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**Sent:** Wednesday, September 17, 2008 8:33 AM  
**Subject:** Monthly Newsletter Sep-2008

	<h2 style="color: red;">Afro-PanaVisions.com</h2> <p>Visions of a more united, self-determining, nurturing, and networking community</p>
<h3 style="color: brown;">On-Line Newsletter</h3> <p style="font-size: small;">September 2008</p>	

**Evaluating the Mis-Education of the Afro-Panamanians**

**Struggle for Solidarity**

A Historic Perspective



**Silvermen Generation**

(Using their Private Entrance to the Zone Commissary)

**Grade: 'A'**

(For Outstanding Effort-- Given Their Circumstances)

Since Emancipation in the Caribbean Islands, these men (including their parents and grandparents) have been schooled to blind obedience to authority and the belief that they were sons of Ham, destined to be hewers of wood and drawers of water forever. On their arrival in Panama on the Canal Zone, the children they brought with them and those born in Panama would mark time in overcrowded rooms grilled by WI teachers paid to emphasize rote memory, discipline, oration, and manners--a curriculum tailored to social control. It was an education policy designed by the evildoers to preserve the status quo... of keeping the WI and his progeny in the position of a menial and common laborer.

After the construction of the canal was completed, and despite inexperienced leadership and lack of any formal organization, the *Silvermen* generation was able to show moral courage by protesting low wages and abusive and mean treatment through union organization and strikes between 1916 and 1920. The protest climaxed in the nine-day strike of 1920, which broke their temporary organization completely and eliminated unions in the WI community for the next twenty-five years. The 1920 strike had left them worse off than before; as the evildoers further cut their wages and threats of repatriation and loss of jobs followed the strike forcing these men back into subservient behavior and positions. Strike leaders were deported and the police evicted the family of strikers from the Zone, stacking their furniture in the streets.

**"Those Who Cannot Remember the Past are Condemned to Repeat it."**

**We Should not Hide From History,**

**We Should Make History**



**Silvermen Generation**

(Forming Lines to be Paid in Cash)

After the 1920 strike and all known leaders/significant players were deported from Panama, Samuel Whyte, a CZ police officer since 1906, was hand-picked by Canal authorities as the recognized leader of the West Indian community, because he had developed a differentia and favorable style of leadership in petitioning canal authority on behalf of the community. Strongly imbued with British Caribbean manners of formality and protocol, Whyte would never challenge canal officials, while at the same time he was haughty, condescending and overbearing with his followers. He had little sociological understanding of the gold-silver system beyond its obvious injustice. His efforts over the next twenty-five years produced scant results. He served well in the role as the evildoers' "Uncle Tom." The climate/ mood, at the time, obviously demanded militancy.

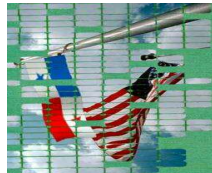


Criollos Generation

Grade: **"B-"**

(For Profile in Courage, but Lack of Continued Unity)

The growing second generation (first-born Panamanians of WI descent) in Panama were poorly trained in American or Panamanian schools, and felt unwelcome in either culture. Marginal men, they grew up frustrated, insecure, aggressive, resentful and hostile towards the Americans as well as the Panamanians. They would adopt the doctrine of racial solidarity and the belief that the Zone system was based on nothing but the ingrained racial prejudice of Americans. They scoffed at their parents' ideal of Christian forbearance and loyalty. They banded together in the early 1930s, strengthening key institutions and rein-forcing their cultural identity. The earliest years of the Depression had a disorganizing effect on the community due to distress, unemployment, and insecurity, but by 1933 strong leaders began to unify it again. The poor quality of the Zone education and the inaccessibility of Panamanian schools reinforced this solidarity, which was first led by the CZ teachers, when they began to further educate themselves on behalf of their children. Leaders also started an aggressive unionization with stateside affiliations in order combat/breakdown the apartheid system on the CZ. Unfortunately, this solidarity split apart violently in the 1960s primarily as a result of Westerman and other leaders who endorsed Arnulfo Arias in the elections. Their oppositions came primarily from those leaders opposing the Canal Treaty.



Afro-Panamanians

Grade: **"F"**

(For Selfishness, Lack of Vision and Failure to Confront)

The coming-of-age third generation in Panama had gone much further in school and a greater majority had completed university or vocational studies than the previous generations. They were schooled in a history, however, focused on the adventures of the "Mayflower", Columbus' journey to the "New World" on the "Niña", the "Pinta," and the "Santa-maria" rather than anything of the adventures of the "Zong," the "Spade," the "Amistad" or even the "SS Ancon" that first brought the *Silvermen's* generation to Panama. Nonetheless, by the 1970s, the remaining WI descendants living and working on the Zone were a privileged minority. As wages rose from 20% of the U.S.-rate average in the 1950s to 50% in 1975. They were making more money than their parents. Many also went to the U.S. for higher education, jobs, and military service and then stayed abroad. Achieving a very desirable contemporary middle class way of life for the first time, they made status an obsession/ addiction. Unlike most of their forbears, they did not have to use their hands for a living. These individuals lived high on the hog, basked in their so-called social standing, and felt no obligation or reason to "serve the race," thereby preventing the cultivation of quality leadership, by example, in the community. For many, it was all about ego, self-aggrandizement activities and patting and saluting/awarding each other *ad nauseum!*

Lacking moral courage, they were too easily misled. Avid for grievance, they would give an ear to any agitator or allow themselves to be carried away by any movement (U.S. Black civil rights in this case) that seems to have afforded them an opportunity to indulge their ruling passion. They would retard progress by making it difficult for legitimate represen-tatives of the *Criollos'* generation to negotiate any improvement regard-ing our integration in Panama, and did not deal with the issues/matters as selfless people of vision. A thinking man learns to deal wisely with conditions as he finds them rather than depend on so-called friends (in this case Torrijos and his advisors) who, in the final analysis, led them merely remaining in the dark. Being unaware of our past, we allowed the Panamanians to sell the notion to us that we have no worthwhile past, that our race has done nothing significant since the beginning of time, and that there is no evidence that we will ever achieve anything great. By leading us to believe this fallacy, they were able to control our thinking. What the Afro-Panamanians have become satisfied with will



Criollos Generation

(Rally Organized by Gaskin to Hear the Late President Remon)

When Edward Gaskin came on the scene and his militant leadership began to prove effective, his talent and drive were crushed this time by the subtle betrayal of canal officials. They would encourage a breakaway group to form a new union and set up 'Civic Councils' in the West Indian neighborhoods with handpicked individuals that were less aggressive and combative. The evildoers understood that there was always a breakaway group/individual in the WI community that was willing to be the "sellout" and to behave in the less-threatening and appropriate subservient manner. Behind every evil action of a CZ Governor on the CZ, they could see the mocking smiles of the white Metal Trade Council (MTC) union leaders.

AfroPanavisions

**"Our Visions for the Communities"****" Building a Democracy of the Minds"**

To innovate, to instigate, to motivate, we, at Afro-Panavisions, understand that you have to bring together people with a diversified, myriad of skills. The philosophy here is that diversity of talents is absolutely necessary for true innovation, quality leadership, effective and proven dynamic organization skills, ultimately leading to success. We further understand that true solidarity of this kind in our community requires the utmost patience, and thus the reason for our deliberate process. We can't afford not to get it right, which will result in the continued "spinning of our wheels." Our holistic analyses are intended to open more eyes to our past mistakes and focus on our current philosophy. One must understand their illness before they can cure it. Our overall intent is to promote a democracy of our best minds, and use our talents to the best we can to team creatively and develop innovative and new solutions to some very old problems in the community. The Samuel Whyte type of ineffective and divisive leadership (where everyone wants to be "the one") is long over, *finito!*

That said, and as we continue our series on the "Mis-education of the Afro-Panamanians," our topics of discussion/graduation for the next

be accepted as a measure of what should be allotted them. (See next monthly on-line edition.)

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few months will focus/concentrate on our poor performance regarding innovation, preservation and leadership.

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**Reaching Out to Our Children in Colon Before it's Too Late**

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