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'Let the jackass bray'

Comedian Errol Fabien gets backlash for 'No Row Lee'

"LET the jackass bray."

That's the point-blank response from comedian Errol Fabien to anyone offended by his 2022 parang soca release "No Row Lee".

Fabien sings about a "truculent, arrogant and argumentative" Chinese man who makes it "hard to live, in we small village" in the self-penned Yuletide ditty. He sings:

*"Every single day someway some how
Dis fella Lee does find herself in row
So dis Christmas we doh want no row Lee
No row Lee."*

The song has had an immediately polarising effect, with nationals seemingly split down the middle in praising and discrediting the tune on social media. There are several ongoing heated debates under the song's music video posted on Fabien's Facebook account.

Carla Tardieu wrote: "I love it! Kaiso, Kaiso!"

Michele Celestine, meanwhile, wrote: "Really, Errol Fabien? This is double entendre at its worst form. I absolutely condemn this tongue-in-cheek attempt to put down the democratically elected political leader of T&T. I am very disappointed in you, Errol Fabien, this track just fuels the ongoing disrespect and lawlessness we see being directed at the holders of public office."

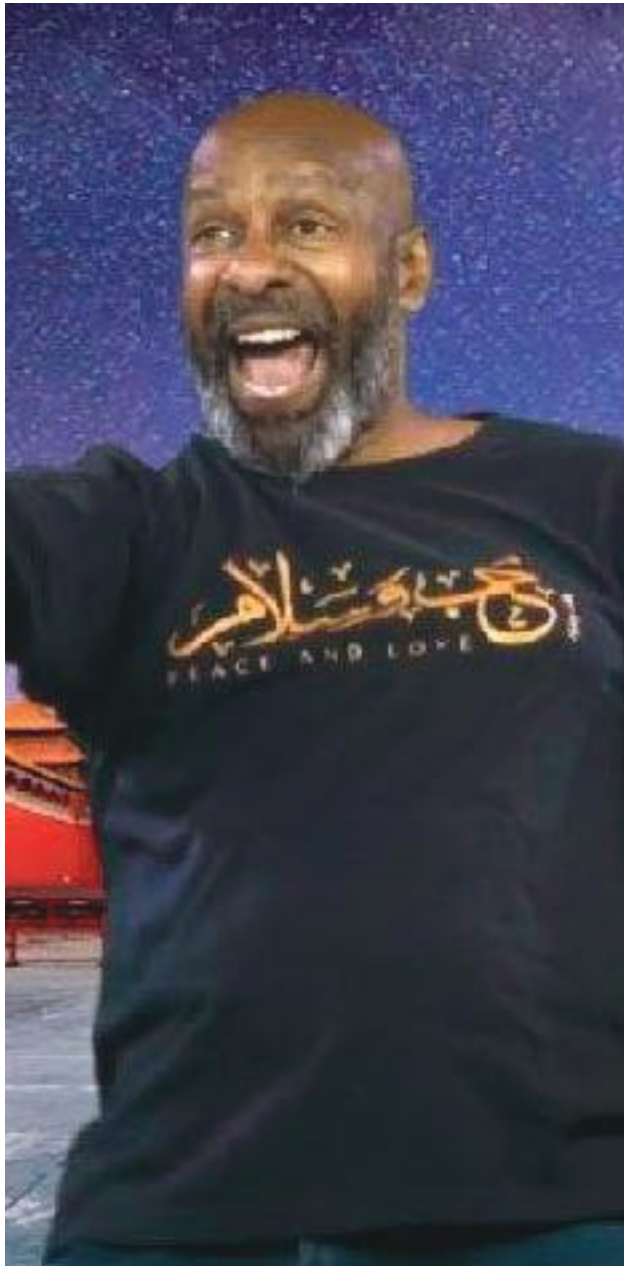
Fabien responded to Celestine directly in a post that has been liked hundreds of times, saying: "Come on, Michele. I expect better of you. How can you drag the honourable Prime Minister into this? This Mr Lee to whom I refer cannot step into our Prime Minister's shoes."

The comedian/calyptonian admitted to being delighted with the widespread strong emotional reaction to his creative work.

"There is quite a bit of satisfaction," Fabien said, when asked about the equal amounts of love and hate he has gotten online.

"As a comedian if our work doesn't offend then we doing something wrong. When we show yuh back yuhself in a light-hearted manner and it doesn't offend then we doing something wrong. We being too nice," he said, with an audible smile during a phone interview, between World Cup games, yesterday with the Express.

Fabien said the funniest part is he doesn't believe his lyrical composition is anything special and didn't expect the song to fall under this



Errol Fabien: duty to offend

much scrutiny. It is currently the most discussed piece of music on the islands.

"The song at best is a silly song. If yuh really look at the lyrics is not no work of genius or immense creativity or cleverness really. It's a silly lil song. All they have to do is let the jackass bray," he laughed.

"Some people actually think the song is about (Pointe a Pierre MP) David Lee, but most people feel is the honourable Dr Rowley I singing about. I knew wiring it he (Rowley) would be the target I not going to be disingenuous about that, but I didn't know it would offend the PNM (People National Movement) people because this song doesn't really describe how Dr Rowley is portrayed to the public. Unless they think Rowley needs to be painted in a perfect light or some-

thing for the upcoming internal elections," Fabien mused.

It is a calypsonian's duty to be the mouthpiece of the populace, Fabien said. Keeping this in the mind the former Best New Artiste Sunshine Award winner says he embraces all feedback on his work. Fabien most notably placed third in the National Humour Monarch competition in the 90s with his hilarious "Ato Tea Party".

"These things (personal attacks) doh bother me because once you're a public figure yuh open up for attack. But the truth is if yuh offended by this song yuh should be offended by all the Christmas parang humour. 'Cork In She Hand', 'Put Something In She Mouth', 'Pone Annie' by the late Kenny J, Del Torro, Rome and others."

Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts Randall Mitchell, however, questioned Fabien's calypso credentials saying his latest musical release was nothing but "opposition advocacy in song form".

"Errol Fabien is a political aspirant and has been for quite some time in opposition of the PNM Government. I wouldn't classify him as a calypsonian, but if he has indeed produced a calypso I believe it should be viewed as just opposition advocacy in the song form. He is just doing service to whichever party he now belongs to. I don't even know which party's views he now represents. I can't keep track," Mitchell told the Express via WhatsApp.

Mitchell added as culture minister he embraces all forms of free speech, saying: "As for free speech, by all means, within the confines of the law and within our customs, norms and traditional moral decency and acceptability".

Fabien, meanwhile, maintains he is an independent politician and political commentator. He says he has shared both "kisses and kicks" to all politicians including the PM.

"I'm encircled by a picong culture. As an independent politician and a commentator I have praised Dr Rowley at certain times. I sang on (former PMs) Basdeo Panday, Kamla (Persad-Bissessar) and (Patrick) Manning and none of these cases came under this kind of fire. And this song is the least of these disciples," he said.

"That being said, I am open for bookings," Fabien coyly concluded.

Spiritual journeys and Diabetes all come down to energy

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.

Hi Di, my name is AJ and I am on a spiritual journey. However, most of my family and friends do not believe. I am not here to convince anyone to believe in what I believe and to choose the path I have chosen, I just want them to accept who I am and we can still have a meaningful conversation from time to time around the subject. What should I do or say?

A1: I totally understand how you feel. Now I want to make it clear to all who are reading as a disclaimer that this is not a religious debate nor it is not to offend anyone in any capacity and I respect everyone's faiths and beliefs.

Now, it is not common to seek something new, nor it is new. Ancient customs and practices have been around for thousands of years, however the issue of spirituality is now more acceptable than it was centuries ago. Traditional religions are actually more recent than ancient teachings.

It is said that there are two birthdays, and they are the day you were born as you and the day that you discover your life's purpose so Happy Birthday! Being on a spiritual journey is a very personal choice and living to what you believe is your life's purpose. You are not here to convince anyone of anything different. I was born a Christian, I do and will always believe in a Higher Source and I am also on a spiritual journey. I talk very openly about it on radio and tv for example and I make it clear that I am not here to talk anyone into something that they are not comfortable with however if you want to have a conversation with me then I am open to it.

I listen and respond accordingly and if the con-

versation moves forward in a positive direction with each respecting the other then we continue, but if it does not then I will respectfully change the conversation. In life, there is no point in spending time, money, or energy on things that are not going to serve you on your path.

What I will say to you is to first find you. Who you are. Who you want to be and what will make you happy. By doing this you will make a huge difference and impact on the world and that is a spiritual path. Just be YOU AJ.

Hello Di, I found out recently that I am diabetic, and although I believed that I was healthy and doing all the right things by eating, and exercising for example that I was diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes. My parents were diabetic, as were my grand-

parents. Did I inherit this from my parents? – D.A

A 2: Dear DA, thank you for your question and it is a very common one. First of all, I am not a doctor nor a health practitioner so please follow your doctor's advice. I have read where it is documented that if one parent had Type 2 then the chance of developing it is 40% and if both parents had Type 2 then 70%. Your risk depends on family genetics, however your environmental surrounding, lifestyle and behaviour do contribute to it as well.

There are a few main body organs involved and they are the liver, pancreas, and kidneys but don't dismiss the other areas. So you are what you eat, right? You are your lifestyle, right? You are your emo-

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tions, right? You are your laziness, right? You are your weight, right? (By the way, I work with clients all the time to release their emotions which has a deep effect on their habits.)

When you put food or sugar drinks in your mouth (you must know your body and how it reacts to food throughout the day and the portions), it is processed by the liver which converts it to sugar which now signals the pancreas and says, hey. I need some insulin so I can balance of all that sugar. Now if the pancreas cannot produce enough insulin for whatever reason then you have excess sugar in the body and now there is an imbalance in the body. Sugar is converted to energy as well. So it goes to the kidneys which are now working overtime but they just cannot keep up and the excess sugar and energy are left in the body and stored as excess fat and hence you gain weight (this is not the only reason for weight gain). Now if you are not drinking enough water to help the kidneys flush out the excess sugar and if you are not active it will be stored in places you do not want it to be. You may not want to go to the bathroom 20 times a day however it is better than having damaged organs and eventually chronic health conditions. Chronic health conditions are any health condition that is more than 1 year. Restricting what you can eat or drink is no fun at all. Your body also needs lots of rest. You only have one body and it is telling you to take care of it.

There are many resources that can help you on a healthy path and I have read that Type 2 is reversible, however you have to make a conscious dramatic lifestyle change for that to happen. I wish you all the best for a healthy life.

Share your questions and responses by sending an email to info@TheExperientialCoach.com. All the best!



Artist Wendell Smith is Sculpting Connections

Although based in Atlanta, Georgia, artist Wendell R Smith wants to be known as a TT artist.

So, for his first solo exhibition in over a decade, he has returned home to present Reclamation.

Reclamation has about 30 mixed media pieces which includes sculptural work, paintings and drawings. He worked in pastel, oil, acrylic and water paints, as well as charcoal and canvas.

He said having his first solo exhibition in over ten years in TT is emotional for him because the world has changed a lot since he moved to the US in 1997. But, he believes everyone has a responsibility to the place from which they came.

“I feel like I am coming home so that I can give my little contribution for the larger good of the nation. There is a sense of humility, sharing my vision for TT.”

“I never thought I’d ever migrate so it caught me off-guard. I feel like a castaway. I get jealous when I see people back home creating, doing work and showing. I finally just said to myself, ‘From here on I’m going to have an exhibit at least every two years in Trinidad.’ It has always been my dream.”

He said his last show in TT was in 1997 before he left for graduate school in the US. Smith said exhibiting outside of the Caribbean was not the same. He wants to see what happens when people within his own culture see his work. He wants to hear the responses of the people whose stories he is telling.

“I’m bringing my experiences ‘back to the village,’ coming with a different perspective in terms of the space I left, the experiences I’ve had, and the way I was able to look at my culture, traditions and society from a distance.”

He said not living in TT made him an observer which changed the way he saw the culture. He stopped taking it for granted and further connected with it.

Smith said the exhibition is “a story of becoming” – the journey in attempting to understand his own experiences as an artist, as a Trinidadian, as a Caribbean person, and as a citizen of the world.

The work is based in history, as he believes it is only when people realise where they began that they could move forward and make something of themselves. The exhibit is also an opportunity to return to TT and give its people hope.

“We’ve been through so much trauma recently that if we could just sit down and create



Wendell R Smith working on a mixed-media sculpture

beauty and art, that would be great. I think this is when our society really needs art and creative expression.

“And with everything that is going on right now with crime, I just feel this is the moment, more than anything else, for us to go into the past. Because it was in the past that people understood community, that people had a sense of taking care of each other. So I find my comfort in the past...Of course, not the traumatic past.”

He said many of the pieces has human figures which he tried to give personalities to give a sense of realism and individualism. They mirror a larger cultural and historical framework with some images being characters taken from folklore, the Christian narrative, or ancestral images.

For example, some pieces allude to the First Peoples, colonisation, slavery, pre-independence and the migration of the Indians and Chinese. They show how all kinds of people occupy the small space of TT, creating “an interesting dynamic.”

Though steeped in the past, the pieces also have personal meaning to him.

“There is something that brings all of that together in my work, and it’s Carnival. Carnival

is really the expression of everything for me. Because, growing up, I didn’t go to museums. When I saw visual representations, it was Carnival. I saw colour on the streets.

“So much of my work is about that reference to Carnival, about the performance, about movement, about the drama of colour. It’s about the way in which Carnival expresses the unity and the complexity of TT culture and, by extension, the Caribbean culture.”

At UWI, St Augustine he majored in literature and creative arts. By the time he completed his degree, he had a substantial portfolio of work. He was proud to be trained by Caribbean artists, and that the work he studied supported thought and ideas from the Caribbean perspective when most artists at the time had to go abroad to study at the tertiary level.

He got married after graduate school but returned to TT to complete a two-year residency and taught critical thinking at UWI. He again returned to Savannah College to teach and work as an artist based in Atlanta.

There, he did a number of residency programmes, exhibitions, travelled and wrote for grants, many of which he received.

Shaggy starts new bank to help inmates, people of colour

Shaggy continues to give back in a major way and is urging other artists to also give back.

The Grammy-winning artist recently visited a Michigan prison where he shared words of wisdom and spoke to inmates as part of his philanthropic efforts, and he is sharing that many others can do more. According to Shaggy, he doesn't take his blessings lightly and knows that his fame also brings him the opportunity to do more for his community. According to TMZ, the Jamaican-born Brooklyn-raised former Marine recently visited Genesee County Jail in Michigan, where he spoke to inmates.

Shaggy, who holds an honorary doctorate from Brown University, was invited as the guest speaker at the prison's graduation event called IGNITE, Inmate Growth Naturally and Intentionally Through Education which is partially sponsored by Shaggy's Colour Bank.

According to reports about the artist's appearance, Shaggy co-owns the banking institution Colour Bank which serves people of Caribbean and African descent in America. The bank serves customers who particularly do not have a social security number and are otherwise unable to access banking services.

At the graduation held on November 15, Colour Bank, which supports inmates' access to education and other resources through IGNITE, also ensured that debit cards and accounts were given to 15 inmates who graduated.

Colour Bank's support is all aimed at the prison's program to assist inmates in re-integrating into society and assisting them so they do not re-offend, especially as studies show many ex-convicts find it challenging to return to normal life after jail.

Speaking with TMZ, the artist revealed that Colour Bank provides inmates with financial literacy courses and later financial services, which they need after they begin to work and earn their salaries.

The artist said that he is motivated to help his community and said he drew inspiration from the Notorious B.I.G., who previously spoke about artists having responsibility for the type of music they make, especially when their influence grows as they rise to the top.

The beloved artist is known for his philanthropy, including his annual Shaggy and Friends concert in Jamaica that raises funds to support the Children's Hospital on the island.



Shaggy's Colour Bank provides inmates with financial literacy courses

Saweetie mourns Takeoff

Singer puts aside differences with ex Quavo to pay respects to his nephew

Saweetie might not be on friendly terms with her ex Quavo, but she is showing respect to his nephew Takeoff, who was shot and killed at the beginning of November.

The devastating loss has rocked the hip-hop world, and many are still reeling from the realization that the Migos will never be the same as the brothers grieve their band members and loved ones. While speaking with Complex as she did press runs to promote her EP that was recently released, the rapper reflected on her feelings the moment she found out the rapper was killed.

"It honestly felt so surreal. I feel like the world stopped. He was a wonderful human being," she says as she recalls past moments she spent with Takeoff over the course of her three-year relationship with his uncle Quavo.

The rapper also shared her sympathies with Takeoff's family members. "I mean wonderful, like hella dope. My heart, my condolences go to his family. It's just really surreal. I feel like Hip Hop is in a really eerie state right now."

Saweetie has been criticized recently for her EP 'The Single Life,' which addresses her fling with Lil Baby and even takes shots at Quavo.

In one song, "Don't Say No-

thin," the rapper talks about a mystery man revealing things they did together and says that's what she gets "for kissing frogs," as she also hints at her ex being burned by the idea of her dating another man.

Since she and Quavo broke up in 2021, the Icy Girl rapper has been very quiet about what happened between her and Quavo. The Migos rapper has however been anything but quiet as he threw jabs at Saweetie last month with the release of his song "Messy" off of his debut album with the late Takeoff, Only Built for Infinity Links.

Fans were sure he was speaking about Saweetie as he addressed a line about her interview on Caresha please months ago.

"I said, 'Caresha please' 'cause she too messy (Woo, please)," Quavo raps in the verse.

"Bitch fucked my dawg behind my back, but I ain't stressin' (Not at all)/You wanted the gang, you shoulda just said it, we would have blessed it (You shoulda just said it)," the verse said.

Right before Takeoff was killed, Quavo also teased the music video for the song, which closely resembled the elevator video showing him and Saweetie fighting prior to their breakup.



Saweetie: Takeoff was a wonderful human being



Takeoff: shot and killed in early November

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Venezuelan migrants shine in Trinidad Parang competition

The migrant students of the Langdons Language Institute (LLI) are proud and grateful to have participated in the Junior Parang Competition held on November 19 at St Mary's College, Port of Spain.

In total 29 children of primary and secondary school age went on stage to show their talent.

LLI principal Susan Langdon said they are grateful to the National Parang Association (NPATT) for allowing them to be part of the event.

"It is a pride and satisfaction our migrant children can also be a part of TT's cultural activities," said Langdon. "Since we started the school year in September we decided to participate in this event. We contacted NPATT and they gave us the approval. It is a very good thing for the migrant children and for the locals themselves because of the cultural interaction."

The LLI primary group included 11 children: Nahomy Marcano, Antonella Vasquez, Ashley Velasquez, Daniela Salas, Camila Astudillo, Ana Camila Coronado, Aidany Rojas, Rudy Hurtado, Alexander Trujillo, Carlos Ruiz, and Diego Landaeta.

They were led by music teacher Eduardo Rivas. Their song The Humble Manger earned them second place in their category.

Marcano and Vásquez, both Venezuelans, were the group's solo singers. They also performed traditional Venezuelan Christmas songs: Mi Burrito Sabanero and Nino Lindo.



The migrant students of the Langdons Language Institute

In the secondary school group, 18 students took the stage: Andrea Meza, Juliet Meza, Ziara Meza, Enmanuel Rondon, Isaias Capriata, Apryl Gomez, Dafne Salazar, Jesus Romero, Samuel Herrera, Yolianni Rivas, Genesis Yguanetti, Romari Escobar, Valeria Leon, Michelle Urrieta, Luisdaniel Herrera, Barbara Zapata, Alejandra Parra and Jhoanny Luna, the latter a Dom-

inican, who was the soloist.

They had the support of music teacher Amilcar Marin. They sang Let's Sing with Joy and Joy at Christmas, a song written by Eduardo Rivas himself.

Now, they are preparing for upcoming cultural and sporting events.



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More for the Mouse

Disney Parks just got a whole lot more expensive

Ahead of Disney's 100th anniversary celebration of the company, Walt Disney World and Disneyland increased its prices for its digital trip planner, Disney Genie+, and expedited attraction line service, Lightning Lane.

Effective immediately, both parks' services — which can be found in the MyDisney app — will operate with a variable pricing model based on date of visit and demand. The pricing method, which debuted last year, is designed to enhance the guest experience by allowing visitors to reserve times in advance to visit attractions via Lightning Lane.

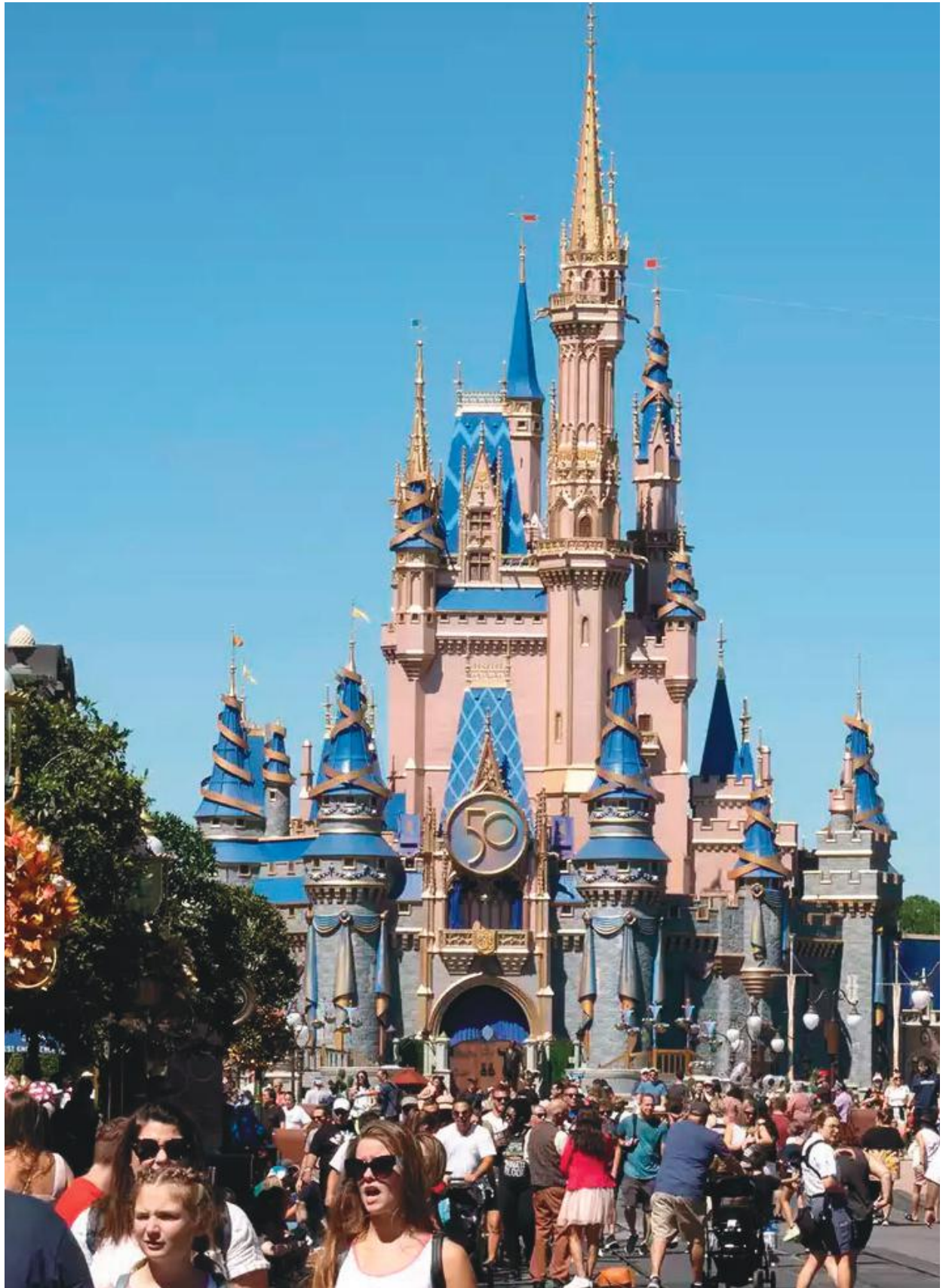
Walt Disney World, which previously offered Disney Genie+ for \$15, now operates on a varying price scale, with dates this month ranging from \$15 to \$22. Guests can visit Disney World's mobile app to view the price of Genie+ on the day of their visit. Select individual Lightning Lane options will also adjust with price increase, depending on date of visit.

The tier model is similar to how Disney prices its theme park tickets.

Disneyland, which previously offered Disney Genie+ for \$20, will now offer the service starting at \$25 per ticket per day. For guests looking to pre-purchase Disney Genie+, they will be able to do so at time of ticket purchase for \$25 per ticket per day. Magic Key holders can purchase Genie+ on the day of visit for a 20% discount.

The price increase does not impact guests that have pre-purchased Disney Genie+ in advance of an upcoming visit. Individual Lightning Lanes for popular attractions, like Rise of the Resistance, will continue to vary by demand and date.

Ticket prices for Disneyland's two theme parks have also increased, with 1-day tickets now ranging from \$104 to \$179, based on the date of visit. As part of the update, a new tier has been introduced marking seven varied pricing tiers. Peak times, such as Christmas and New Year, are priced at the highest tier, \$179. Off peak times, such as most weekdays in January, are priced at



Visiting the Disney Parks just got more expensive

\$104. Multi-day tickets and park hopper add-on have also increased. Disneyland's annual pass program, Magic Key, continues to be on pause for new purchases.

Walt Disney World did not experience a

ticket update.

Price increases at both parks have also gone into effect immediately on food and beverage offerings, including on bottled drinks, snacks, and at some dining locations.

Food and Rum

Barbados festival returns after a 2 year hiatus

The Barbados Food and Rum Festival has returned to the island of the flying fish after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The grand culinary festival, hosted by the Barbados Tourism and Marketing Inc. (BTMI), opened with a traditional street lime at Oistins, Christ Church, Barbados, which saw thousands of persons, including tourists, on hand.

At the Thursday opening, which was given the theme of “Oistins Under the Stars” and ran until the wee hours of Friday, Barbadian chef Greg Greenidge kick-started proceedings by showing live on stage how the Bajan fish cake is prepared. It is made with stripped salt fish in a unique, well-seasoned batter, which is then scooped up and placed into a hot pot of oil, in much the same way pholourie is made.

In addition to the cooking, there was live entertainment and performances by various Bajan artistes as well as mixologists on hand to serve a diverse variety of rum, rum punches and other alcoholic beverages.

A regular tourist to Barbados, Benarva Brown, from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, was at the opening event and praised how the cultural aspects were integrated into the experience.

“I really enjoy the cultural aspect, like the drumming and dancing. Although it’s a rum and food festival, it still shows how they were able to incorporate everything. The setup there at Oistins was very, all the food was very authentic and the rum punches were really good. I love that you can’t really taste the alcohol in the drinks... this entire experience thus far has been really great... I’ve visited Barbados before on numerous occasions but this trip I was able to immerse myself in every single way,” Brown said.

Meanwhile, a first time visitor to the island, Sabrina Diaz, said it had been a great experience, particularly “seeing the people come together where the similar cultures were portrayed” and the food, which she noted was shared in large portions. “The official opening of the festival was amazing, the drums and the dances and the entertainment over all was very thrilling. I’m just really excited for the continuation of the festival.” The young woman, who is from Venezuela but resides in Miami, where she does public relations, also said that she hopes to visit Guyana one day for Mashramani,



A chef serves up some grilled lobster at ‘Oistins Under the Stars’

which she has heard all about.

“So it’s because I won a trip that’s why I’m here and I’m super elated for that cause it has been an experience so far. The food and the rum punches that I had last night (Thursday night) were delicious, the fish was well seasoned and the punches you couldn’t tell that they had alcohol so the mixologists really outdid themselves,” said Sidni Fullerton from Jamaica.

A journalist called Bruno (only name given) from Martinique and who is a frequent visitor to the island explained that his experi-

ence this time around was more “intoxicating and sweet”. Bruno described the food as “well seasoned” but “a bit different” from what he’s accustomed to. “Other than the tasty fishes and other dishes, the rum punches were very good as well, they tasted like normal drinks but we both know it had some rum in there” he added.

Among those in the packed streets of Oistins on Thursday night were visitors from the United States, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Mexico and other counties far from and near to Barbados.

Panther's in the Black

Wakanda Forever sequel to Black Panther now the top box office film

Marvel Studios adventure “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever” brought crowds to movie theaters around the globe over the weekend, selling an estimated \$330 million in tickets and setting a November record in the United States and Canada.

The sequel to 2018 Oscar-nominated blockbuster “Black Panther” racked up roughly \$180 million at domestic theaters Thursday night through Sunday, distributor Walt Disney Co DIS.N said. That marked the highest total ever for a film opening in November, topping the \$158.1 million for 2013 film “The Hunger Games: Catching Fire.”

Outside the domestic market, “Wakanda Forever” pulled in an estimated \$150 million from its release date to three days later. It ranked as the top-grossing Hollywood release in all markets.

The results provided a boost to movie theaters, which have struggled to return to pre-pandemic levels of ticket sales. The domestic total ranked as the No. 13 movie debut of all time.

“One of the top 15 openings of all time tells me the box office is pretty healthy when there is something audiences want to see,” said Jeff Bock, senior media analyst at Exhibitor Relations Co. “Marvel time and time again offers something audiences want to see.”

The original “Black Panther,” starring Chadwick Boseman as King T’Challa, broke ground as the first superhero movie with a pre-



Wakanda Forever topped the box office openings in November

dominantly Black cast. The film took in \$1.3 billion at worldwide box offices over its run and became the only superhero movie ever nominated for best picture at the Academy Awards.

Marvel had to rework “Wakanda Forever” after Boseman died of cancer in 2020 just before filming was supposed to begin.

The studio decided not to cast another actor in the role of T’Challa. Instead, writer and director Ryan Coogler crafted a new film that centers around T’Challa’s younger sister Shuri (Letitia Wright), his mother Queen Ramonda (Angela Bassett) and other women who step up to help lead the grieving nation.

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The Chef Sagajo Experience

A taste of Trinidad & Tobago delights palates in Florida

Blue ribbon chef Debbie Wilson-Berment, known in culinary circles as ‘Chef Sagajo’ has been shaking up the South Florida scene with her flavourful dishes since she and her family moved to the Sunshine State.

As a melting pot of nationalities and cultures, Florida is famous for its international cuisine but there’s plenty of room for Berment who brings years of knowledge, experience and a burning passion for food to the table. Whether she’s cooking for a private country club or for her personal clients, the result is always the same – meals that are a delight for the senses. Berment is a living testament to the saying that if you love what you do, you’ll never work a day in your life. Food in all its forms fascinates her so much that being a chef feels less like work and more like a lifestyle. To say that Berment loves turning raw ingredients into mouth-watering treats for the tastebuds would be an understatement.

She first learned to cook out of necessity. As the eldest of three siblings Berment was often drafted to help her mother in the kitchen. Looking back on her childhood years she spent between St James and Woodbrook, Berment could say without a moment’s hesitation that her culinary training began at the age of nine.

She could not have asked for a better instructor, since her mother Alma Wilson had her own catering business and was so good at what she did that she won several culinary competitions – even beating trained hotel chefs from all over the country at their own game. Although her mother had employees, Berment wasn’t content to simply sit back, watch and enjoy the fruits of their labour. Instead, she was her mother’s sous chef, her little helper. “I was intrigued, I just loved working with food,” says Berment who recalls helping her mother make rosettes out of icing for her famous wedding cakes. By the time she was 16, it was clear that the apple didn’t fall far from the tree; Berment was already making a name for herself in the catering world, doing orders and baking cakes for her friends’ birthday parties.

She later migrated to Canada before moving with her husband and children to the warmer temperatures of Palm Beach County. Settling down in Florida was a game changer. As a chef, it opened up a whole new world of possibilities; she was exposed to truffles, truffle oil, lemon oil



Debbie Wilson-Berment: cooking up a storm of Trinidadian delights in Florida

and other exotic ingredients that at the time were not accessible in T&T. ‘Working with all those different ingredients was a thrilling experience because they are what make a dish stand out,’ she says. But if Berment wanted to make it in the culinary world in the US, she had to rely on more than her own skills – it didn’t matter to Americans that she could cook well, she had to be qualified. So she went to culinary school, which changed the way she approached food and redefined in her mind what it meant to be a chef. Since then she’s been offering her clients an elevated dining experience. ‘I took what I learned at culinary school and combined it with the different flavours we cook with as Trinidadians. I’m very proud of my Trinidadian roots and I can definitely say that my cuisine is a lot more flavourful than others,’ she says with a wink.

Berment specialises in Mediterranean, Italian and Greek cuisine. Some classic dishes require her to stick to the rules, for instance traditional meals that call for port and wine hardly go well with a strong seasoning like cha-

don beni, but when it comes to seafood like roasted snapper, Berment adds her own Caribbean twist before putting it on the flame. ‘People are often surprised that a meal that they are used to making, can taste so different yet so delicious.’ Culinary school also taught Berment the importance of plating and presentation – after all, we eat with our eyes first. A meal of rice and curry shrimp may sound straightforward enough, but it becomes a work of art – almost too pretty to eat, under Berment’s skillful direction. ‘Regardless of whether I’m plating for four or for one, when I bring a plate out to someone, I like to see their eyes pop. That’s special.’ Berment has enjoyed a few culinary adventures over the years. She worked at one of the finest country clubs in Florida and was the first to introduce bread pudding with raisins soaked in rum, to the club’s members. She also taught culinary arts at the West Boca Raton High School and was able to introduce her mother’s recipes for hops, sada roti and fried bake to her American students, many of whom had never tried Trinbagonian cuisine, up to that point.



2022 Wishlist

from
Phoenix Paws & Claws Rescue
& Sanctuary

Who are we? We are a safe haven and transitional space for a wide variety of domestic animals, exotic pets and wildlife. We handle wildlife emergencies, help rescuers house and foster animals. We specialise in ongoing and long term care of turtles, tortoises and neo tropical wildlife and exotic animals.

This intergenerational project has been ongoing for the past 70 years with Aleeyah as Founder / President of the Foundation for 23 years.
The name Phoenix Paws & Claws was recently made public.

All funds collected will go towards facility upgrades for the animals.

2022 Wishlist

- Chainlink Fencing
- Green Coated 1/4" x 1/4" wire
- Gravel
- Cement
- Animal crates: wire or plastic
- Ply Wood
- Paint
- 6 yards blue stone

Donations

Donations from outside of Trinidad & Tobago
Paypal through www.gogetfunding.com

Cash donations in T&T

The Foundation for Heritage Preservation
and Legacy Creation
First Citizens Bank - West Court
Chequing Account 2838003

For More Info, Contact Aleeyah @ (868) 758 1823



A very bad bet

Drake loses \$2 million on a UFC championship fight

Drake took a big loss on Saturday night and lost \$2 million in a UFC fight. The rapper is known for his outlandish sports betting and gambling, and while he often wins the prize, his luck ran out on Saturday.

Drake made the seven figures bet on his friend middleweight champion Israel Adesanya who went up against Alex Pereira on Saturday night at the UFC 281 match held at New York's Madison Square Garden on November 12.

Drizzy, who has a deal with sports betting company Stake, had shared on Saturday night that he had taken a break from his betting, but he had planned to "stack" up as he shared his hopes of winning the bet.

Drake's \$2 million bet would have only brought him \$2.9 million had he won the intense fight that saw Pereira dealing Adesanya a TKO during the 5th round. This is also a break in his winning streak with Adesanya, whom he previously betted and won \$1 million back in July when Adesanya defeated Jared Cannonier at UFC 276.

In the meantime, Drake is still winning, at least when it comes to music. On November 13, the rapper's joint album with 21 Savage- 'Her Loss' earned the biggest streaming week for a collaboration album in US history with 513 million streams.

The album also on Sunday debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 chart, with the biggest week for an R&B/hip-hop set in 2022 and the fourth-largest streaming week ever for any album. According to Billboard, the album's Billboard 200 debut at the number one spot comes with 404,000 equivalent album units earned in the US, with the majority of it coming from streaming activity.

The album has received mixed reviews and has brought its share of controversy, including lyrics fans thought were referring to the shooting of Megan Thee Stallion.

Drake and 21 Savage were also slapped with a temporary injunction after Vogue's owner Conde Nast, who filed a lawsuit against the rappers for using its copyrights in a fake publicity stunt to promote the project.



Losing \$2 million: Drake reacts ringside to the defeat of Israel Adesanya

The Birthing Goddess

Ex-Diplomat promotes joy of natural, painfree childbirth

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.

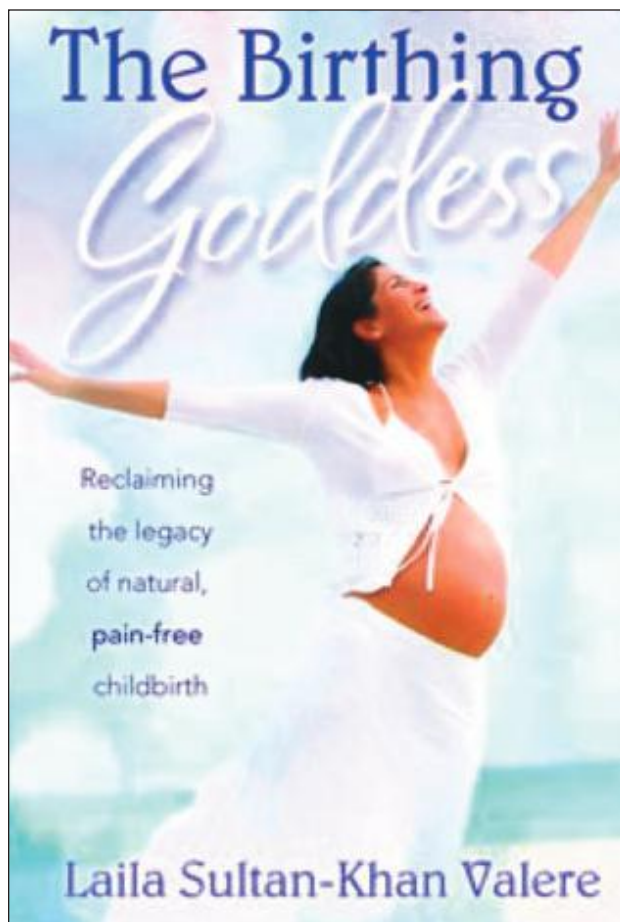
For years, she had longed for a second daughter—a fourth child, but had given up trying after having suffered a miscarriage. She had focused her energy on nurturing her first three children and on pursuing her Masters in Psychology at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She had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



Laila Valere's new book on birthing

homes in Trinidad. Despite having attended childbirth education classes, those birthing experiences 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 hypno-

therapy (guided relaxation and intense concentration to resolve issues like anxiety and stress) and meditation, Valere trained her birthing muscles 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.

BeenieMan slams promoters

Dancehall King upset over high-priced tickets at Uganda show

King of Dancehall, Beenie Man, was not pleased with a Ugandan promoter for hosting an event many called classist as the overpriced tickets targeted only the upper echelon of the country.

The promoters from Top Boy Entertainment are being blamed for overpricing concert tickets resulting in a very low turnout which seems to have also embarrassed Beenie Man and led to the artist criticizing the event.

According to news reports from Uganda, the legendary Jamaican deejay arrived in Uganda in early November for a concert to be held on Nov 10. at Lugogo Cricket Oval alongside a list of international artists, including Nigerian Oxlade Official and South African entertainers Focalistic, Mellow, and Sleazy.

The event, promoted by Top Boy Entertainment, saw just a few hundred people despite the event capacity being in the thousands. There are reports that the promoters failed to market the event, while persons online said the event was overpriced. Ugandans chose to attend cheaper events happening that same weekend in Kampala.

“The Beenie Man flop wasn’t a case of bad marketing or marketeers. Problem was the price, and lets not pretend it’s rocket science. There’s literally been a concert at these venues every other week. In a struggling economy. Something had to give. And many more shows will,” one person said online.

Another said, “Really wanted to go for it then i checked out the price at the gate n it was 150k there n then I changed my mind ...even early bird was 100k...wth was that.”

“Now they’re blaming it on others. U can’t make a concert of 150k ordinary in just a few days u think money is just got from trees like leaves?” a third person added.

According to a Kampala news outlet report, the event charged 150,000 Ugandan shillings and was marketed as a VIP and VVIP concert. That’s about USD 40.16 and above what the ordinary middle class could spend.

Beenie Man, who performed at the event for just about an hour, was also not pleased, and at the end of his set, the artist addressed the promoters for the blatant classism.



Beenie Man on stage in Uganda

“What I want to do is a show for the nation. Now the next promoter call me with a show like this, I’m gonna tell him where to stuff it,” the artist says.

“The show was good, the audience is nice but I need to sing songs for the nation. I need to sing for the nation, am I lying?” the artist asked the crowd.

“We need to sing for the rich, we need to sing for the poor, we need to sing for the have-nots,” an appalled Beenie man said.

The artist who comes from humble begin-

nings also added, “Mek me tell you something, a poor man with a voice will get an ear, and once him get ears, him get two so him become an important person, do not look down on people, always look up.”

Beenie Man has been traveling to Uganda over the last 13 years, and there are reports that this is the first time he has experienced a sparsely attended event. Nevertheless, Beenie had a great time in the country and those fans who attended the show says it was a good performance from the Doc.

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Prison threats against Kartel

A spokesman for Vybz Kartel is alleging that the artist's life could be in danger as a prison warden has threatened to kill the artist.

On Sunday, the spokesman, who asked to remain anonymous, said that the family of the deejay fears for his life and have now called on his lawyer to reach out to Tower Street prison officials about the latest allegation.

Attorney-at-law Isat Buchanan, who represents Vybz Kartel, has been instructed to speak to prison officials.

Kartel's management alleges that Tommy Lee Sparta (who is currently serving a three-year sentence for illegal possession of a firearm) was beaten up while in prison and the same artists have now threatened Vybz Kartel.

The source alleges that since Vybz Kartel was moved to GP in September following an interview revealing that he and his fiancée were engaged, the "Romping Shop" artist has been harassed by prison wardens.

"Ever since Kartel came to gp on September 30, the officers have been searching his cell non-stop and saying that his soldier(Tommy Lee) dis dem. And a feem fat a fry Kartel," the source revealed.

The latest incident occurred on Thursday, Nov 9. where tensions rose after a broken cell phone was found within the area where Vybz Kartel is housed, and wardens sought to blame Kartel.

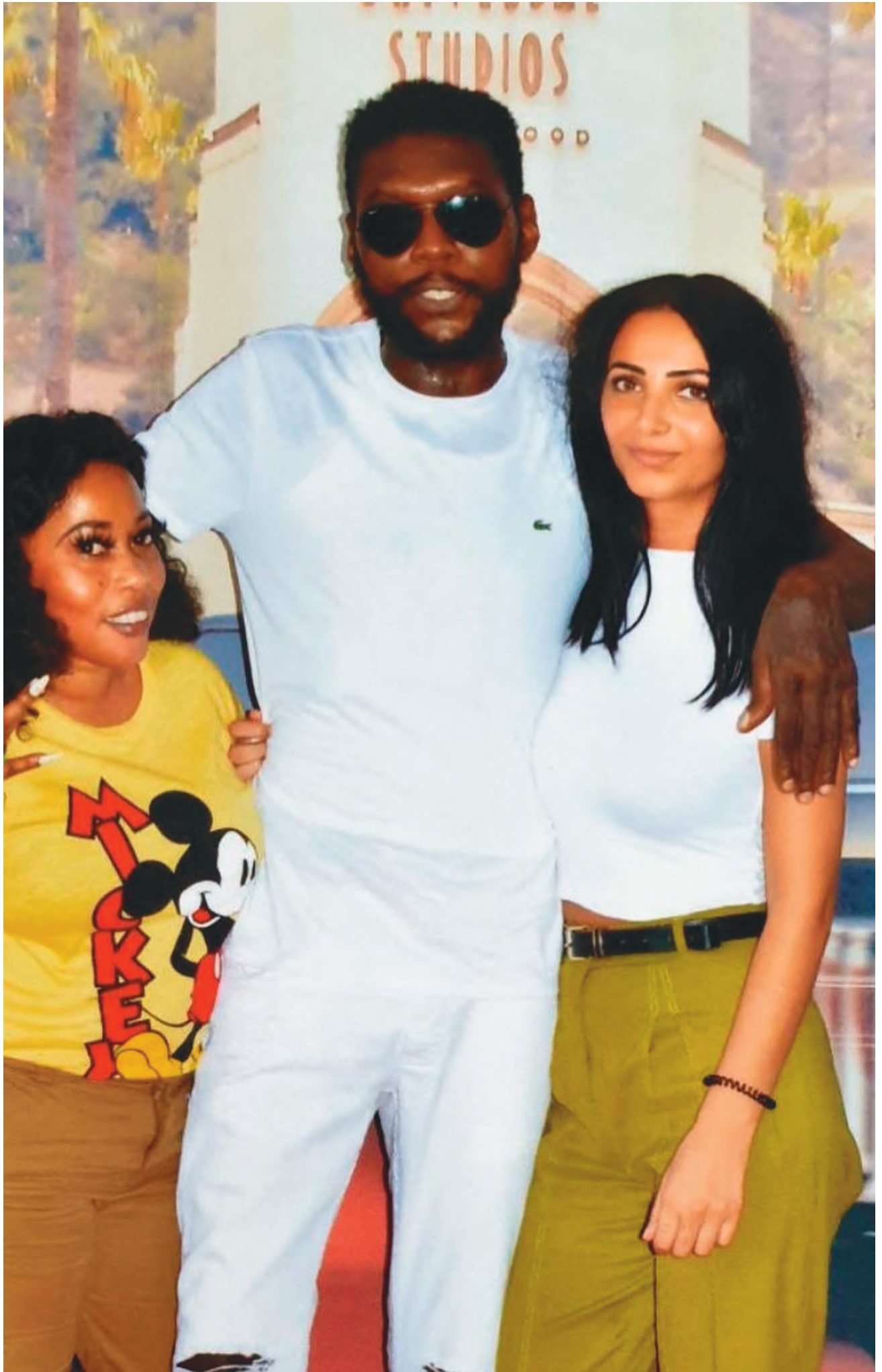
"The officers found a broken cell phone on the block where Kartel [is] located and accused the DJ of being the owner of the phone and telling him that 'a dis him dis warden fi a bruk up phone'," the source revealed.

On Sunday morning, a warden, now identified by Kartel's management as an officer by the name of Reid, got into a verbal confrontation with Kartel and later threatened the deejay's life.

"[Reid] told Kartel that he acting like is him run [the] prison and this is not road... Kartel and him have a verbal altercation when Mr Reid told Kartel that he will kill him and nothing don't come out of it. After which Kartel told him 'ya fi owe me dat! Matter of fact me a go make me lawyer know'"

The artist's management team is calling on the authorities to investigate the alleged harassment by the warden and the threats from staff officer Reid.

Kartel's lawyer has declined to comment



Vybz Kartel with fans before his imprisonment

until he has spoken to his client. The artist is presently awaiting the outcome of his criminal con-

viction appeal at Jamaica's highest court of appeal, the Privy Council in England.

The awakening

Keshav releases new album Remains after four years

AFTER the success of his recent EP, *Attraction*, producer and now singer/songwriter Keshav has released his debut vocal album – *Remains*.

Keshav, full name Keshav Chandradath Singh, is half of the production duo Jus Now, which has created timeless soca hits. In addition, his music has been featured on ads for Nike, Apple, *Fast and Furious*, and he has played at festivals including Glastonbury Festival in England and Tomorrowland in Belgium.

He has worked with artistes like Major Lazer, Stylo G, Busy Signal, Machel Montano and Bunji Garlin.

But in 2022, he began focusing on singing and songwriting.

Coincidentally, he says, his 12-song pop album was released on November 18, exactly four years after he began working on it.

In a press release, he said the album "coincides with (his) realisation that love is not something anyone can bring to you, and no matter who you experience it with, it always remains."

The press release said the song stems from his experiencing the "full circle of a relationship, from beginning to end and beyond.

"I met someone that inspired a wide range of emotions, and I woke up one day and decided to start recording these records every day for over two years, away from the studio in my own living space."

He wrote, produced, mixed and mastered every song on the album, which will be released on his record label, Heavy Drumz.

"It started with reactionary observations on love but ended up culminating in an inevitably inward journey."

He also said work is already under way on his second album, adding that he hopes to release a remix album of *Remains* on which he can work with his colleagues in the music industry.

"(I am) super-gassed to be able to show the world what I really feel as an artiste in a way that feels truer to myself than ever before."

He said it represents an "awakening" and the process forced him to "look inward more than ever before.

"It's something that speaks from deep within me."

He added: "I wrote 45 songs right before



Keshav: worked on album for 4 years before releasing it

and during the pandemic in a period where I experienced the full circle of a relationship from beginning to end and beyond. I met someone that inspired a wide range of emotions, and I woke up one day and decided to start recording these records every day for over two years, away from the studio, in my own living space," he said.

Working on his own project after years of producing for others was challenging for the producer and musician.

"I usually work closely with collaborators but I found it imperative that I produce, play, write, mix and master the entire project. Experiencing some inexplicable challenges during the process, I even paralysed one of my vocal chords, which left me unable to speak properly, let alone sing, for three months."

Keshav plans to tour internationally in countries such as India, the UK, US, Canada and Trinidad to promote his album.

Lights, action, Lumina!

Canadian-Trini director enters the science fiction arena

Trinidadian-born Canadian film director Gino McKoy released his new film *Lumina*, in Los Angeles last month, which explores the adventure of a man in search of his girlfriend who disappeared in a flash of light.

McKoy explained that this science fiction film takes the protagonist Alex and his three friends deep into the desert where they encounter life-changing truths.

"I wanted to examine how it would affect certain individuals psychologically, if they had someone or a significant other disappear or be abducted by aliens and I spoke to Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), which is basically the alien network, and they have a lot of people who claim to have been abducted and experienced this type of phenomenon."

McKoy said no viewer will experience a dull moment while watching the film as it's science fiction that touches on the psychological impact of having a loved one disappear.

He said, "You should also expect to see some comedy, action, and even a love story. There's an underlying love story because the movie is about a man looking for his loved one."

Lumina was filmed in Marrakech, Morocco and this decision was highlighted by the country's business paper *L'Economiste* for restarting film production there. This comes as there was an 18-month dry spell with no production or job opportunities in the country. McKoy added that his movie was shot during the covid19 pandemic with nationwide curfews being in place to prevent the rise of infections.

Aside from *Lumina*, McKoy was working on rewriting the script for *Spidersweb*, another science fiction film that he wanted to personalise with his love for the genre and action.

"This story was originally written by Michael Sloan, creator of the *Equalizer* TV series and feature films *Equalizer* – parts one and two – with actor Denzel Washington. I rewrote this script which has more science fiction and action. It's now in pre-production and I will also be directing this movie."

Science fiction is his comfort as this has



Director Gino McKoy, right, with actor Eric Roberts, centre, and Badr Balafrej

been an interest of his since he was a child and now he gets to share his interest with all who are willing.

"Writing science fiction is a big thing for me. That's my first love. I grew up watching *Star Wars* which was a big inspiration to me as a child. Reading *Star Wars* books at the age of three. My mum, Lynda McKoy, even has tape recordings. I always wanted to do science fiction and I always wanted to do something that was unique. That inspired me to write this screenplay and shoot this particular movie."

Not only was he inspired by the *Star Wars*

franchise, he also credits films such as *Predator*, *Bladerunner* and *Alien* for his interest. McKoy told *Sunday Newsday* that *Lumina* was only given life after he wrote his first ever feature film script – *Little Mizz Innocent*.

McKoy said some of his major milestones include signing his first music publishing deal with BMG Rights Management in Germany and a worldwide sub-distribution deal with Sony Music.

As for *Lumina*, he said he is anxious for the worldwide release.

"I want the world to see it and hear it."

Ready to conquer the World

Miss World TT Ache (pronounced Ashay) Abrahams expects that a number of people may be having a problem with the pronunciation and spelling of her name, but she has come to terms with it.

"I used to be really embarrassed because of that. My first name has a Yoruban origin and it means 'so shall it be' similar to 'amen.' It's a word of affirmation. It also has a lot of metaphysical meaning and it is used in many cultures around the world. But to summarise it, it means 'authority and power.' So I found the might to enjoy it, to really embrace it, and it's almost like every time you say my name there's a prayer that you're saying," she said.

Abrahams, 23, said her interest in the Miss World pageant was sparked when she realised, as the country's ambassador, she'd be able to make an impact and encourage positive change in society, especially when it comes to mental health.

"That is what stood out to me, because it's more than just appearance. Now, going forward, I am Miss TT. That is a privilege. It really is."

She recalled entering her first pageant, Miss Beauty Plus, at age 14. But, she said, she dropped out when her insecurities got the better of her.

"I didn't believe in myself and the pageant director came up to me and she said, 'You could have won.'"

Abrahams said she just couldn't picture herself winning, but now that she's been crowned Miss World TT she is embracing her 14-year-old self and letting her know that she's "the bomb."

Abrahams said one of her objectives when entering the Miss World pageant was to use it as a launching pad for her Safe Space project – a cause created with her 14-year-old self in mind, and as a way to support young people who feel the way she felt at that age.

"It was through my own journey to mental health recovery that I realised the importance of it, because it's easy to judge how I look, what my parents do or my confidence now, and not be aware of how I was feeling when I was a teenage girl. And as many of us have experienced, I'm sure, it's not easy for us in a world that we live in to feel that we aren't the prettiest, that we aren't the most popular and so many negative thoughts. For me, I've realised that I had to change that narrative within myself to be in the position that I am now, and I've successfully done that and I'm happy I've done that."

She said it's now her time to teach others to do the same and explained that the idea behind Safe Space is to help people to tap into their cognitive abilities, and help them focus on the functions of the mind, including how people feel and how they function in society.

"We use the aerobathon (a marathon effort of non-stop fitness fun) because tapping into your physical health has a direct impact on your mental health, so it was nice to get the com-



Miss World TT Ache Abrahams

munity involved."

Abrahams said one little girl who participated and won many of the activities on her own, was also one of her biggest supporters.

"Funny enough, there's a little girl who came with her mother to the aerobathon that I had in the La Seiva community. I promised her 'if I win the crown, I will come back and show you it.' Her mother told me the night of the pageant she kept asking, 'Mum, did she win? Did she win?'...this week I'll go up and she'll see the crown and maybe put it on..to know that it's possible because we came from the same small community and she can do exactly what I did."

She said the thing about winning pageants is that young people, especially girls, tend to look up to you.

"I'm from Maracas Valley, and I can see their (young girls) eyes filled with hope that they can do it (be winners) too, and I'm encouraging them to try because it's an amazing opportunity."

She said she takes her responsibility of getting people to truly experience TT through her very seriously and she will be training her hardest to accomplish this.

"Hopefully I can go out there and do my best and show them what we have."

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