

Four judges sworn into office Tuesday

The Observer



KINGSTON, Jamaica (JIS) — Four judges were sworn into office yesterday during a ceremony held at King’s House. Taking the oath of office were: Frank Williams and Carol Edwards, who will serve as Judges of the Appeal Court; Carolyn Tie, who will serve as Puisne Judge in the Supreme Court; and

Stephane Jackson Haisley, who will act as Master- in-Chambers.

Deputy Governor-General, Steadman Fuller, who presided over the swearing-in ceremony, congratulated the judges on their appointments and urged them to continue to protect the legitimacy and integrity of the judicial system.

“These appointments speak to the hard work that these judges have done over the years and is the basis on which (you) have been called upon to continue serving,” he noted.

He also congratulated Chief Justice Zaila McCalla, on her recent appointment as Honorary Bencher of the Middle Temple Inn in London, England, in recognition of her contribution to the law in Jamaica.

He said the Chief Justice's appointment along with the new designation of the judges "reflects the fact that strides are being made within our judicial system, irrespective of the challenges." The Chief Justice, in extending her congratulations to the appointees, said their roles are important in ensuring an efficient and fair judicial process.

"Judges are not selected merely by seniority but also on their proven track record of high standards of performance," she pointed out.

The Chief Justice implored them to ensure that justice "is seen to be done in all circumstances" and to continue to exhibit the high standard of professionalism and dedication that is required and that they have demonstrated in the past.

Attorneys To Stone Dogs!

The Gleaner

I felt it for Ms Sashakay Fairclough when I read her distressing column, 'Are degrees failing Jamaica?', published in The Gleaner on Wednesday, March 23. She's an attorney who discovered much too late in her career that the market for lawyers in Jamaica is oversaturated. Too many competing for too few jobs!

We are a contentious people, always taking each other to court. Even so, we don't need all the lawyers we keep churning out each year. Thanks to the University of the West Indies, the University of Technology and the British universities offering overseas degrees, we now have attorneys to stone dogs.

I almost fell into that lawyer trap. As an assistant professor of English at a small private college in New England in the 1970s, I was tempted to abandon literature for law. I got into Georgetown Law, my first choice. But that summer, I was offered a job at the University of the West Indies, Mona. I decided to come home. And I've never regretted it.

IMPECCABLE LOGIC

If Ms Fairclough has her way, people like me would no longer have a job in the humanities. And, perhaps, she's right. We need only 'useful' professions in Jamaica. As she puts it, "Medical, engineering and scientific careers should be encouraged, but political studies, music, history, media and the rest are all a waste of time, as so many are painfully finding out."

Literature doesn't even get a mention. It's part of the unspecified wasteful "rest". Ms Fairclough's logic is impeccable. Going to university is no guarantee of getting a job. So why take out expensive loans to fund an education that's nothing but a waste of time? Because learning is an end in itself! It's not just a means to an end.

All the same, if I was 18 again and considering going to university now, I would probably think twice about doing a degree in literature. I would most likely choose the innovative degree in entertainment and cultural enterprise management (ECEM) that was introduced by the Reggae Studies Unit in 2007. Kam-Au Amen, the very first graduate of the UWI's cultural studies programme, designed the popular new degree.

The ECEM programme encourages students to explore many of the disciplines Ms Fairclough dismisses as useless. Like literature, history, media and the rest! And the degree helps them understand how to become entrepreneurial and make work for themselves.

Burning Spear, one of the songwriters I teach in my Reggae Poetry course, asserts:

Marcus Mosiah Garvey say

Man who cannot get no work

Should make work, make work

Be creative! Be creative! Be creative!

Out-of-work attorneys need to listen to the reggae singers and players of instruments whose musical creations help us cope with the unexpected twists and turns of life. Studying music is not a waste of time. Supposedly 'impractical' careers feed the soul. Money isn't everything.

RIVER MUMMA

There are many attorneys who are dragging themselves to work each day. They hate the tedium of the law. But they're afraid of giving up the security of the paycheque. Some sensible attorneys resort to 'useless' creative work to help them cope with the everyday stresses of the legal profession. It's therapeutic.

My sister, Donnette, is a classic example. She's just returned from Geneva where one of her magnificent quilts was featured in an exhibition at the UN that opened on World Water Day, March 22. This year's theme is 'Water and Jobs'. The United States Mission to the UN in Geneva, in partnership with Quilt for Change and the American Exchange Rome, organised the exhibition which focused on 'Water is Life: Clean Water and Its Impact on the Lives of Women and Girls Around the World'.

Donnette interpreted the theme quite liberally. She did a beautiful portrait of River Mumma, blinging to the max. In her artist statement, Donnette observed that in Jamaican folklore, River Mumma is the guardian of the river, conserving it for sustainable development. But River Mumma both protects and destroys. She embodies the paradoxical qualities of water: an essential life force and a torrential threat. I hope the Arts and Education section will do a story soon on 'River Mumma' in all her glory.

REGGAE TALKS

Last Wednesday, Queen Ifrica gave a brilliant talk in the reggae series hosted by the 'useless' Department of Literatures in English. Paying tribute to her mentor, Tony Rebel, the Queen passionately told the story of her development as an artiste who was born free.

The series continues this week on Tuesday at 6 p.m., when Tanya Stephens will speak about her career. She's one of the songwriters whose lyrics are studied in the Department's Reggae Poetry course. The venue is the Faculty of Medical Sciences, Lecture Theatre 3.

On Thursday at 7 p.m. in the same venue, the series comes to an end with the screening of the documentary Kingston Crossroads. This perceptive film is the MA thesis of two German filmmakers, Oliver Becker and Jonas Schaul, who will answer questions afterwards.

Kingston Crossroads tells the intimate stories of several fascinating characters whose lives intersect in the city. The documentary features Earl 'Chinna' Smith, Kabaka Pyramid, Micah Shemaiah, Leroy 'Jah B' Smith, Luciano, Gabre Selassie, Matthias Roulecko, Exile Di Brave, I Nation and Mau Mau. I'm inviting Ms Fairclough to attend these events. I'm sure they will cheer her up considerably.

- Carolyn Cooper is a cultural consultant. Visit her bilingual blog at <http://carolynjoycooper.wordpress.com>. Email feedback to columns@gleanerjm.com and karokupa@gmail.com.

The End