



TRINIDAD and TOBAGO  
**NEWSDAY**

**SUPPLEMENT**

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 31, 2022

**60<sup>th</sup>**

*Anniversary  
of Independence*

PHOTO BY SUREASH CHOLAI

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**Happy 60th Independence from bmobile.**



60<sup>th</sup>

## Anniversary of Independence

## SHANE SUPERVILLE

It was a clear, breezy night on August 31, 1962, when friends and soldiers Ralph Brown and Norris Baden-Semper waited to see the TT flag raised for the first time.

While Baden-Semper was on duty at the Red House, Brown was off duty and stood several feet away, among throngs of other spectators gathered to witness history.

Today, 60 years later, 82-year-old Brown, a retired major general, and retired Lt Col Baden-Semper, 83, are the last two surviving officers who were present for TT's first Independence Day.

Both men have seen their fair share of history.

From collecting evidence on the 1970 mutiny to commanding the regiment in response to the 1990 attempted coup, Brown's military career has made him part of local history on more than one occasion.

While a lot has changed since 1962, the two agree they will never forget the overwhelming pride and joy they felt that night.

Speaking with Newsday in phone interviews in July, Brown and Baden-Semper reflected on TT's 60-year journey from Independence to now.

They both agree while TT has changed a lot from the British colony of their boyhood days, ideals of patriotism and unity are needed now more than ever.

Born in Alfredo Street, Woodbrook, during World War II, in 1940, Brown recalls the Trinidad of his childhood as a "hectic place," owing to the jitters over the global conflict.

While many might know Woodbrook today as a commercial hub by day with an active nightlife, Brown says his neighbourhood was a very different place growing up.

"Woodbrook was purely residential, and there were just a few retail outlets on Ariapita Avenue itself. Just a handful, five or six; but all of Woodbrook at the time and Newtown were residential areas.

"Growing up as a boy in those war years, where the Port of Spain docks are now, the Americans had owned that, and that was handed over pre-Independence back to the government of TT.

"The Americans still occupied Chaguaramas, so there was a lot of American activity during those war years."

Baden-Semper was born in La Brea and moved to Siparia with his family before they eventually settled in Rapsey Street, St Clair.

Norris Baden-Semper during a military parade at the Queen's Park Savannah.



## Side by side we stood: Soldiers reflect on Independence Day



Norris Baden-Semper, former aide-de-camp to TT's first Prime Minister, Dr Eric Williams.

He cannot recall much from the wartime days, but remembers colonial Britain's presence everywhere during his school days.

"We had something called Empire Day, and on Empire Day most of the schools went to QRC grounds, where we all sang Rule Britannia.

"After that we were all given buns and soft drinks, and that happened every Empire Day until 1956...I think, or 1962. But that happened every Empire Day. They (primary school students from all over the country) used to come to QRC and other places too."

While at QRC, Baden-Semper

joined the Cadet Force, where he rose to the rank of corporal.

He says the military life always appealed to him and recalls a conversation with his mother about joining the army years before the regiment was formed.

"By the time I made corporal, I told my mother I wanted to become a commissioned officer in the army, and my mother said to me, 'But there is no army, son.' And I said to her, 'I think very soon there will be one.' So since then I was interested in it."

His father, Inskip Baden-Semper, was a veteran of the First World War who fought in the British West Indies Regiment in Egypt and Palestine against the Ottoman Empire.

The elder Baden-Semper retired at the rank of lance corporal, and was not only proud that his son wanted to join the military, but ambitious enough for him to aim for a rank higher than his own.

"He was happy to see I was aiming that high, because he was never anywhere near that kind of rank.

"But in those colonial days, black people never made those commissions; all the commissioned officers at the

time were white people.

"He was definitely proud. When I finally got through with being a commissioned officer, he was a very proud man."

Baden-Semper entered the military as a second lieutenant in the West India Regiment, a feature of the short-lived West Indian Federation, which collapsed in January 1962. He was assigned to the regiment's Jamaican barracks up until August 1962.

He remembers the desire to move away from colonialism at the time.

"People wanted independence, because most people didn't like to pay so much homage to the Queen. For example, I was a commissioned officer, and after we had our dinner we would toast somebody, the head of state, and we used the Queen... now we toast the President, but in those days we toasted the Queen, and everything was the Queen."

At that same time Brown entered the regiment as a second lieutenant and was sent to England in 1962 on a training course for officers. He too recalls the call for independence throughout TT, leading up to the country gaining independence

in 1962.

"Dr Eric Williams came on the scene in 1956, I think (Williams became chief minister of TT that year), and everything changed thereafter.

"We were all rooting for the West Indies Federation until its collapse in 1962.

"When Dr Eric Williams came on the scene there was this whole new fervour among the people in the entire Caribbean, not just TT."

Brown and Baden-Semper were among 15 officers in the regiment, nine of whom were Trinidadians.

These included World War II veterans Lt Joffre Serrette and Capt Henry Christopher.

With the excitement for independence at its peak among the public, Brown and Baden-Semper also felt the patriotism in the days leading up to August 31.

While neither was part of the first Independence Day parade, they were both present for the raising of the new TT flag at the Red House that night.

Baden-Semper, who had returned to Trinidad only a week before Independence Day, was assigned to the Red House.

While he was some distance away from the crowd, he clearly heard the roar as the British Union Jack was lowered and the new nation's flag was raised.

"I was there in my uniform when the bugles were blown, and they lowered the Union Jack. Then the bugles were blown again, and they raised the red, white and black flag.

"The crowds nearby...of course you can imagine the noise – they started to bawl, 'That's we flag!'"

Baden-Semper said he felt proud at the sight of TT's flag, but was partly used to the idea of independence, having served in the West India Regiment under the federation. He remembers the federation's flag of a yellow sun against a blue sea.

For Brown the experience was much more moving. Recalling the sight as the TT flag unfurled, he says that experience will always stand out for him.

He remembers standing side by side with other spectators at a nearby carpark on Knox Street, where the regiment headquarters now stands.

Across the street from the Red House, another group of spectators, believed to be in the thousands, packed Woodford Square.

SIDE BY SIDE  
continues on page 5 >>>



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Retired Major General Ralph Brown looks with pride of a photo of himself in uniform. PHOTO BY DAVID REID



Retired Major General Ralph Brown with his son, Gary Skeene, and grandson, Braxton Skeene, at his home in Lambeau, Tobago. PHOTO BY DAVID REID

SIDE BY SIDE  
from page 3 >>>

# Seeing the new flag ‘something that you felt to your core’

While he remembers the details of that night clearly, Brown is still challenged to find the words for the overwhelming patriotism and hope he felt, 60 years later.

“I can’t describe the feeling. It’s something that you felt to your core.”

He said there was a great sense of hope for the future and unity among all who gathered, despite differences in age, race and social class – something he hopes could continue in today’s TT.

He said the values of unity and patriotism are especially important in 2022, adding that he was disappointed in the inability of leaders to find common ground on certain issues. He said tribalism is sometimes exploited

by political figures to win votes, and he believes leaders could show more maturity in their remarks and avoid making divisive statements.

“If in 1962 Dr Rudranath Capildeo, Lionel Seukeran and Simboondath Capildeo had taken that (divisive) stance, who knows...we may not have been an independent country today. We may have probably still been under British rule.

“There’s absolutely nothing wrong with agreeing to disagree, once we are not disagreeable. I think it’s sad to see what passes

now for politics as compared to 1962.

“My advice will be to the politicians, to stop the bickering and think of the country.”

Baden-Semper said he is concerned over the spate of crime today and hopes more programmes to facilitate youth development will be introduced.

“When fellas were threatening you, they would threaten to cuff you down outside and thing. But now they’re shooting you. So life has changed, and one has to be much more careful now. So you can’t just walk around

the Savannah and go there in the night and do the things we used to do in our days, because nowadays somebody will stab you or threaten you or kill you or something.”

While a lot happened throughout both men’s military careers, there are moments they will never forget.

For Brown, the capstone of his career was also a part of TT’s history, and one he hopes is never repeated: he commanded the regiment against insurgents during the 1990 attempted coup. Describing that

time as the darkest hour in the country’s history, Brown said it was a traumatic experience for everyone who survived it.

For Baden-Semper, who retired from the military in 1989, memories of his career are more upbeat.

For one particular Independence Day, he recalls being assigned as the aide-de-camp to Dr Eric Williams. Williams found out Baden-Semper too was a QRC old boy, and they shared their experiences at the college.

“He said to the driver, ‘Driver, pass around this way,’ because he heard I went to QRC and he went there as well, and he wanted to talk about QRC. So we passed around the Savannah there and we spoke about the school.

“He was a very nice fellow, and being a QRC old boy like me, we had something in common.”

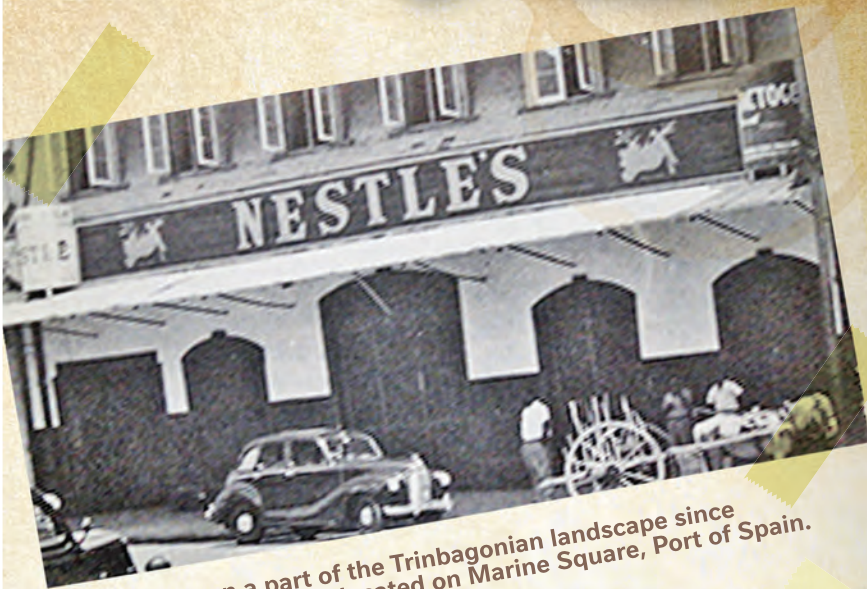
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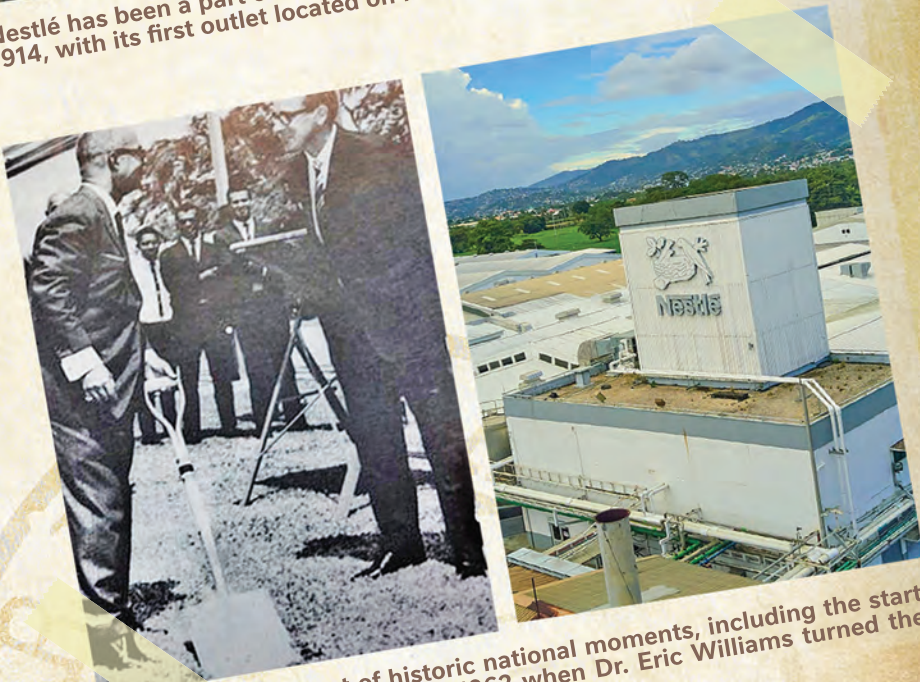


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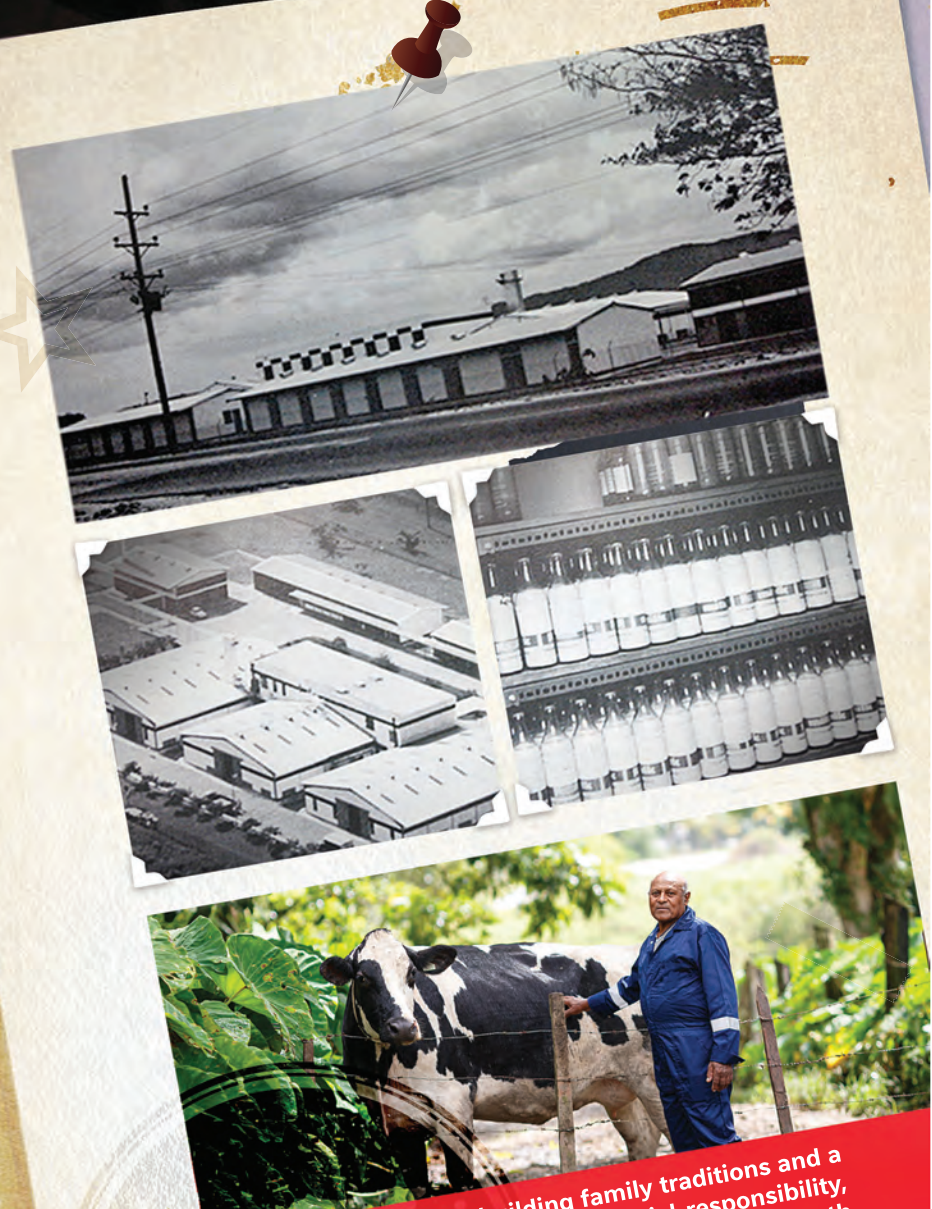
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60<sup>th</sup>

*Anniversary of Independence*

# In the beginning

**S**ixty years ago today – August 31, 1962, Trinidad and Tobago gained its independence from Great Britain, joining many nations – including Jamaica which celebrated its golden jubilee on August 6 – at the end of centuries of colonial rule.

At midnight, August 30, the Union Jack was lowered and TT's national flag of red, white and black was raised in front of the Red House – the seat of Parliament today. A Governor General remained as the head of state until 1976 when TT removed its final ties to Britain and became a Republic with its own President.

But before then, on the night of Independence, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal read the message sent by Queen Elizabeth II, relinquishing her rule.

And, Dr Eric Williams, the former Premier, read his address to the nation at the country's first Prime Minister.

The following is what Williams said to the newly independent nation:

**Fellow Citizens,**  
It is a great honour to me to

address this morning the citizens of the independent nation of Trinidad and Tobago as their first Prime Minister. Your national flag has been hoisted to the strains of your national anthem, against the background of your national Coat of Arms, and amidst the beauty of your national flower.

Your Parliament has been inaugurated by Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, the representative of Her Majesty the Queen. You have your own Governor General and your own Chief Justice, both appointed on the advice of your own Prime Minister. You have your own National Guard, however small.

You are now a member of the Commonwealth family in your own right, equal in status to any other of its members. You hope soon to be a member of the World Family of Nations, playing your part, however insignificant, in world affairs. You are on your own in a big world, in which you are one of many nations, some small, some medium-size, some large. You are nobody's boss and nobody is your boss.

What use will you make of your independence? What will you transmit to your children five years



Dr Eric Williams.

from today? Other countries ceased to exist in that period. Some, in much less time, have become totally disorganised, a prey to anarchy and civil war.

The first responsibility that devolves upon you is the protection and promotion of your democracy. Democracy means more, much more, than the right to vote and one vote for every man and every woman of the prescribed age. Democracy means recognition of the rights of others.

Democracy means equality of opportunity for all in education, in the public service, and in private employment – I repeat, and in private employment. Democracy means the protection of the weak against the strong. Democracy means the obligation of the minority to recognise the right of the majority. Democracy

means responsibility of the Government to its citizens, the protection of the citizens from the exercise of arbitrary power and the violation of human freedoms and individual rights. Democracy means freedom of worship for all and the subordination of the right of any race to the overriding right of the human race. Democracy means freedom of expression and assemble of organisation.

All that is democracy. All that is our democracy, to which I call upon all citizens to dedicate themselves on this our Independence Day. This is what I meant when I gave the nation its slogan for all time: Discipline, Production, Tolerance. Indiscipline, whether individual or sectional, is a threat to democracy. Slacking on the job jeopardises the national income, inflates costs, and merely sets a bad example. The medieval churchmen had a saying that to work is to pray. It is also to strengthen our democracy by improving our economic foundations.

That democracy is but a hollow mockery and a gigantic fraud which is based on a ruling group's domination [of] slaves or helots or fellaheen or second class citizens or showing intolerance to others because of considerations of race, colour, creed, national origin, previous conditions of servitude or other irrationality.

Our national flag belongs to all our citizens. Our national Coat


of Arms, with our national birds inscribed therein, is the sacred thrust of our citizens. So it is today, please, I urge you, let it always be so. Let us always be able to say, with the Psalmist, behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

United at home in the common effort to build a democratic nation and ostracise outmoded privileges, let us present to the outside world the united front of a nation thinking for itself, knowing its own mind and speaking its own point of view.

Let us take our stand in the international family on the basic principles of international rectitude. When our time comes to vote, let it always be a vote for freedom and against slavery, for self-determination and against external control, for integration and against division.


Democracy at home and abroad, the symbol of it is our Parliament. Remember fellow citizens, we now have a Parliament, we no longer have the colonial assemblies which did not have the full rights of a Parliament of a sovereign country. The very name "Parliament" testifies to our new independent status. By the same token, however, we at once become the object of comparison with other parliamentary countries, inside and outside the Commonwealth.

**IN THE BEGINNING**  
*continues on page 7* >>>



*Happy Independence*

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**Trinidad and Tobago**



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# Dr Williams calls for unity in Independence speech

IN THE BEGINNING  
from page 9 >>>

This is a consideration which involves not only the Members of Parliament but also the individual citizen. The Members of Parliament have the traditional parliamentary privileges guaranteed in the Constitution. The Speaker, the symbol of the power of Parliament, has his status guaranteed in the Order of Precedence. We shall soon have a Privileges Bill protecting and prescribing the powers of Parliament itself. Measures are being taken to establish the responsibility of Parliament in the field of external relations.

The Constitution recognises the position of the Leader of the Opposition and the normal parliamentary convention of consultation between Government and Opposition are being steadily developed and expanded. The Constitution itself, Independence itself, represent the agreement of the two political parties on the fundamental question of national unity. The ordinary citizen must recognise the role of the Parliament in our democracy and must learn to differentiate between a Member of Parliament, whom he may like or dislike, and the respect that must be accorded to that same Member of Parliament ex-officio.

I call on all citizens from now on to accord the highest respect our parliamentary system and institutions

and to our Parliament itself. Democracy, finally, rests on a higher power than Parliament. It rests on an informed and cultivated and alert public opinion. The Members of Parliament are only representatives of the citizens. They cannot represent apathy and indifference. They can play the part allotted to them only if they represent intelligence and public spiritness.

Nothing has so demonstrated in the past six years the capacity of the people of Trinidad and Tobago than their remarkable interest in the public affairs. The development and expansion of that interest is the joint responsibility of the Government, the Parliament, the political parties and relevant civic organisations.

Those, fellow citizens, are the thoughts which, on my first day as Prime Minister, I wish to express to you on Independence Day. Your success in organising the independence which you achieved will exercise a powerful influence on your neighbours with all of whom we are likely to have close associations in the next few years, the smallest and nearest, as part of our independent unitary state, the larger and more distant as part of the wider and integrated Caribbean community. Problems of difficulties there will be. These are always a challenge to a superior intelligence and to strength of character.

Whatever the challenge that faces you, from whatever quarter, place always first that national interest and the national cause. The strength of the



Sir Solomon Hochoy takes the salute at the first Independence Parade in 1962. PHOTO COURTESY INFO DIVISION

nation depends on the strength of its citizens. Our national anthem invokes God's blessings on our nation, in response to those thousands of citizens of all faiths who demanded God's protection in our Constitution. Let us then

as a nation so conduct ourselves as to be able always to say in those noblest and most inspiring words of St Paul, "By the Grace of God we as people are what we are, and His Grace in us hath not been void."

## Prime ministers: 1962-present

- Dr Eric Williams: 1962-1981
- George Chambers: 1981-1986
- Arthur Napoleon Raymond (ANR) Robinson: 1986-1991
- Patrick Manning: 1991-1995
- Basdeo Panday: 1995-2001
- Patrick Manning: 2001-2010
- Kamla Persad-Bissessar: 2010-2015
- Dr Keith Rowley: 2015-

## Presidents

- Sir Ellis Clarke: 1976-1987
- Noor Hassanali: 1987-1997
- Arthur NR Robinson: 1997-2003
- George Maxwell Richards: 2003-2013
- Anthony Carmona: 2013-2018
- Paula-Mae Weekes: 2018-



TT's first prime minister Dr Eric Williams addresses the independence celebrations at the Red House in 1962. Among those present is Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, representing Queen Elizabeth II. PHOTO COURTESY INFO DIVISION

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HAPPY 60TH INDEPENDENCE!

60<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary of Independence

# Mc Kie twins' 60th birthday wish: Love and harmony for TT

JANELLE DE SOUZA

Indy and Andy Mc Kie, the first children to be born when TT became independent, want only the best for their country.

The twins were born on August 31, 1962 with the firstborn, Indy (a reference to Independence Day), arriving at 12.05 am as the Union Jack was coming down and the country's new flag was being hoisted for the first time. Andy was born five minutes later.

Andy told Newsday times in TT are tough and it is difficult for him to see all the hatred and animosity among the country's people. There is not enough love, he said.

"For the country's 60th anniversary I just want people to show love to our brothers and sisters, that we all live in harmony. I wish everyone God's blessings and that the country could move on to a better tomorrow and see a bright future ahead."

Indy, who lives in Canada, said he has a lot of love for his beautiful country, but is concerned about crime.

"I'm just hoping and praying that the government can do something about the high rate of crime, and not just the murders. The country needs more love and caring. They need to pray more, put their trust in God and be more considerate to one another."

He added that it is important that the government find ways to create jobs for the youth, because if they are idle, they would turn to crime. He also believes the government should make jobs available for qualified people so they would be less likely to emigrate.

He recalled being frustrated after a job strike left him unemployed and leaving TT for Canada.

"At the time I came to Canada, it was booming. You were walking in the street and people were asking if you wanted a job.

"I want that for Trinidad. That even if you don't have a skill, that young people can get something to do and make some money."

Indy left Trinidad at 24 and has lived in Scarborough, Ontario for 33 years. He now works at a corrugated plant as a machine mechanic. He has one daughter, a three-month old granddaughter, and remarried last year.

Andy lives in Arima, has three children and three grandchildren, and has been married for 23 years. He is a bus driver with the Public Transport Service Corporation and is retiring this week.

He is not certain what he is going to do when he retires but intends to relax for a while and possibly visit his twin in Canada, with whom he has maintained a close relationship.

"We grew up in Laventille in very humble beginnings. Our parents were strict and the family was church-going. God rest their souls, they passed on last year, I have to say thanks to them for giving us the morals and values they instilled and that we were able to instil in our children.

"I have to say thank God for life, health and strength because many of us haven't made it at this age through the pandemic. I thank God that both my brother and I have the opportunity to see this milestone of 60 years, and pray that we see many more."

He said their parents, Leslie and Joan Mc Kie, told them their history and that their godfathers



Andy and Indy McKie enjoying a night out at the Queen's Park Savannah.

were TT's first Prime Minister Eric Williams, and Nobel Peace Prize recipient and former UN under-secretary-general Dr Ralph Bunche. To their knowledge, Williams and Bunche met their mother when they visited the twins at the Port of Spain General Hospital when they were born. However, they never met the men.

Andy said, "Plenty people have told us we supposed to have it nice as Independence children, that the government of the day supposed to big us up.

"But I never pay that any mind. I just thank God that we were born on such an auspicious occasion and we get to enjoy the day with our families."

He said it is "nice" knowing they were



Leslie and Joan Mc Kie, the parents of Indy and Andy who were born 60 years ago on Independence Day.



Andy Mc Kie retires as a PTSC bus driver this week. He plans to visit his twin brother Indy in Canada. PHOTO BY SUREASH CHOLAI

born on Independence Day, but they got used to it a long time ago and it is like any other holiday. He usually celebrates by watching the parade and the fireworks, and, if Indy is not in the country, he might have a small celebration at home.

Since Indy lives in Canada, his birthday is a "normal day," but he usually has a party to celebrate. This year, the celebration will be twice as nice, as September 4 will be his first

wedding anniversary, and he intends to celebrate both with family and friends.

"Since this year my birthday is falling on a Wednesday, I can't do anything because I'm working. So we put it off till the 4th to combine with the anniversary one time. Therefore, two cakes! The only thing is, the other half (Andy) missing."

He said he was supposed to come to TT for his birthday this year, but has already come to TT earlier in the year to take care of some business and could not get more time off.

"But I told Andy whenever he's ready he could come up for a trip and we could have a little toast here. It's never too late. Once God spares life, there is hope."

Indy plans to be in TT for their birthday next year "no matter what," because he is looking forward to seeing his twin soon. He also hopes to move back to TT in a few years, "because the winter in Canada is getting biting now."

The twins have four younger siblings, Rickie, Garfield, Marcia, and Junior. Marcia, the only girl, was born on Republic Day – September 24 – and Junior, the youngest, was born on December 25 – Christmas Day.

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## Happy 60th Independence



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60<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary of Independence

# Basil Davis: Forgotten Black Power 'martyr'

ZAINAB KAMARA

The echoes of grief still resonate deeply for Ivy Joseph, whose brother Basil Davis was killed on April 6, 1970 at a meeting at Woodford Square in Port of Spain. Davis, 24, was shot at point-blank range by police officer Joshua Gordon after pleading with Gordon not to arrest another young man. In an interview with Newsday, Joseph said decades later, her family has not received justice, as Gordon, now dead, was never arrested, charged or brought to trial to answer for what she believes was the blatant murder of her hero brother, who lost his life defending a comrade.

As TT celebrates its 60 years of independence on August 31 and reflects on major post-independence historical events like the Black Power Movement – the effects of which has woven their way into the tapestry of today's society – Joseph hopes the significance of her brother's death is also recognised. Especially, as the years passed, any hope she had that her brother would get justice withered away.

"I would like it to be recognised why he died, when he died and what came out of it after that, because it was one of the first such killings in this country... It (Davis's story) needs to be part of our history told to younger generations," Joseph said.

"Most of us are moving on in life unaware of the sacrifices and

what took place in the past and it is impacting our life now... Our history that brought about certain changes in this country is not being taught, and the younger generations don't even know about it."

Davis's killing is largely credited as a catalyst that increased the Black Power Movement's momentum which eventually culminated with Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams declaring a state of emergency on April 21, 1970.

Khafra Kambon, then the co-leader of the National Joint Action Committee (alongside Makandal Daaga), the student-led group at the helm of the revolution, said they aimed to even the socioeconomic playing field for oppressed people of TT who were not white.

"It wasn't just a class thing in TT. It had a very strong racial characteristic to it. It was ownership, control, as well as discrimination in jobs which was very visible. You had to push a lot if you were dark-skinned especially to be able to rise in society, and that continued even though the African group in society came to take over the politics of the society. And even Dr Williams, as much as he did a lot of good in the society, he did not challenge that structure of the society," Kambon explained.

I wish he had lived a longer life Joseph, who was nine when her brother was killed, said he, like many other young men at that time, was searching for something to

identify with.

"I think in that search, that curiosity, that he followed the movement. He used to attend meetings and we never knew he was attending meetings. We saw the little dashiki and thing, but it never dawned on us that he was following the movement."

She reminisced about happier times growing up on Third Street, Barataria, as the youngest of 11 children. She said Davis, who worked as a labourer, would often lift her up



Ivy Joseph, Basil Davis's sister, recalls the impact his death had on her family, and the wider community. PHOTO BY AYANNA KINSALE

onto his shoulder and take her to lime with him and his friends, when they would cook anything they could get their hands on and have a lot of fun.

"He was a loving brother, loving son, a caring individual to

those around him for the short life he lived, and I wish he had lived a longer life."

BASIL DAVIS

continues on page 15 >>>



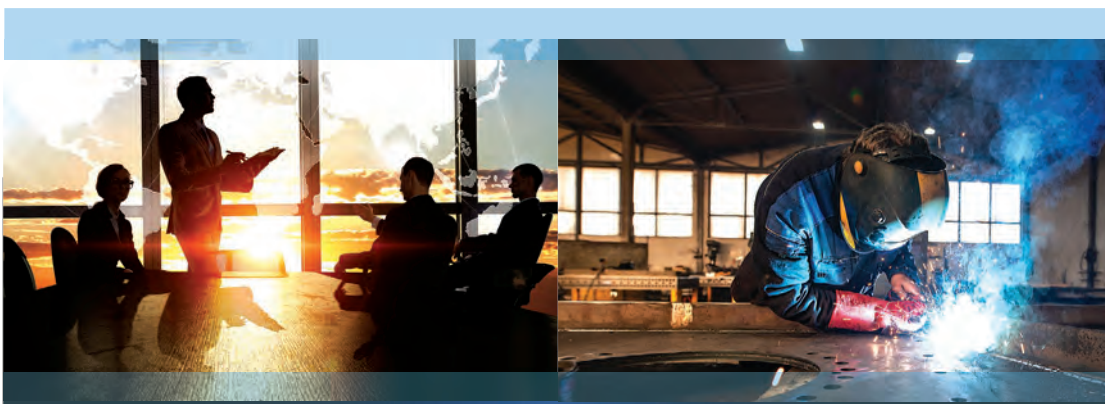
A young Basil Davis.



Basil Davis was killed in 1970 during a Black Power Movement meeting.



## CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE



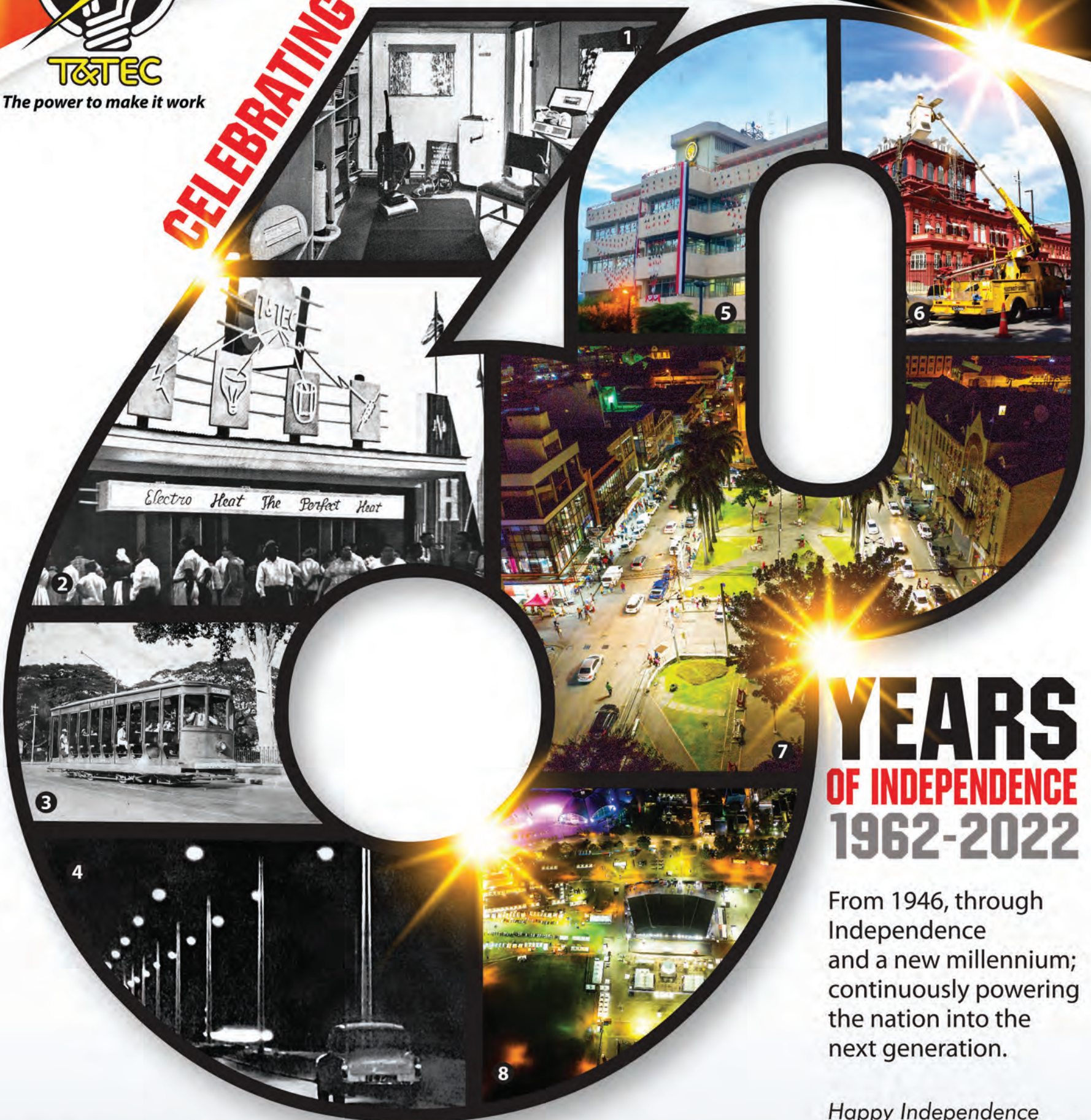
In this our 60th year as an independent nation, we join all Trinidadians and Tobagonians in recognising this significant milestone. We also celebrate our freedom to forge our own destiny as one nation and one people, whose light will forever shine brightly.





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1 - 1954 - The interior of a T&TEC mobile Service Centre, introduced to facilitate applications for new connections by customers in remote communities. 2 - 1954 - T&TEC's booth at the Caribbean Trade Fair allowed people to see the multiple uses of electricity. 3 - 1945 - The St. Clair tram car heading west. 4 - 1962 - Mercury fluorescent street lighting along the Beetham Highway. 5 - 2010 - T&TEC's Stanley P. Ottley Building, Mt. Hope. 6 - 2020 - T&TEC crew at work in front the newly-refurbished Red House, installing new LED street lights. 7 - 2021 - Overhead view of the Brian Lara Promenade, upgraded with new LED street lights. 8 - 2019 - Aerial view of the Grand Stand and North Park, Queen's Park Savannah, illuminated by T&TEC.

60<sup>th</sup>

## Anniversary of Independence



Crowds packed pavement-to-pavement for the funeral of Basil Davis.

# 'One of the most significant events of 1970'

BASIL DAVIS

from page 13 &gt;&gt;&gt;

Joseph said everyone in her family was shocked when the news broke about Davis's killing. Her mother, Violet Davis, took the news badly.

"We have an uncle, my mother's brother, who worked at CID, and he was the one who broke the news to the family. My mother did not take it nicely."

Joseph said her mother had no idea Davis was following the movement until he was killed, but insists she had no ill feelings toward the movement.

"I don't think she blamed the movement for her son's death. It was just something that happened at that point in time and she accepted it for that."

Joseph said her mother quietly grieved for Davis up until her death, but never received justice.

"She didn't talk about him. I think talking about him would have brought on more pain. Looking back now, I can identify now that in her quiet moment, she would have thought of him. Because I myself does think about him."

'It was a blatant murder'

Joseph said on the day her brother was killed, he was trying to dissuade police officer Gordon from arresting another participant, "Charlie," at the Black Power demonstration. There are conflicting claims about



The family gravesite where Basil Davis was buried in the San Juan cemetery.

Charlie's identity. While Joseph claims Charlie was Davis's friend, Kambon said Charlie was a well-known street-dweller in Port of Spain, and although he may have had some mental health issues, he was harmless.

Both Kambon and Joseph agreed that whoever Charlie was, Davis selflessly lost his life saving him from arrest.

"Basil Davis was no violent guy...His (Gordon's) response to that was to turn around and shoot him at point-blank range. Basil

Davis didn't even have a penknife on him," Kambon lamented.

Joseph said Gordon knew her brother.

"The officer that killed my brother knew my brother. He didn't live far from where we lived.

"The individual that did the killing got off. It didn't go to trial... although it was a blatant murder."

Joseph also alleged there was some mishandling of information about Davis's autopsy to protect Gordon, but didn't go into detail about how she heard that.

"There was some mishandling of the bullet that killed him and how they went about identifying the body...They forced my mother to identify the body, when she should not have identified the body in the manner that she did."

Joseph, who does not consider her brother a martyr for the movement, debunked the narrative that her brother was one of its leaders, saying, "They made him out to be one of the founders behind the movement, or that he was involved in the movement, and that was not true.

"He was just following and getting information and going to the meetings. He was just going as a young mind."

Davis was buried on April 9, 1970 in what Kambon claims was the largest funeral that has ever taken place or will ever take place in TT.

The funeral procession, which he estimated boasted over 100,000 people, left Woodford Square for San Juan cemetery and according to both Kambon and Joseph, it was impossible to see where the multitude of people marching started and ended.

Joseph recalled: "They were carrying the casket, no hearse. I was trying to get home to meet the casket and couldn't get through the crowd. When I did get through the crowd I had to go through the neighbour yard... They had to take me through the kitchen window to see my brother.

"After that they leave to go up San Juan hill cemetery... To get to the burial site it was a no-no. I couldn't see him go down. It was huge."

Kambon said NJAC, with permission from Davis's mother, organised the funeral procession, but neither he nor Daaga anticipated the funeral would draw such a large crowd.

"The way in which he was killed triggered something in the society. This is a revolutionary point in the society's development. Black Power has really captured the imagination of people...in that environment once you feel that a killing was unjustified, there was an immediate, profound emotional response.

"From pavement-to-pavement, literally, the street was crowded with people moving. We pushed through...and when we looked east on the main road, people pavement-to-pavement as far as we could see. And we looked back towards Port of Spain: people pavement-to-pavement as far as the eyes could see.

"I never ever seen people like that. No Carnival ever had people like that...He became like a martyr of the movement."

For Kambon, Davis's death was "a very significant marker" that

he said "changed the dynamics" at that time and fired people up to lend their support to the movement.

"It was one of the most significant events of 1970."

Both Joseph and Kambon said decades later, society and those in authority have learnt nothing.

Joseph said, "I think the true essence and the true cause behind the movement, the information that the public really needs to know about what really happened in 1970 (has been forgotten), other than everybody know there was an uprising. What happened before the uprising, what the people went through at that point in time, a lot of information is being suppressed and not circulated."

She also lamented the increase in police killings and the disproportionate murder of young black men and encouraged the rebuilding and strengthening of the family structure as a means to combat this.

"We know very well that most homes are headed by women... the fathers are missing who are supposed to bring character and discipline...and that is where our family life is. The men are not there and they are not taking up their responsibility as men to bring up their sons as men.

"My mother had 11 of us. There was not a male figure in the house, but there was support. Now I don't think we have that kind of family closeness in society, where an uncle or big cousin can come in and talk and discipline."

Asked about the increase in police killings and gun violence, with young black men often being the victims, Kambon simply said, "You learn and you unlearn," and asserted that the deterioration of society and the ensuing violence were largely due to TT's failing education system.

"When we look at inequality in the society, and the predictor of growing inequality, you will see it in the results in the education system. Schools that used to do well before, coming from those same communities, are no longer doing well, because the socioeconomic environment has deteriorated to an extent."

Kambon said in today's "value system," education does not fit in.

"The wider society is conditioning an explosion, without realising. We are doing it by inaction, lack of understanding, lack of sympathy and empathy.

"So we have that kind of explosion that is developing that will be very different to 1970 because it will not have that ideological direction to it that you had in 1970."

Instead, Kambon warned, it will be an explosion of rage.

60<sup>th</sup>

## Anniversary of Independence

STEPHON NICHOLAS

Official and private events have been planned to celebrate TT's 60 years of independence.

Central Government has organised celebratory events, while the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) has its own activities planned to mark the occasion.

Politically, economically, structurally and socially, there have been many changes since TT raised its own flag on August 31, 1962.

And still, there are many in Tobago who wish to see even greater changes on all fronts, arguing that Tobago's true potential can only be achieved if its fate is in the hands of Tobagonians.

Some take umbrage at the name Trinidad and Tobago, preferring to say Tobago and Trinidad, to indicate the importance of their priority.

But semantics aside, the Trinidad experience is different from that of Tobago.

Historian Dr Rita Pemberton, who was born in Tobago but lives in Trinidad, said Trinis and Tobagonians have mostly warmed to each other.

She recalled the days where Tobagonians were treated less well than their Trinidad counterparts.

"When Tobago was isolated, you could tell a Tobagonian by the way we talk or the clothes."

She said the employment limitations in Tobago forced Tobagonians to migrate to Trinidad in search of better opportunities.

"If you're in the public service you couldn't go past clerk three or four in Tobago.

"A number of people went into the police service or nursing or teaching and you had a relocation of people.

"There are more Tobagonians in Trinidad than in Tobago," she said.

She noted that the population in Tobago has remained stuck around 60,000 because of the migration issue.

Pemberton said the mixing of the populations, through the workplace, friendships and marriages, has caused a better understanding of the different cultures.

"What we have now is this sharp distinction between Trinidad and Tobago being dulled, because people have feet on both sides."

She said one just has to look around to see Tobagonians in



The Assembly Legislature Building, Scarborough. PHOTO BY JEFF MAYERS

# Trinidad and Tobago's relationship after 60 years



Ancil Dennis. Photo courtesy THA



Kelvin Charles



Hochoy Charles



Melena Simon-O'Neil, president-elect of Association of Female Executives of TT is the first Tobagonian to head the body. PHOTO COURTESY CHEERS VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chief Justice Ivor Archie  
FILE PHOTO/ROGER JACOB

every sphere nationally – the Prime Minister, Chief Justice Ivor Archie, heads of corporate institutions, lecturers, principals.

She noted, though, that Tobagonians did not have it easy initially.

"Tobagonians who came to Trinidad to study back then were treated like outsiders: 'You doh talk like we, nah. Allyuh from country.'

"Some people still have that backward thinking."

Pemberton believes this is slowly dissipating with travel between the two islands having become much easier, thanks to the seabridge and airbridge.

"A lot of Trinis go to Tobago (for vacation). There are a lot

of Trini businesses operating in Tobago now. Trinis are going to the primary schools in Tobago."

Although acknowledging there is no major sociological study of the two islands' sentiments about each other, Pemberton believes the frosty attitude of the past is almost gone.

She said the friction between the islands is only an issue in heated moments.

"When people get angry they toss all kinds of things at you."

She recalled a visit to the Tunapuna market where two vendors clashed and began cussing each other over encroachment on their designated space.

"You had the n-word and the

c-word thrown about. The man left and when he came back he brought a drink for the female vendor, and while he was gone she was selling his produce and putting the money down for him.

"It is a work in progress," she said of the social relationship.

Tobago Business Chamber president Martin George recently lamented that Tobago's food security has regressed since independence and it is now heavily reliant on imports.

"In 1962, Tobago was self-sufficient to a large extent in terms of its own food production. In fact, it used to be able to send food to Trinidad because so much was being grown in Tobago. Years ago, you

would hear people talk about Tobago red fish, pigeon peas, the produce from the island, because it was of such a high quality and produced in such abundance.

"Where are we now? It appears that we have regressed in all of these areas."

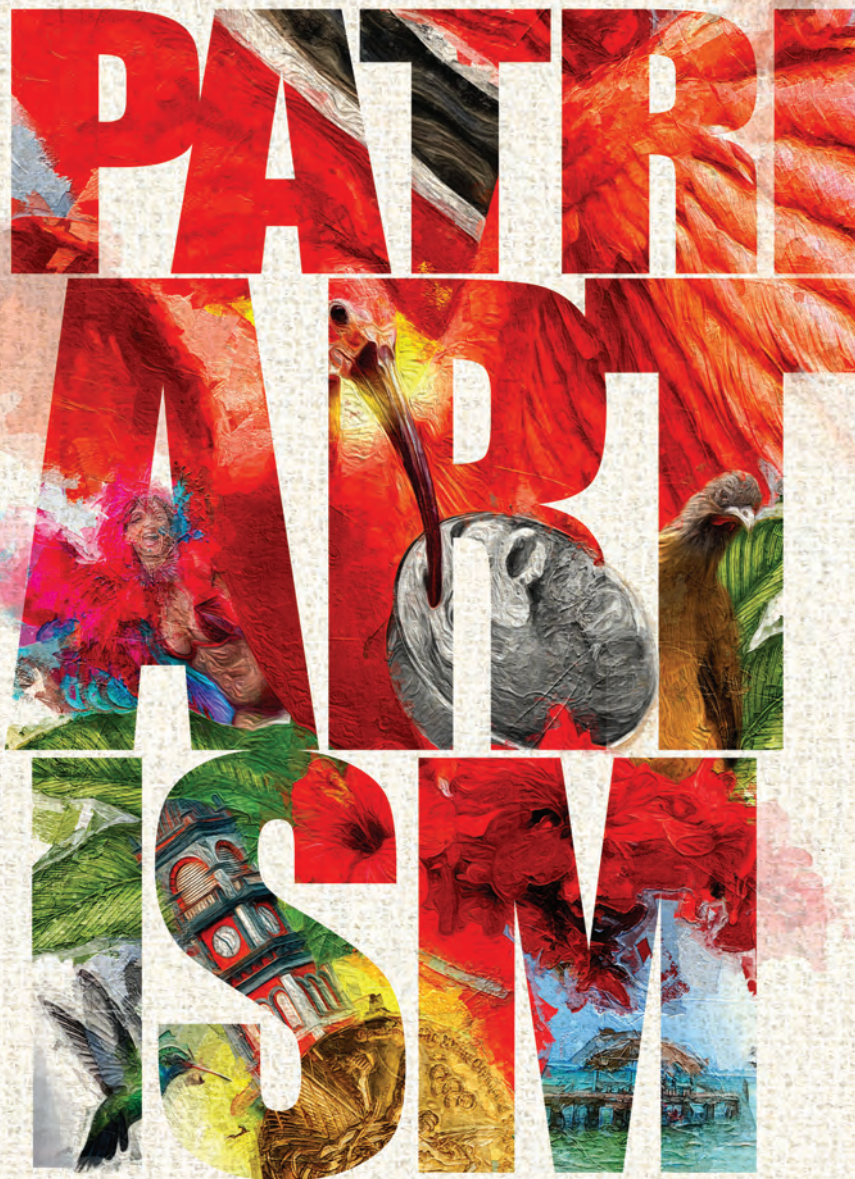
Pemberton said Hurricane Flora's decimation of Tobago on September 30, 1963, as well as a shift in the mindset of Tobagonians, negatively affected the agriculture sector.

RELATIONSHIP  
continues on page 18 >>>





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Anniversary of Independence



In this 2021 file photo, the inter-island ferry the Galleons Passage is docked at the Scarborough port. PHOTO BY JEFF MAYERS



Chief Secretary Farley Augustine. PHOTO COURTESY THA

RELATIONSHIP  
from page 16 >>

# ‘Relationship is still strong’

“We had independence and then we had the hurricane soon after. Dr (Eric) Williams (then prime minister) had talked about a development plan for Tobago, and instead had to change to a rehabilitation plan.

“The rehab had an effect on the employment level. A lot of people who would have been in the garden got employment in the rehabilitation programme in the works department. Because there was an urgency to get things back to normal, there was a lot of overtime involved too.”

She added, “A lot of farmers had to fight up with agriculture and go back to seedlings. The hurricane had damaged the roads too. Some planters decided it was too laborious. Young people chose to get employment in the rehabilitation of the island.

“There was a sentiment among young people that agriculture was too hard.”

But she argued that TT has come full circle and nationally, and throughout the Caribbean, with the effects of the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, people are beginning to understand the importance of self-sufficiency.

“You have better control of what goes into the food, it’s cost-effective and you have more control over supply.”

The THA’s focus on agriculture now, with the formation of the Tobago Agribusiness Development Company Ltd (TADCO), has put the sector back on the front burner. The demand for alternative, non-



Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley holds a lamb on his farm in Tobago.



Scarborough market vendor Cecil Noel sells pumpkin to a customer. FILE PHOTO/DAVID REID



Orville London

wheat flour is also high, and a partnership with Trinidad-based Novo Farms is expected to help TADCO achieve its goals of exporting to the world.

Pemberton said the completion of the rehabilitation after the hurricane brought a new problem for the State, as it was unable to sustain that level of employment.

“The question of employment was raised. You had people benefiting from secondary school and training opportunities but no employment. You had the Black Power Movement following, in the 1970s.

“You then had people asking whether there was need for an alternative administration for Tobago – one centred in Tobago.

“You had people like Pam Nicholson, Dr Winston Murray and ANR Robinson expressing concern about the government policy and a need for greater autonomy.”

She said there were some already calling for full secession.

“That took up until the 1980s, when the THA was created.

“And even then there was some dissatisfaction with the level of autonomy, and this resulted in the 1996 amendment.”

She argued that since the THA was established, Tobago has benefited from some improvement in infrastructure and some services – although many critical health services are

still only accessed in Trinidad. “There are different schools of thought that Tobago brings more to the table with oil and gas and should get a greater slice of the economy. So you still have some division of views.”

After 60 years, the issue of greater autonomy is back on the front burner, with a bill in the committee stage in Parliament.

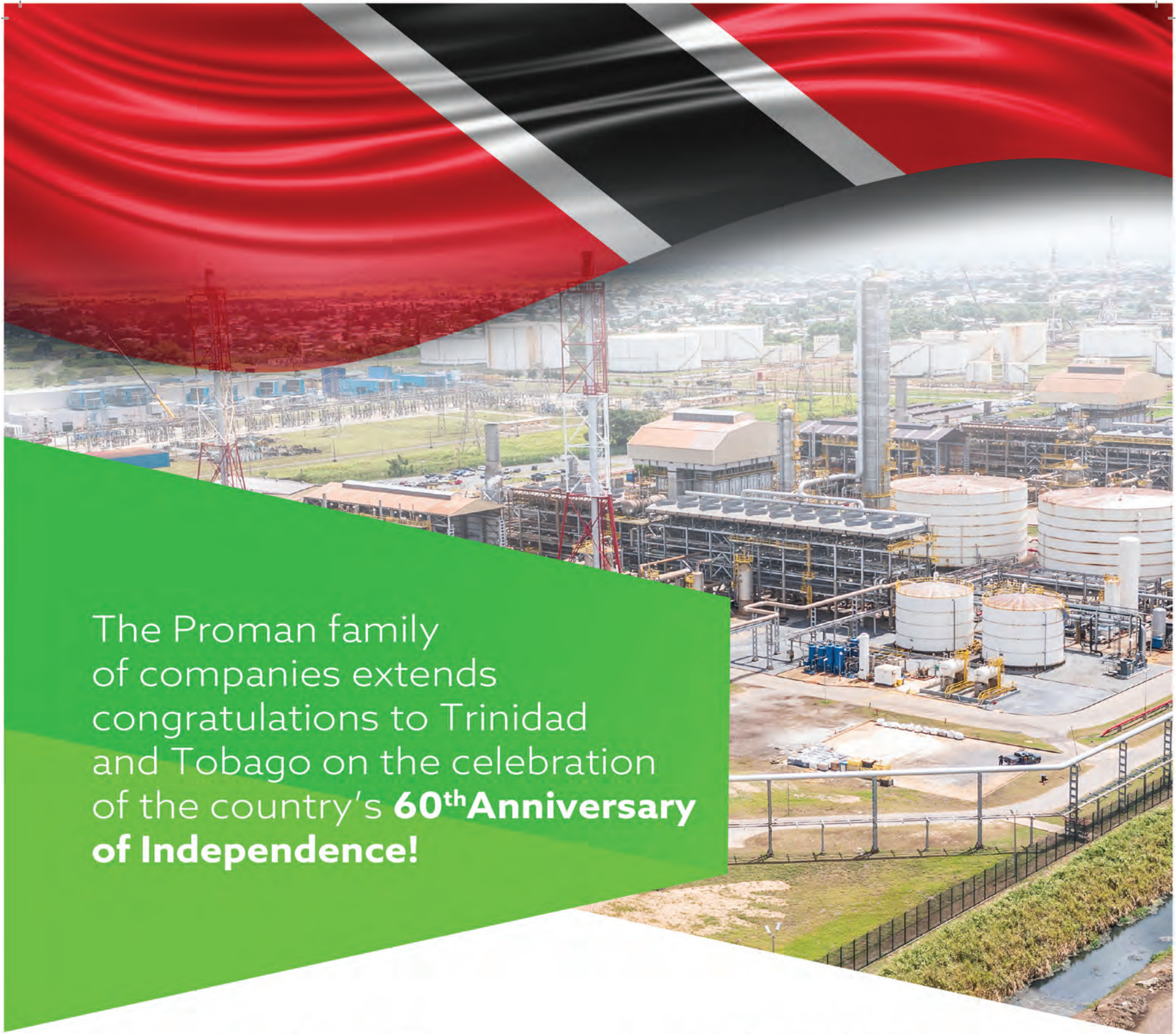
The Tobago Self-Government Bill was debated in the House of Representatives last year. It gives Tobago 6.8 per cent of the national budget and makes provisions for certain law-making powers for Tobago. But this has been rejected by the Progressive Democratic Patriots (PDP), who hold a 14-one majority in the THA. No vote was taken on the bill, as the Opposition United National Congress walked out during the debate.

PDP political leader Watson Duke has been a strong advocate for self-determination for Tobago, even calling at times for independence and for Tobago to have its own prime minister.

Tobago has spoken, in its support for the PDP in the last THA election and demand for greater autonomy. After 60 years, the relationship is still strong, but Tobago wants more to be happy.

## THA Chief Secretaries 1980-present

- ANR Robinson – 1980-1984
- ANR Robinson – 1984-1988
- Jefferson Davidson – 1988-1992
- Lennox Denoon – 1992-1996
- Hochoy Charles – 1996-2001
- Orville London – 2001-2005
- Orville London – 2005-2009
- Orville London – 2009-2013
- Orville London – 2013-2017
- Kelvin Charles – 2017-2021
- Ancil Denis – 2021 (January election in a 6-6 tie)
- Farley Augustine – 2021-present (December election 14-1 win)



The Proman family of companies extends congratulations to Trinidad and Tobago on the celebration of the country's **60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence!**

On this special occasion, we join our nation in celebrating the **Diamond Jubilee Independence Day** across Trinidad and Tobago.

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60<sup>th</sup>

## Anniversary of Independence



Winston Bailey, the Shadow, emerged in the 1970s with his "dark genius." PHOTO BY MARK LYNDERSAY



Super Blue performs at the Dusk in White fete at the Rando Glasgow production Tobago Love Soca weekend at the Canoe Bay resort in 2019. FILE PHOTO/DAVID REID



Ras Shorty I (PHOTO COURTESY SHELDON BLACKMAN)

GILLIAN MOOR

By 1962, music was already a major aspect of TT's identity, giving expression to the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural mix of its people, and reflecting the historical context.

The nation's song blended strains from Africa, India, Europe and more, into a captivating harmony that had made waves internationally. TT had taken limitation and created new instruments, and was proud of its musical mix.

European and African lyric and melody had birthed calypso, sung each Carnival in rival "tents."

Christmas was celebrated to the tune of Spanish-derived parang. Indian folk and filmi music thrived, rendered on a combination of traditional and western instruments.

African drums were the rhythm of repressed religion and the emergent cultural stage (with the Prime Minister's Best Village Trophy Competition popularising folk rhythms from 1963).

Dr Gordon Rohlehr, UWI professor emeritus and critic of popular culture in the Caribbean, says TT was shaking off repression – and the music reflected the sentiments of the time.

Carnival had been banned during WWII. Censorship of music meant sexuality had to be cloaked in double entendre. It was forbidden to criticise the colonial masters.

Now, the old guard of calypsonians was moving on. Kitchener was in England, clearing the way for what Rohlehr refers to as "the Sparrow era."

Trinidad was recovering from

# The sound of TT music



Lord Kitchener entertains the crowd during one of his many performances. PHOTO COURTESY NALIS

the presence of thousands of US soldiers at the army base in Chaguaramas, a period that saw prostitution rock family life and more women becoming financially independent. Politically, the concept of a Caribbean federation had emerged, though the federation itself did not last long.

Rohlehr says the US occupation eventually drove a sense of nationalism, which powered the move towards Independence.

But the day of all days to remember  
Was when we marched in the

rain with our Premier  
One voice, one shout, one cry,  
one call  
Freedom! Independence for  
one and all  
– Mighty Duke, 1960

At that time there were only two main radio stations – Radio Trinidad and Radio Guardian, with Venezuelan (Spanish) music often interrupting transmission.

Port of Spain listeners could also get WVDI US Armed Forces Radio and could subscribe to Rediffusion, a wired transmission that re-aired BBC programmes and other British

content, along with local talent segments.

Rediffusion also had a B station for local programming, where Holly Betaudier and the BBC's Trevor Mc Donald got their start. Pat Mathura hosted Indian Talent on Parade on Radio Trinidad.

In the year of Independence, Lord Blakie's risqué Maria was the Road March, with North Stars' version of Sparrow's Dan Is The Man winning the inaugural National Panorama in 1963.

Even in the Catholic church, the tide of independence was rising in the region. A new canon

of Caribbean-flavoured hymns was popularised, played on guitars, cuatros and hand drums – even as classical European music remained the realm of the more arty.

UTT senior lecturer, pioneer sound designer and seminal soca artiste Robin Imamshah (Last Supper, Shandileer, Taxi) recalls: "Before Independence there were no calypsoes or local music on radio stations. We didn't have control. They only allowed a few chosen songs during the last week of Carnival."

But he says, by the early 1970s, "There was a rumbling. People wanted their own thing."

Imamshah notes that the local Indian music industry "didn't need radio," selling thousands of popular records made by the Mohammed Brothers et al, selling them at roti shops and doubles stands and even exporting them to India.

"The market was massive, and the sound of our music was so different from classic religious sound," he said, thanks to the local percussive innovations of dholak, dantal with vocals and harmonium.

Imamshah worked at KH Records, owned by Kerry Richards and Hunt Wong Moon, which had a \$250,000 government mandate to take TT's music to the world.

Their concept was SOCA: the Southern Caribbean Sound Project, their ambition to create a signature local studio "sound" akin to the Motown or Philadelphia sounds. They visited some famous international studios, and settled on their own in-house band, while searching for the quintessence of local music.

SOUND OF TT  
continues on page 22 >>>



**Marubeni  
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60<sup>th</sup>

## Anniversary of Independence



Sparrow paved the way for a new era of calypso.



Entertainers from the Malick All Stars Tassa Group perform at the Barataria Oval for the Independence Road Show Caravan.



Patrice Roberts performs at Call to Paradise at Magdalena Grand Beach and Golf Resort in 2019. FILE PHOTO/DAVID REID

SOUND OF TT  
from page 20 >>>

# Soca still most popular local genre

"We realised bass in Trinidad has a special place," he said.

Focusing on the dun-dun drum of West Africa, the dhol drum from India and TT's own bass pan, they created an amped-up bass sound that attracted musical artists from far and wide.

New genres kept coming forth. Sundar Popo came out with the first chutney song, Nana and Nani, in 1970.

The early years of the decade saw the Mighty Shadow emerge from Tobago to make a unique mark with his dark genius.

Rapso, blending spoken word and percussive rhythm; Jamoo, a gospel-infused hybrid by kaiso rockstar-turned-holy man Ras Shorty-I; ragga-soca with Jamaican attitude (and accent), soca chutney, chutney soca parang and more came forth.

A fecund and varied underground scene endured over the decades.

In 1990 Amar Studios' Kiskidee Karavan made a brief intervention, creating a sensation with the music of homegrown talents.

In the more traditional calypso space, social commentary was placing the nation's evolving racially-aligned politics on centre stage. Songwriters took on Indo-Afro love and rivalry: Marajhin, Ganges and the Nile, Allyuh Look Fuh Dat, Jahaji Bhai.

"You cannot control the currents of culture," Rohlehr says. "The music itself found its own way of merging."

Soca has remained the focus of attention, investment and popularity throughout successive decades.



Drupatee Ramgoonai performing at the Dimanche Gras show at the Queen's Park Savannah in February. FILE PHOTO/SUREASH CHOLAI



Jimmy October sways to his 'new calypso' in the song Magic during his performance at Kes on the Rocks, Queen's Park Savannah, Port of Spain in 2020. FILE PHOTO/ROGER JACOB



Joshua Regrello is one of the new artistes whose music resonates beyond TT.

Road March success – having the most-played song during annual Carnival celebrations – is seen as the highest goal, short of an international breakthrough.

The power to move Carnival crowds created soca superstars like SuperBlue, Iwer George, Destra, Patrice Roberts, and Machel Montano. And the music changed to suit, with faster tempo, a less poetic approach, less experimentation and, often, more formulaic songs.

But despite calls for support

and quotas from some quarters, international genres like pop and rock have persisted as the main radio fare, influencing local music along with jazz, gospel, alternative, hip hop and more.

Dr Keron Niles, UWI lecturer, policy analyst and leading-edge music manager, feels TT's emphasis on festival and seasonal music may work to its detriment: "If our music is going to be sustainable, if we want the sector to contribute on a larger scale and earn more foreign exchange," he says, "we need to

move away from such a heavy emphasis on festival-specific music, for example Christmas, Divali, Carnival, Phagwa.

"The country needs to move away from competition-centric consumption. We can have more local artists, musicians, pan players, performing year-round around the world."

Niles sees plenty to be optimistic about, with seasoned pros like Drupatee Ramgoonai still touring in the cultural diaspora, and calypso evolving "a more global sound, attracting

more global attention" and music from "artistes like Joshua Regrello, Johann Chuckaree, Jimmy October and others resonating" further afield.

"The industry is becoming more export-oriented, in part due to technology," he says. "We need to move more toward helping local artistes to find their target markets overseas."

But he emphasises the need for musicians and music marketers to be "more strategic, and more intentional" as the industry looks to the future.

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60<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary of Independence

# Putting TT's beauty on the map

VISHANNA PHAGOO

**A**mong the landmark events of 60 years of independence are three wins in prominent beauty pageants. To this day, many people recall witnessing Janelle "Penny" Commissiong winning the 1977 Miss Universe competition and Giselle Laronde-West winning the Miss World title in 1986. Wendy Fitzwilliam later also won the 1998 Miss Universe contest.

Laronde-West and Commissiong sat down with *Newsday* and talked about how they felt about being able to contribute to the country in this way.

## Giselle Laronde-West

Laronde-West said as she is celebrating her own 60th birthday in October, the feeling of sharing that with her country is immeasurable. She felt "absolutely proud" to be able to have done something for her country and now getting to see the nation celebrate 60 years of independence.

She recalled her start in modelling, saying it started when she was 20 and joined the House of Jacqui, San Fernando.

"I kind of grew up naive, but at the same time very tomboyish, very much into school and sports. So when I was asked if I'd be interested in modelling, I said, 'Okay, let's see what it holds. I don't know if I'll be good at it.' But it turned out I was not too bad."

Laronde-West said she didn't take part in all the shows, as she was picked for certain ones, but at those, she soaked up every moment of it and laughed as she said that was where she realised she loved being on stage.

"I really enjoyed being up there and showing what I have to show, the clothes that I'm wearing, and getting the reactions. So I enjoyed it."

She added that she's never shy when she's onstage, though off stage is a different story.

While still at the House of Jacqui, Laronde-West was working at the TECU Credit Union to save money to go to UWI, but with encouragement from a former Miss TT, Brenda Joy Fahey, and her brothers, she auditioned for the pageant.

"They said you never know where it will take you, you might make connections, you'll be able to get opportunities and also maybe get some money that could help you."

With permission from her parents,

she was on her way. She recalled Fahey rushing, on the last day of auditions, to get her a dress, shoes and swimsuit.

"I did that, and then I got chosen to be one of the 12 to be Miss TT. At the time they were looking at three girls to crown, one for Miss World, one for Miss Universe, and one for Caravelle.

"It really opened my eyes to a lot of TT, it made me understand a little bit more about the country. They took us to a lot of places in TT that I had never been to before.

"Because they didn't know which girls would be chosen for which competition, they would expose us to everything. We would go to children's homes; we would do a lot of charity work along the way while we were training."

So Laronde-West encouraged every young woman who gets such a chance to grab it, as it could be a life-changing one, as it was for her.

"It's not just about beauty, which people get sidetracked about: they always think it's just a beauty pageant and it's just showing your body. It's a part of it, but what they miss is all the other great elements that come out of it. A young girl who gets a lot of experience in a variety of ways. Getting to meet people of all different walks of life, to see what the country really holds, to identify with the whole 'beauty with a purpose' element – specifically Miss World."

After the training, she was chosen to represent TT at the Miss World Competition, which she described as "mind-blowing." She added that because she was chosen, she had to travel to the United Kingdom for the first time.

"That's another element that people forget when they cry down the competition. This young woman, who has maybe not travelled much, never left the country, or maybe did once or twice, now having the opportunity to go to a far-off country and meet almost 100 girls, or more sometimes, all from different parts of the world, and getting yet getting another opportunity to open their minds, eyes, and intuition."

Laronde-West said she met so many people who came from different environments, had varying experiences and lived through contrasting challenges.

"There was everything, from very rich girls to girls who are poor and couldn't even scrape together a suitcase – and I was closer to that side. Because that was a challenge for me, coming from a little place in Marabella, not really coming from a wealthy family, and I wasn't granted



Former Miss World Giselle Laronde-West. PHOTO BY AYANNA KINSALE

dresses, jewels, shoes, and bags to take with it. Many times I had to go and ask designers to help get this or if they can give me that, or if I can borrow it, or even ask to pay for it.

"Then you see some girls with seven suitcases, which was no big deal for them. So it really was an eye-opener."

After experiencing all of this and more, Laronde-West said she wasn't heading to the competition at the Royal Albert Hall in London, on November 13, 1986, with the intention of winning.

"I never know exactly how to describe it. It's almost like going to heaven or experiencing a dream come true. The first thing I thought about was, 'What are my parents thinking? What is TT thinking? What is going on?'"

She said her win was a blur, as she was still in shock, but still needed to do her victory walk. After winning, before returning to TT, she met many influential people such as a Spanish prince; Stefan Johansson, a Swedish Formula One race car driver; and popular English singer Sir

Cliff Richard.

On her return home in December of that year, she said as she landed, she was greeted by what must have been thousands of people at Piarco Airport. Laronde-West said even to this day, whenever she decides to go to a rumshop or to get something in the grocery, she is always approached.

"People always come up to me and say, 'Wow, thank you for doing this for us.'"

"That is what I appreciate because I think that it meant something to the people, and once I'm recognised as a woman for the people, I am happy."

Laronde-West has now worked at Caribbean Airlines Ltd as an executive manager in customer experience for over three years.

Before this, she held public relations positions at companies such as Scotiabank, Hilton International and Angostura.

TT's BEAUTY

continues on page 26 >>>



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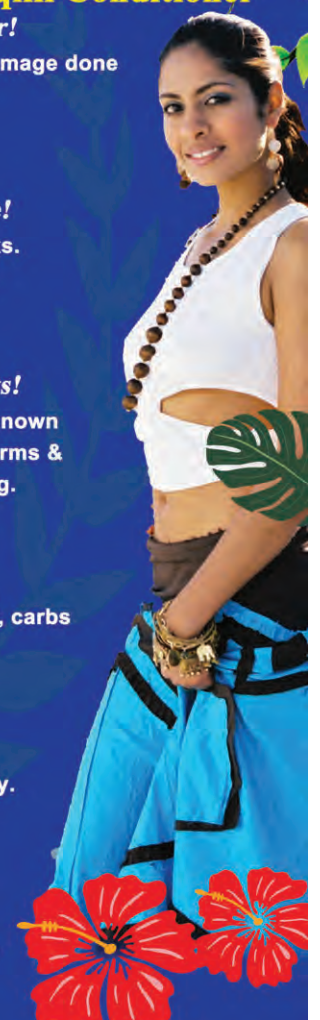
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60<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary of Independence

# Victory for women of colour

TT's BEAUTY  
from page 24 >>

## Janelle "Penny" Commissiong

Janelle "Penny" Commissiong won the Miss Universe Competition on July 16, 1977 at 24, in the Dominican Republic.

Though she is grateful for the experience and the title, she said at the end of the day, she's just Penny.

"You live with people recognising you, and sometimes you don't want that, but it's a mental thing that you have to develop.

"I have to say that I am very grateful. I mean, I was like, in Port of Spain and the guys on the side called out, 'Hey, Penny!' I'm grateful that the community as a whole – not remembers me, but understands the importance and significance of it (her winning Miss Universe)."

Commissiong said she wasn't interested in becoming a model, but used the exposure so people would know who she was and help her when she was ready to start a business in merchandising.

She said she worked in purchasing for a department store in New York before deciding to start her own business back in TT.

"So I entered locally and I won. Then I had to go on and represent the country for Miss Universe.

"It was a little different for me, because it's not like I had my eye on being a beauty queen or a model, nothing like that. So then I went to the Dominican Republic and it was a completely and absolutely new experience."

Commissiong added that back then the idea of a beauty queen was a Caucasian woman who was five foot eight and blonde.

"What's important is that – 45 years later, people take things for granted today, because 45 years ago even in the Dominican Republic, people of colour were rarely seen."

Seeing this playing out, she said the competition had a lot of coverage from European journalists, and every day there were photos of the entrants on the covers, but very seldom saw a person of colour, if ever.

"Now, every time I have an interview, I thank Miss Bermuda, because she had the courage to start talking about it, and when she did, you started seeing us on the front pages or in the newspapers, period."

She was chosen as one of the 12 contestants to compete to be crowned Miss Universe, and Commissiong said there were signs she would emerge victorious.

"There's a point in the show where all the contestants are wearing the same costume, singing a particular song, and everyone supposedly participates – unless you're chosen as one of the 12. I don't know why, but I didn't take my dress to the auditorium that night, I just left it in my room.

"When I was called as one of the 12 girls, I was fine. Then I was called as one of the (final) five contestants, and that's when I started getting cold feet.

"Then they started counting down, and I said I'd settle for three, because we never got this far – but by the time they called three, and at that point, I don't know, I kind of



Janelle Penny Commissiong PHOTO BY SUREASH CHOLAI

got greedy."

Commissiong thanked the judges, and said she is yet to see a line-up like that again, as there were judges varying from a fashion designer to a Hollywood movie producer.

"I think that helps in terms of fairness."

She said after winning, she worked with Miss Universe for a year.

"I was really busy, and I was ready to give it up by the end of the year. I was busy and tired because of all the

travelling.

"Of course, it's something that stays with you, I mean how could it not? Not so much the actual winning it, but what the winning shows you about life and the world."

Commissiong said the only thing she is up to these days is experiencing the retired life. Her husband Alwin Chow, a former media manager and businessman, died last December.

"It's taking some time to get used to and he was a very important part of my life."

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## Anniversary of Independence



Brian Lara punches the air after reclaiming the Test batting world record against England in 2004.



Brian Lara executes a pull shot during his memorable innings of 213 against Australia at Sabina Park, Jamaica in 1999.



West Indies legend Brian Lara.  
PHOTO BY GREG WOOD

JELANI BECKLES

# Brian Lara -

## Record-breaking batsman who put TT on the map

**B**rian Lara, the TT and West Indies batting hero, has given this country much to celebrate.

From his stylish way of batting, match-winning performances and record-breaking innings, there's no doubt that Lara is one of TT's sporting icons.

Lara, 53, had an appetite for batting and batting long. The former West Indies captain would stay at the crease for hours and it led to achievements that few sportsmen could dream of.

Lara, who grew up in Santa Cruz, joined Harvard Coaching Clinic as a youngster to develop his talent and later moved on to Queen's Park Cricket Club. Lara made his West Indies debut in 1990, but in April 1994 he became a household name. At the Antigua Recreation Ground, he broke the Test batting record held by Sir Garry Sobers when he scored 375 against England. Sobers, a Barbadian and West Indies legend, had held the record since 1958.

Weeks later Lara created history again, playing for Warwickshire in English county cricket. He compiled a mammoth 501 not out to break Hanif Mohammed's record of 499 for the highest first-class score.

In October 2003, Australian Matthew Hayden broke Lara's record of 375 by scoring 380. But Hayden had little time to celebrate, as six months later Lara broke the Test batting record for the second time. At the Antigua Recreation Ground, again, Lara struck 400 not out against England. It is a record he holds to this day.

Former West Indies and TT opening batsman Suruj Ragoonath is just a year older than Lara. They have known each other since they played youth-level cricket and went on to play alongside each other for years on the national senior cricket team. Reflecting on Lara's numerous



Brian Charles Lara plays a batting stroke, at the unveiling of the sign renaming Knaggs Hill to Brian Lara Drive, Chancellor Hill, Port of Spain. At centre is Minister of Rural and Local Government, Kazim Hosein and San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation chairman Anthony Roberts on May 2, 2019. FILE PHOTO/ANGELO MARCELLE

record-breaking innings, Ragoonath said, "Watching Brian Lara break those world records was just amazing... I remember when he broke the 501 first-class record I was at work at Angostura."

Ragoonath said his supervisor let him stop working and listen to the

historic moment.

Former TT and West Indies cricketer and Newsday columnist Bryan Davis first met Lara when he was coaching at Fatima College. Davis was coaching some of the older students, but heard about a talented player called Lara.

Davis said Lara always had an appetite for runs and from early on had his mind set on breaking records.

"We had a coaching session going on in the afternoon, and he said to me, 'Mr Davis, how come that record that Garry Sobers has of 365 not out has been standing so long?'"

"He said, 'I want that record, you know.'"

Davis explained to Lara that many situations can prevent a batsman from scoring such a huge total.

Davis said most will just see the records and statistics of Lara, but his work ethic was like no other.

"Nobody knew how much Brian Lara used to practise. He will be here at 7 o'clock in the morning in the nets here (at the Queen's Park Oval)... he just loved to bat." Davis said Lara would ask four or five friends to bowl to him.

"Inside of him he had a drive. He had a drive to make plenty runs."

Ragoonath said, "He always wanted to be the best from a very early age something that most of us who played with him lacked. We were just contented with making a 50, but not Brian."

Ragoonath also recalled a discussion in 1987 that demonstrated Lara's hunger to be a great cricketer.

"At that time the much-touted (Roland) Holder was seen as the next star in West Indies cricket... Brian, sitting outside the gate at the Tragarete Road entrance (to the Queen's Park Oval) said to me, 'Ragoo, do you think Holder has anything on me?'"

"I did not have to answer the question, because he went on to say, 'The only thing Holder can do better than me is hook.'"

Ragoonath said playing with or against Lara was memorable.

"It was just a pleasure to have played with Brian Lara, and even in games that we played against each other like North/South games, school games, trial games, it was always a thrill coming up against him because you knew that you were coming

up against the best."

Davis, reflecting on Lara's contribution to TT, said, "I would put it as a ten out of ten. I believe that Lara's contribution is global, worldwide."

Davis said TT's sporting heroes are not only admired by people in TT, but around the world.

In 1998, when he was on a tour to Australia with a Queen's Park Cricket Club team, he had a conversation with two airport employees.

Davis said when he told them the team was from TT, one of them did not know of the country.

However, the other employee seemed to be a massive sports fan, and when he said Davis was from the same country as Lara, TT football legend Dwight Yorke and track and field great Ato Boldon, the employee who was uncertain where TT was on the map quickly made the connection.

Davis is satisfied that Lara has been recognised by TT.

"The Brian Lara Cricket Academy, the Brian Lara Promenade, a statue of Brian Lara (on the promenade), the Brian Lara Pavilion at the Queen's Park Oval – and there have been many things like that to recognise him."

"He is well-recognised. Anywhere you go, you could hear Lara's name," Davis said.

"Brian Lara's contribution to TT is immense," Ragoonath said.

"He has put TT on the map in a very indelible manner. He has brought great recognition to the country because he is renowned internationally the world over, Brian Lara is a global superstar." Ragoonath said Lara is an "excellent ambassador."

"He would have done a huge amount in terms of contributing to TT and creating greater awareness of us as a nation and as a people and what we are capable of."

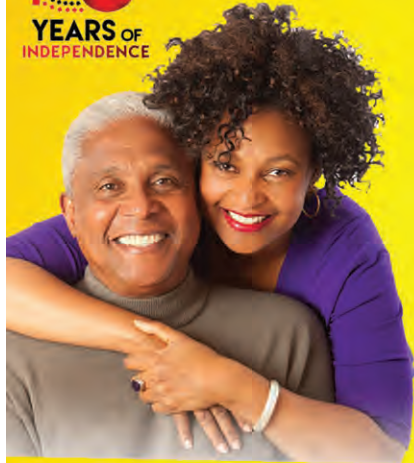
Lara retired from international cricket in 2007.

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60<sup>th</sup>

## Anniversary of Independence

JELANI BECKLES

Most people remember where they were when defender Dennis Lawrence scored a header in November 2005 to help the Soca Warriors qualify for the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany.

Lawrence's header gave TT a 1-0 win over Bahrain in a World Cup qualification playoff match in Bahrain. It helped TT qualify for the World Cup for the first time in history.

At the time TT, with a population of approximately 1.3 million, was the smallest country to qualify.

Everyone was glued to the TV for the historic moment and celebrations erupted when TT sealed its place.

The match against Bahrain was held around lunchtime in TT, but everyone took time from work and school to witness the moment. People lined the streets waving flags and honking their car horns in jubilation.

Some, who had witnessed the disappointment of the 1990 Italy World Cup campaign, sighed with relief. At the Hasely Crawford Stadium in November 1989, the USA defeated TT 1-0 to book a place in the 1990 World Cup. TT had needed a draw to qualify.

Defender Brent Sancho and goalkeeper Shaka Hislop were both members of the Soca Warriors team at the 2006 World Cup.

Speaking about the victory against Bahrain, Sancho said, "I think when the whistle blew we would have been in disbelief. Many of us on that team would have toiled for many, many years in the national programme, whether it be youth, senior, whatever it may be. (It was) a lot of sacrifice and I don't think a lot of people recognise the kind of sacrifice that we would have put in playing for TT, it is a tremendous sacrifice."

Hislop, who was a university student during TT's 1990 World Cup campaign, reflected on the experience of being a devastated fan, then seeing TT qualify.

"I still remember I was a student at Howard University in November 1989, when we fell at that final hurdle in qualifying for Italy 1990. I remember how hurtful that was, just as a fan.

"At that point I am not sure I ever thought I would not just represent the national team, but certainly at no point (was I) thinking I would see a national team qualify for a World Cup. To have a front-row seat, so to speak, to that night (against Bahrain was special)."

Hislop, who did not play against Bahrain, said he was elated to see players he had grown up playing football with creating history.

Hislop played national youth football with Soca Warriors captain Dwight Yorke and midfield maestro Russell Latapy.

"Just from a fan's perspective, it was surreal. I never thought I would see the day," Hislop recalled.

Sancho, describing the feeling on returning home to TT after the Bahrain match, said, "I think I am as Trini as any Trinbagonian there is, and I don't think I have ever seen that level of unity, that level of pride and that level of love for country in my life ever.



**FLASHBACK:** The TT senior men's team prior to the 2006 World Cup group B match against Sweden, on June 10, 2006 at Dortmund stadium. (First row, LtoR) forward Dwight Yorke, defender Brent Sancho, goalkeeper Shaka Hislop, defender Avery John, defender Dennis Lawrence. (Second row, LtoR) forward Collin Samuel, midfielder Carlos Edwards, midfielder Christopher Birchall, defender Cyd Gray, midfielder Densill Theobald, forward Stern John. **AFP PHOTOS**

Level of pride, unity was like no other moment

## Soca Warriors qualify for 2006 World Cup



TT fans cheer their team during their World Cup 2006 qualifying match against Bahrain in Manama on November 16, 2005. Trinidad beat Bahrain 1-0 to become the first Caribbean country to play in a World Cup since Jamaica's appearance in the 1998 edition.

"Everywhere you walked...there was a hug, there was a flag flying. It was just a moment where everybody felt proud to be a Trinbagonian."

Sancho said he felt as though the entire population of TT was on the field against Bahrain battling.

When he was representing TT, he was



Swedish midfielder Anders Svensson vies with TT midfielder Carlos Edwards during the 2006 World Cup group B football game, on June 10, 2006 at Dortmund stadium.

not just playing for himself.

"I think, more importantly, (we were playing) for our families and friends from the country that supported us through thick and thin. We felt like we did it for all of them."

At the World Cup, TT shocked most in their opening match by holding Sweden to a 0-0 draw.



TT's Brent Sancho and Kenwyne Jones celebrate after beating Bahrain in a World Cup 2006 qualifying match in Manama on November 16, 2005.

What made the result more special was that the Soca Warriors played almost the entire second half with ten men, after defender Avery John was sent off.

Hislop made some memorable saves against Sweden.

He was not expected to play against Sweden, but was named as the starter in goal after Kelvin Jack was injured just before the match. It is his proudest moment.

"It was the highlight of my career in so many ways," Hislop said.

Hearing the national anthem was unforgettable.

"For me the highlight of the day was just hearing that national anthem play. It is something that I never thought I would experience. and standing on the pitch hearing that national anthem play was as big as it got to me."

A lot of sports fans like to cheer for the underdog and a large percentage of the German public and people from all over the world rallied around the Soca Warriors.

Hislop said as the match against Sweden progressed, more fans started to cheer for TT.

Sharing the moment with his family was the icing on the cake.

"For me personally I had my wife (with me at the World Cup), at the time four kids...my mom, my brothers came to the World Cup, my closest friends were all in attendance, and that really meant a lot to me to have them there."

After TT battled to the draw against Sweden, Sancho said hundreds of fans gathered outside their hotel.

"When we came back to the hotel at about half two, three in the morning there were at least a couple hundred fans, maybe even about 1,000 fans, outside our hotel waving TT flags and wanting to just get a glimpse of us.

"These were not people that were from Trinidad, these were people from Germany, from the town (where we were based). They were so proud of us for getting that result."

Hislop said, "It really was outstanding. It was good to see the number of TT fans show up (in Germany)."

# CONGRATULATIONS

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