



UNION of JAMAICAN ALUMNI ASSOCIATIONS U.S.A., Inc.
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Over Two Decades of ~ Dedication ~ Commitment ~ Service

EDUCATION IS EMPOWERMENT, ONLY THE EDUCATED ARE FREE

2017 – 2018 PRESIDENT’S REPORT

Annual General Meeting

12 September 2018

To say that this has been a phenomenal year for UJAA would be an understatement. That is not to say that it has been a year without challenges. Rather, it has been a year of growth, development, learning, collaboration and change.

We began our 2017 – 2018 year by implementing a major Bylaws change that saw us electing the Directors for our Board of Directors. This year, we will elect our Officers. While this continues to allow for change on our Board each year, we are hopeful that this new approach will allow for the leadership development that is essential for growing and sustaining our union. As is the role of all conscientiously managed organizations, we will monitor and evaluate over time and adjust, if necessary, accordingly.

We began our fiscal year with a record 53 member organizations strong. I believe this growth is reflective of UJAA’s record of performance for our members in our communities and our schools. Many thanks to the Membership team, led by UJAA’s Corresponding Secretary Sharon Wilson, for your efforts in helping us to maintain our focus on communicating and engaging with our members through our weekly emails, our website, as well as Facebook and Twitter. With the help of our Membership and Public Relations teams, we are doing a better job of sharing our good works. While this is indeed a very positive development, it increases our collective responsibility to maintain this standard of achievement. The bar has been reset. Our work has been cut out for us!

In addition to our growth, this year marked a year of several new initiatives, expansion of previous projects, and the continuation of others.

New Initiatives:

Under the category of new initiatives, we created:

- A Primary Schools Team – who have focused on the development of their school communities.
- A Technical Schools Confab – for discussion and collaboration on the development of these schools, particularly as it relates to STEM.
- An Organizational Development Team – to develop training and information for growing and sustaining our member organizations.
- A Leadership Development Team – to develop training and information on being the effective leaders that our organizations need.
- An Alumni Recruitment Team – to develop strategies for sustaining the membership in our organizations.

Also, under the category of new initiatives, we:

- Held our first-in-a-very-long-time New Year’s Eve Ball.

- Collaborated with the Alliance of Jamaican Alumni Associations, our sister alumni umbrella organization in Canada, to have our members participate in their Emerging Global Leaders Program. This program provided leadership training for 30 high school students from across Jamaica and included – for the first time - 3 students from Toronto, Canada. This program has the potential for bringing our children together – from Jamaica, from here in the USA, from Canada and from the UK – for a unique leadership development opportunity. I am excited about the possibilities that this program may provide. I hope that we will consider not only our continued but perhaps expanded support in years to come.
- Joined forces with the Advisory Board Member of the Jamaica Diaspora Northeast to host a Community of Practice meeting aimed at sharing best practices among the many Jamaica Diaspora organizations. We shared and learned much more than any one of us anticipated.
- Supported the Jamaica Diaspora Education Task Force in the staging of this year’s Education Summit which, this time, brought teachers to the USA to visit and observe basic, elementary, secondary, specialized and tertiary institutions. This Summit also brought together the Alumni umbrella organizations from around the globe - Alliance of Jamaican Alumni Associations (Canada), Jamaican Alumni Associations – UK (United Kingdom), Coalition of Jamaican Alumni Associations of Florida (South Florida, USA), Jamaica Alumni Associations of High Schools (Jamaica), and UJAA - together for the first time to begin the process of sharing that is essential for the continued enhancement of our work in support of education in Jamaica.

These new initiatives bore real results. For example, under the leadership of Director Ansell Williams, who joined the UJAA Board in 2017, we saw a new focus on the inclusion for our Primary Schools member organizations. The eight-member Primary Schools Team collaborated to develop and implement training for primary school teachers on how boys and girls learn differently. “The Gender Lens” as the training was called was delivered by The Gurian Institute which had done similar work in Jamaica for Kingston College. Although the training was very well received, it reflects only a beginning. I look forward to hearing more from this team regarding how we can grow this initiative for the benefit of our primary school teachers and our young students.

The Primary Schools Team also led an initiative to extend invitations to UJAA to be the keynote speaker at their schools’ commencement ceremonies. As a result, I was invited to speak at the school closing programs of four primary schools and one high school. It was indeed an exciting opportunity. I am hopeful that this initiative served to ensure that more of Jamaica is aware of UJAA and our work. More importantly, I am also hopeful that my message to our young people was memorable, inspiring, yet practical. Time will tell!

Although not a financial success, our New Year’s Eve Ball had the unexpected but enormous outcome of affording us the opportunity to document – in print – the accomplishments of each of us, as well as all of us - as UJAA. Most of us have little concept of the magnitude of our work, our collective results and our impact on our schools and our country. So, congratulations to each of you for your commitment and dedication – no matter the pain and angst – to your organizations, and thus to your schools, and our island home.

The Organizational Development, Leadership Development and Alumni Recruitment teams are an outgrowth of our Presidents’ Roundtable which is now in its 3rd year. The Roundtable has proven to be an important event on the UJAA Calendar since it has allowed us to come together in a structured, but

informal way – to discuss, to share, to get to know each other. In addition to the presentations shared on “Being a 501c3 Organization” and “Organizational Development,” we had several special guests this year including our Consul General of Jamaica to NY - Trudy Deans, the Editor-In-Chief of The Jamaica Gleaner – Garfield Grandison, Advisory Board Member for the Jamaica Diaspora Northeast – Akelia Lawrence-Maitland, Dr. Jarvis Sulcer who shared his vision for a STEM Enrichment Program for our high school students in Jamaica, and others. It is thought that the Roundtable has helped to spawn many new collaborative initiatives between our member organizations. We’re teaming. Together Everyone Achieves More – in concrete, tangible and intangible ways. With your continued support and active participation, I remain hopeful that this forum will reap real rewards for us as UJAA as well as for each of you.

Growth Initiatives:

Under the banner of growth, in the past year, we:

- Expanded our role as a stakeholder with the National Education Inspectorate by donating twelve tablets to the Inspectors for use in their field observations.
- Expanded our support of The Math Club’s MLK Jr. Day Mathematics Competition.
- Expanded our support for Team Jamaica Bickle as they faced new financial challenges.
- In addition to our continued support of *FIRST* Technology Challenge – which is expanding to include a competition in Jamaica in 2019, we expanded our support of Robotics in Jamaica by providing financial support to the Red Spring Robotics Competition – a collaboration of schools in Red Hills and Constant Spring, St. Andrew - to expose our students to the wonders of Robotics and competition.

As a stakeholder of Jamaica’s NEI, we cemented our commitment to their work with our tablet donation. We remain firm in our belief that the independent observations of this team provide meaningful information and direction to the Education Leaders in Jamaica, the administrators of our schools and to each of us. Our efforts in support of our schools, then, must be consistent with the recommendations of the NEI so that our schools can consistently and effectively grow and develop. As a guest of the NEI at their recent Annual Staff Retreat, I asked that they evaluate the hypothesis that schools with strong alumni associations exhibit stronger performance – in academics, in athletics, in national citizenship. They have agreed to evaluate this hypothesis, so we look forward to their results in the upcoming years.

Our involvement in The Math Club’s MLK Jr. Day Mathematics Competition has proven to be important opportunity for UJAA and its members. The competition was expanded from one borough (The Bronx) to 3 boroughs of New York (adding Queens and Brooklyn) this year. This resulted in a tripling our resources – financial and human – to support this program. I am enormously proud of you - UJAA – for not only agreeing to the additional allocation of funds, but also to stepping forward to provide the human capital needed to execute the program. This program provides numerous benefits:

- It allows the reinforcement of our goal to enhance the develop of STEM.
- It affords us the opportunity to support the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King who encouraged our support of education and the development of character, and
- It underscores our commitment to our communities and students here in the New York area.

My sincere thanks to each of you that participated in the Math Club Program and look forward to your engagement and support in 2019.

Continued Initiatives:

Our commitment to a long list of programs and events continues.

As we heard earlier this evening, our Team Jamaica's performance at the *FIRST* Global Robotics Competition in Mexico City was indeed a highlight – for Jamaica, our participating schools, our alumni associations and all of us – UJAA. Again, this project underscores the opportunities available to our students, and their capacity – as well as ours – to step up! This opportunity does come with a growing cost, however. We will need to get creative to ensure our ability to continue to support this project in the years to come when they likely travel to places as far as Australia or South Africa.

This year, we continued our support of Industry Cove Basic School in Cousins Cove, Hanover with school supplies, a computer and printer, paper, ink and Friday School uniforms. We have committed to ensuring the improvements necessary to ensure that our school is certified by the Early Childhood Commission. I am hopeful that this will become a reality in 2019.

We also continued our support of Operation Restoration Christian School in Trench Town which we have supported in multiple ways over the past 20+ years. In addition to a visit to New York by Principal Robert Dixon last Fall, we continued our donations to the school in the form of school supplies, supplies for their modified "Tuck Shop," and included the ORCS teachers in any and all training opportunities. ORCS has been referred to as an example of community unification through education. This model is to be utilized in other communities – particularly in Kingston – to help guide our children towards education, and to provide the added support needed to lift our citizens out of poverty. We can expect to hear more about these developments in the months to come, along with opportunities for us – collectively – to impact our people, and our country.

Our Education team, under the leadership of UJAA Director Karlene Largie, continued their work on our Water Tanks Project. In November, we gave thanks at our Annual Service of Thanksgiving. In March, we administered our 21st Annual Mega Raffle with thirty participating organizations and raised over \$270,000. In June, UJAA Director Natasha Davids led our 28th Annual High School Graduate Awards Program which allowed us to distribute \$15,000 to our children of Jamaican Heritage. We sponsored our 5th Annual Penn Relays Bus Excursion which continues to be a favorite of us all as well as our families and friends and was a financial success.

Our Public Relations team, under the leadership of UJAA Assistant Treasurer Wilbert Davis, despite some challenges, is firmly in place and we're seeing and feeling the results. We created and shared numerous Press Releases, supported several community organizations with tickets and/or journal ads, afforded you the opportunity to participate in the many community festivals, and purchased promotional materials that allow us to spread the UJAA brand while creating good will.

In 2018, UJAA was recognized by Carl B. Moxie's Wake Up Radio and by Operation Restoration Christian School. We can and should be proud and thankful for this public acknowledgement of our efforts over the past 28 years.

In closing, allow me to extend special thanks to Natasha Davids – for hosting our Executive Board Meetings in her dining room almost every month. Fiscal Year 2017 – 2018 has been a busy, but productive and rewarding one. As I complete my second term as your President, I am grateful for the support of a phenomenal leadership team in this year's Executive Board. We worked hard. We didn't

always agree. But we were a formidable TEAM who shared the load and worked to advance education in Jamaica. Thank you!

My sincere thanks also to the member organizations who attended our meetings - particularly our Presidents' Roundtables, who invited UJAA to celebrate your dinner dances and reunions with you, and for your feedback and your support. Please know that I respect your commitment to your schools, your organizations and UJAA, and welcome – always - your suggestions. We've been toiling for 28 years. As we begin our 29th and as we consider the challenges of our schools, our island home as well as those of our Diaspora, I ask you continue your efforts while we step up our game, and to join me in affirming our belief that: "Education is Empowerment; Only the Educated are Free."

Respectfully submitted,

Lesleyann Samuel

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President
12 September 2018