



## **The Jamaica Progressive League Celebrates Its 73rd Anniversary - Opens Karl & Faye Rodney Library And Resource Center**



On Saturday September 12 at their headquarters in the Bronx, this pioneer group which played a vital part in the Independence of Jamaica, the Jamaica Progressive League, celebrated its 73rd Anniversary.

The League's long history and achievements are legendary in the Caribbean Community, and the Jamaican community in particular, and has celebrated a number of firsts in the

Disapora Program.

Known not only for its fight for Jamaican Independence, the League is known for its successful lobby for the Immigration Laws of the United States that make it easier for immigration from the Caribbean and from colonies of Great Britain.

The then President of the League, Beryl Henry, was among those invited to the signing of the law by then President Lyndon Johnson.

The current President, Mrs. Sadie Campbell and her current board, are determined to carry on the well-known public and pioneering work of the League.

President Campbell decided to do major renovation to the League's headquarters at 2230 Light Street in the Bronx, and to bring the 73rd Anniversary to the headquarters as a clear signal that the League is solid and succeeding.

As part of the 73rd Anniversary Celebration, the League opened the Karl and Faye Rodney Library and Resource Center on the newly renovated second floor of the building.

Working with the Rodneys over several months, the Library was officially opened on September 12, 2009. Stacked with hundreds of books from the Rodney's collection and

donations, Ms. Campbell says she envisioned the library as a beacon of hope for that section of the upper Bronx and a catalyst for growth in that area.

Mrs Campbell said the Rodneys, Publishers of the New York CARIB NEWS, were most befitting of this recognition.

Mr. Rodney, who was President of the League for ten years, in addressing the audience reminded them of the birth of the League in Harlem, the synergy enjoyed with the African Americans in Harlem, and the environment and consciousness for the right of black people.

In 1936, in the middle of a depression in the U.S., people of goodwill were coming together to start the march, the struggle for Jamaica Independence, and never eased up until it was achieved.

Mr. Rodney remarked it was not just the intellectual or the academic, but ordinary Jamaicans with real consciousness and dedication, committed to a cause greater than themselves.

Mr. Rodney commented that the League has adapted to, adjusted and in some way transformed itself to meet the mission of the organization, and the need of Jamaicans and Jamaica.

From the pioneering efforts in celebrating Jamaica Independence, Trade Shows, free Legal Clinics, Immigration Advisory Services to Adult Education programs.

From the Miss Jamaica U.S.A. Pageant and the Norman Manley Scholarship programs, both events held each year at the Waldorf Astoria.



He pointed out that there are professionals in the community who were beneficiaries of these efforts.

Mr. Rodney made the point that the Library and Resource Center was another step in the evolution of the Jamaica Progressive League to meet the needs of the times. Learning and civil discourse needs to be highlighted and encouraged in our society. Reading is basic, understanding is necessary and applications to be encouraged. All of this will be happening at the Library.

Mr. Rodney reminded that there will be strong Mentoring and Guidance components of the Center to assist the young people in navigating the current system. Special Lectures and Discussions will be regular features of the Library and Resource Center, to make it a dynamic addition to the League's program and the community enrichment activities.

Mrs. Rodney expressed appreciation to the League's leadership for paying this most important tribute of naming the Library and Resource Center in the names of her and

husband Karl. She remarked their commitment was always to strengthen the community and for twenty eight years, that has been the mission of the newspaper they publish – CARIB NEWS. This, she said, will get them an additional opportunity to continue this mission. Mrs. Rodney pledged to work for the success of the project and promised continued growth and an even greater community outreach.

The Mistress of Ceremonies for the program was Ms. Andrene Bonner, Executive director of Caribbean World Arts & Culture and a noted author. Rev. Dr. Samuel G. Simpson, Pastor of Bronx Baptist Church and Wake Eden Baptist Church performed the blessing of the Building and Library and made a contribution of a special Bible for the Library. Ms. Bonner also contributed her most recent book, Olympic Garden, to the Library. Mr. Desmond Clarke, on behalf of the Jamaica National Movement, contributed the book Jamaican Olympians, by Judge Patrick Robinson to the Library.

Ms. Cecile Christie, Vice-Consul Jamaica Consulate, brought greetings on behalf of the Consul General.

Mrs. Barbara Richards, Educator and President of UJAA addressed the audience on the importance of the Library in the life of a community and the value in education. Mr. Jose Richards, Vice President of the League, urged the audience to be very pro-active to secure the right attention and resources for the community.

Among those attending were, Hon. Robert Johnson, Bronx District Attorney, Assemblyman Carl Heastie, a strong supporter of the Center, Mrs. Beryl Levi, CEO of Tower Isle Bakery along with COO Patrick Jolly, Mr. Lowell Hawthorne, CEO of the Golden Krust Bakeries and his wife Lorna, Michele Rodney, Dean of the School of Criminal Justice Monroe College, former Mayor of Mt. Vernon Ronald A. Blackwood, Mryna Merchant, Elaine Chambers, Mr. David Burey, President Hartford Chapter JPL, Ann Marie Grant, Executive Director, AFUWI, Andy King, Candidate for NY City Council. There was a strong cultural component of the evening. The Alvarez Group provided great multi-cultural music, and BRAATA – a choral group of Jamaican Folk Singers of Brooklyn, delighted the audience.

Awards were handed out to Patrick Jolly - Tower Isle Patties, Tony Kelly - Royal Tropical Bakery, Bronx District Attorney Robert Johnson, and to JPL Board members Kassandra Campbell, Cora Jackson, Carmen Teape, Veronica Morrison and Doret Reid.

A display of Jamaican Art was mounted by well known Jamaican artist Paul Blackwood.

Food was prepared by Topaz, Royal Tropical Bakery, Tower Isles and JPL member Melverton Newell. Refreshments contributed by Pepsi Cola and Grace Foods.

For more information and contribution to the Jamaica Progressive League, call (718) 881-0308.