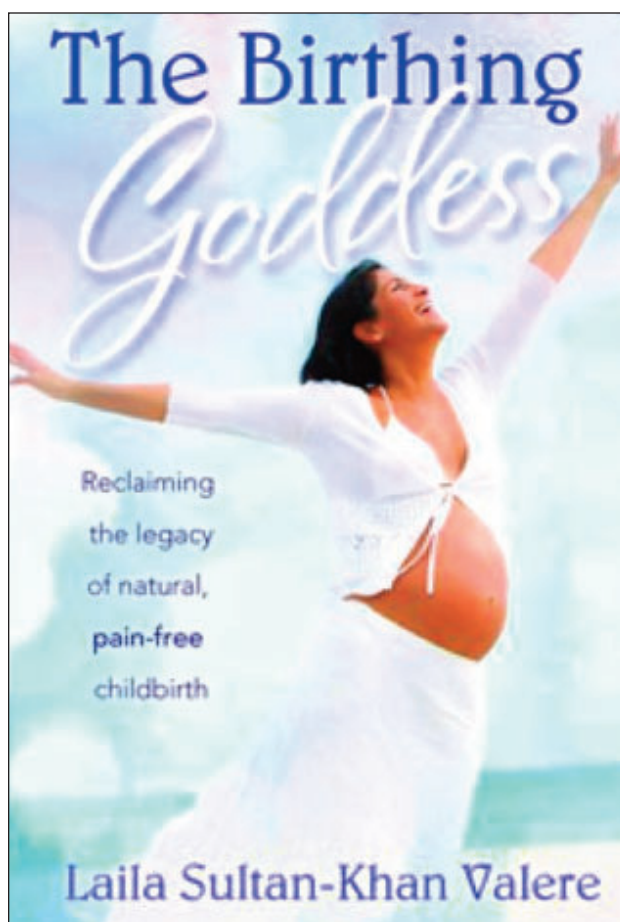
For years, she had longed for a second daughter—a fourth child, but had given up trying after having suffered a miscarriage. She had focused her energy on nurturing her first three children and on pursuing her Masters in Psychology at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She had even completed a few courses towards her doctorate.

Faced with the prospect of a "miracle" pregnancy, however, Valere decided to sacrifice her academic dream of completing her PhD to have her daughter.

Initially, her decision to have the high-risk pregnancy caused tension in her marriage. Still, Valere was adamant that the pregnancy was a chance to "get it right," to experience the birthing process in the worry-free, painless way God intended.

"I had always felt it should be pain-free. I had always felt that if God made us as women and graced us with the ability to conceive and co-create, then birthing had to be a natural beautiful, normal, healthy function," she revealed.

She had her first three children at nursing homes in Trinidad. Despite having attended childbirth education classes, those birthing ex-



Laila Valere's new book on birthing

periences had been quite agonising; with her first labour at age 26 having lasted at least 12 hours.

"It wears you out. I'm sure many women wonder whether God intended us to have all that pain," she said.

Her fourth time around, "taking things one day at a time" became the mantra of the once-again expectant mother. She found herself often singing the old gospel song and developed a heavy reliance on God for direction. Gradually, Valere built her confidence and embarked on a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual journey which involved intense research, a disciplined regime of physical and mental exercises, good nutrition and prayer. As her pregnancy progressed, she deepened her relationship with God, cultivating great mental strength, determination and willpower.

Capitalising on the resources at her university, she read books by famous obstetrician, Dr Grantly Dick-Read, who felt that women encountered pain during labour because of fear and lack of physical and mental preparation. She also read books by alternative medicine advocate Deepak Chopra, among others. Using hypnotherapy (guided relaxation and intense concentration to resolve issues like anxiety and stress) and meditation, Valere trained her birthing mus-

cles and focused her mind to replace fears with positive emotions so she could feel God's presence during the birth.

Valere felt that her self-training worked as her fourth child, Athena, came safely and painlessly.

"I thank God so much. Oh my Gosh! It was the most beautiful, natural birthing experience. It was beautiful! I was in control; not the doctor, not the nurse."

She said she had to insist on giving birth naturally, with no epidural. When it was time to deliver her baby, she, her husband and a nurse were present in the room. She kept her focus on her mental and breathing exercises and when the nurse was ready to call the doctor, Valere asked her to delay doing so.

Through her book, Valere aims to quash the belief that in order to give birth, a woman must feel pain and distress which sometimes traumatises the baby as it travels through the birth canal. She draws on her wide-ranging experiences and observations over her multiple professions and lays out methods like quantum touch breathing (to help energy follow thoughts), progressive relaxation and imaging and creative visualisation (to boost mental powers, discipline and confidence) in simple steps while recounting her final pregnancy.

While her teachings are primarily geared towards women, she said that men too can train their minds and spirits to benefit if they apply her concepts.

The second of six children, Valere grew up in San Fernando and credits her parents, Amral and Zanimoon Sultan-Khan for fostering her love for community service and her desire to enter psychology. She and her family originally migrated to Florida around 1983 and returned to T&T after having Athena and began an illustrious career in psychology and as a diplomat.

Mrs Sultan-Khan Valere was the first President of the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Psychologists (TTAP) and served as High Commissioner to Barbados (1987-1990) and later to Canada (1990-1992). She was recognised by the Canada Diplomat Magazine as being one of their top ten diplomats while she served there.

The *Birthing Goddess* is available on Amazon, and will be officially launched in Canada at the Trinidad and Tobago Consulate on June 9 at 6 p.m.

For more information, please call 416-495-9442 x 260.

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