

Laureate News



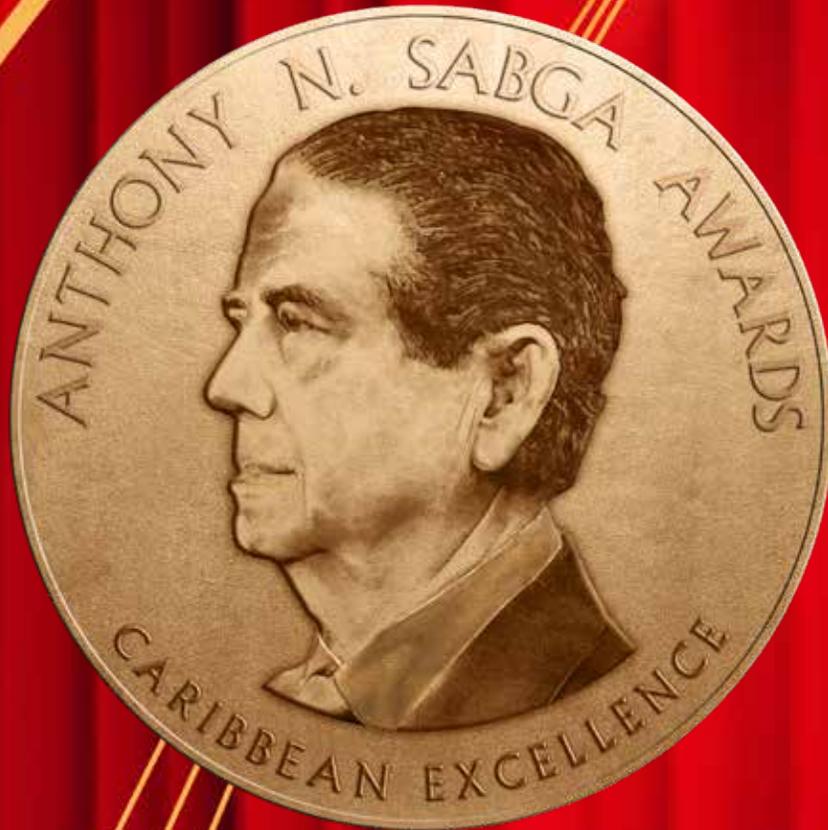
About Us

The Anthony N Sabga Awards, Caribbean Excellence was established in 2005 to recognise and support excellence in human endeavour that uplifts the region.

Since then, we've awarded 71 laureates, presenting them with over TT\$34 million to further their careers.

The Awards' Laureate News is a regular publication – all about our laureates and the infrastructure that selects and supports them.

[Learn More](#)



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Five New Laureates



Five New Laureates

Five new laureates were announced via stream at ansacaribbeanawards.com in February.

Arts & Letters Laureate Ms Sheena Rose is an accomplished visual artist whose work has featured in solo exhibitions in London, New York, Taiwan, and across the Caribbean. Her paintings of relaxed figures are said to challenge centuries of demand for Black labour by representing empowerment through leisure, and her art has been described as flawlessly executed and intellectually rich.

Entrepreneurship Laureate Mr Dean Nevers is a telecommunications engineer who founded a startup that now delivers telecom solutions in ten Caribbean territories and provides hundreds of jobs for Caribbean nationals. Konnexx Services Limited provides advanced telecom, renewable energy, and industrial network solutions. It has moved from a net loss in its first year of operation to annual revenues of over US\$20 million.

Public & Civic Contributions Laureate Mrs Shamelle Rice is the founder of a Barbadian charity that assists sex workers in their efforts to transition from the trade. Jabez House provides vocational training, job placement opportunities, mental health support and basic needs assistance. Since 2012, it has served over 1,000 sex workers from Barbados and other

Caribbean countries.

The Science & Technology Award is shared this year by two exceptional Caribbean nationals.

The first is Laureate Dr Niven Narain, a biotech innovator whose groundbreaking drug discovery platform powered by Artificial Intelligence has produced 650 US and international patents and scores of high-impact scientific publications. Several pharmaceuticals developed using his platform are advancing in late-stage clinical trials and being reviewed by the US Food and Drug Administration for treatment of conditions ranging from aggressive cancers to childhood mitochondrial disorders.

Laureate Professor Tannecia Stephenson is one of the Caribbean's foremost climate scientists. She has led landmark studies that assess historical climate change across the region and has contributed to regional efforts to develop digital platforms that make climate data accessible to policymakers. She has also ensured that Caribbean priorities such as heat-related impacts and rising sea levels are prominently represented on the world stage.

Our laureates will be presented with their awards at a gala ceremony in Georgetown in June.

A Grammy for Kwamé!

Our 2017 Arts & Letters Laureate, conductor Kwamé Ryan, did T&T and the Anthony N Sabga Awards proud in February, earning a Grammy award for Best Opera Recording.

Mr Ryan earned his Grammy for conducting the Houston Grand Opera in its performance of *Intelligence* – the true story of two women who ran a Union spy ring during the American Civil War.

Canada-born and raised in Trinidad, Kwamé served as Director of the Academy for the Performing Arts at the University of Trinidad & Tobago for six years. He is currently Music Director of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra in North Carolina.



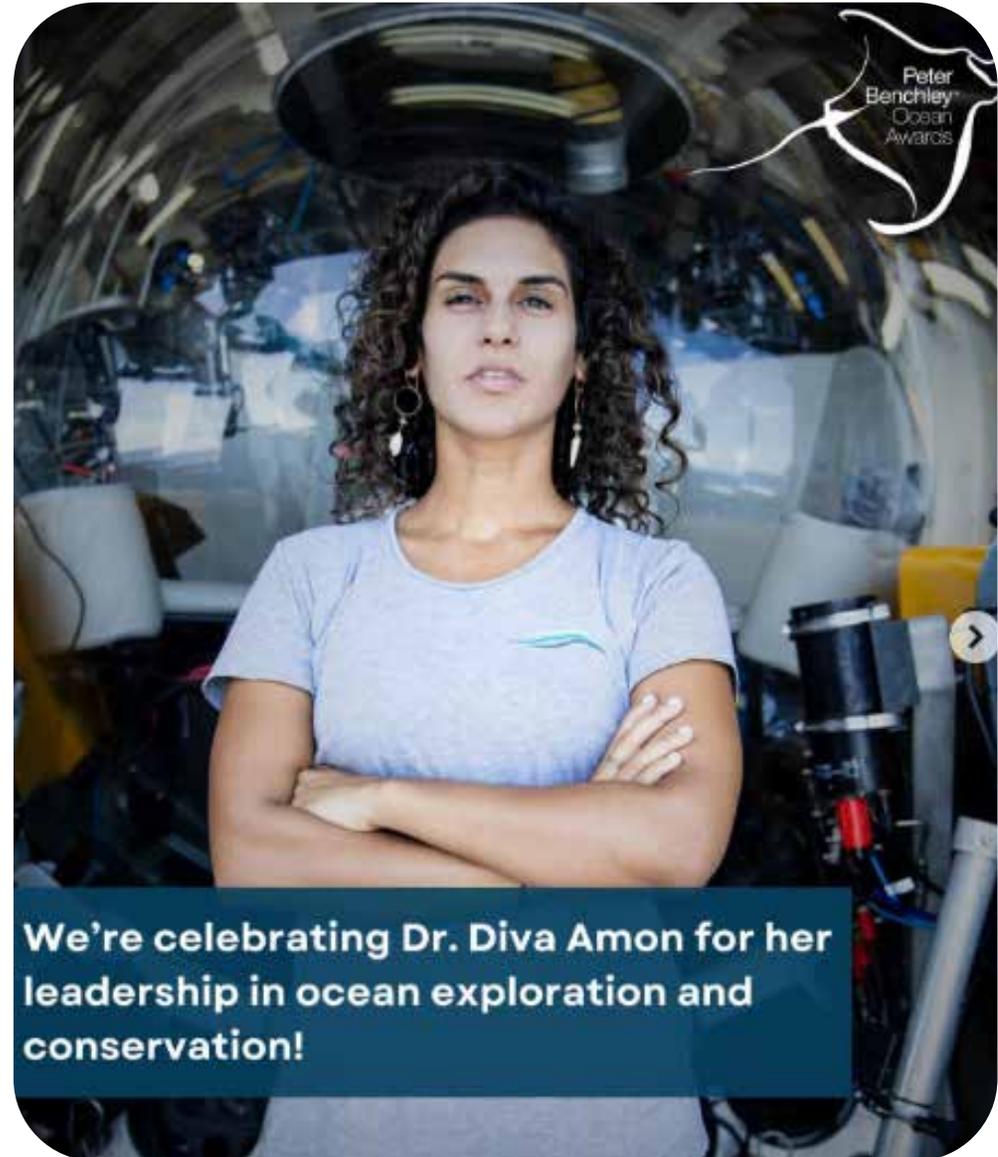
Dr Amon earns Peter Benchley award

2024 Science & Technology Laureate, deep-sea marine biologist Dr Diva Amon has earned yet another accolade – this time the Peter Benchley Ocean Award for Excellence in Science Ocean Exploration, which recognizes global leaders advancing solutions for ocean conservation.

Diva has long been a trusted media source for her knowledge of deep-sea ecosystems and man’s impact on the ocean.

Interviewed by TIME magazine last year about efforts to protect the ocean floor from mining, she said that the scale of planned seabed mining is “enormous” and the damage from mining plumes and wastewater could be “irreversible” due to the length of time slow-growing deep-sea ecosystems take to recover.

Dr Amon has been collaborating with other scientists on research into the impact of mining on the deep sea. She has also been attending meetings of the International Seabed Authority and other intergovernmental agencies to communicate the science to decision-makers.



Etienne at the Lincoln Center

2025 Arts & Letters Laureate, jazz musician Etienne Charles, joined T&T compatriot Kees Dieffenthaler on stage at the Lincoln Center in New York City in January as Kes The Band performed at the Unity Jazz Festival. It was the first time soca had headlined the event, with Kes and friends delivering two sold-out shows.

Kes The Band blended soca, calypso, jazz, soul, and rock, offering reimagined versions of hits like Hello, Fallin', and Savannah Grass.



Etienne scores Alvin Ailey dance

Our 2025 Arts & Letters Laureate, jazz composer and trumpeter Etienne Charles, has composed an original score for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's "Jazz Island", which was scheduled to debut December 5 and run through early January at the New York City Center.

"Jazz Island" is actually adapted from a folklore story recorded by the late Trinidadian actor and dancer, Geoffrey Holder. Choreographer Maija Garcia told the New York Times in November that she had reached out to Etienne because they're "both interested in the Afro-Caribbean aesthetic inside of American music and dance."

Etienne told the Times he immediately saw the choreographer's vision when she described it. For the music to accompany a dance set in a market, he drew on memories of going to market in Trinidad as a child: "The ladies shouting to get everybody's attention to what they're selling, lots of little noises of different people talking."



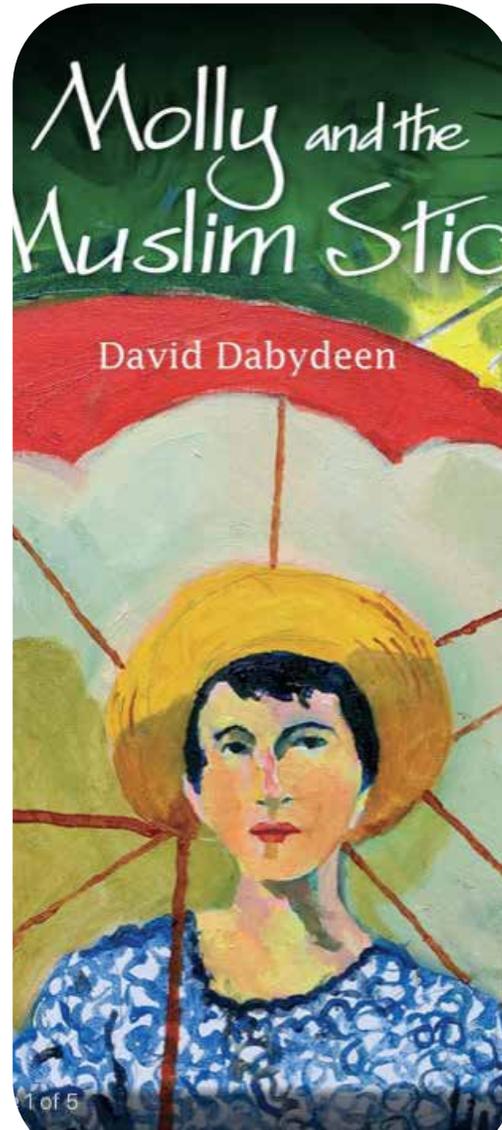
Etienne Charles (Photo by Luigi Creese)

Nobel nomination for Dabydeen

Novelist, Professor David Dabydeen, told the Stabroek News in December that he has been nominated for a Nobel Prize in Literature by European and Chinese scholars.

Our 2008 Arts & Letters Laureate has published eight novels, three poetry collections, and several books on the history and culture of Guyana. He left Guyana at 14, worked as Professor of Literature at the University of Warwick for 35 years, and is currently at Cambridge University directing the Ameena Gafoor Institute for the Study of Indentureship and its Legacies. “Everything I write is about Guyana,” he said, noting that he has returned to his homeland twice a year for the past few decades.

Prof Dabydeen was Guyana’s Ambassador to China from 2010-2015, and Ambassador to UNESCO (1997-2010). He is an Honorary Fellow of Selwyn College, Cambridge.



A new Teague in town

17-year-old Jaden Teague-Nunez – son of our 2014 Arts & Letters Laureate Professor Liam Teague – shared the stage with his father at the prestigious Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC50) at the Indiana Convention Centre in November.

The duo was the only steelpan performance at the percussion showcase and they highlighted the instrument’s versatility by playing a set that ranged from Rhapsody in Steel to the fiery Grotesque by composer Ben Wahlund, and Liam’s own original composition, Hands Like Lightning.

The T&T Newsday described Jaden’s performance of A Visit to Hell – a multi-movement piece composed by his dad – as “one of the afternoon’s most riveting moments.” It was the same composition performed when Jaden earned the honour of becoming the first pannist to win the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s Young Artist Competition, in 2024.



Liam and Jaden at a recent performance
(Photo courtesy Newsday/Marna Niebergall de Rojas)

Prof Haque describes a strange visitor

Astronomer Professor Shirin Haque has kept up her series of YouTube videos explaining cosmic events, recently posting about the passage of 3I Atlas – a comet that swung by our solar system in November/December.

Our 2020 Science & Technology Laureate explained that the comet was being hyped in astronomy circles because it wasn't behaving typically. "The cometary tails that we are so accustomed to seeing are barely visible in this one," elaborated Haque. "The tail is even pointing towards the sun, when normally the solar radiation and the solar wind causes it to point away from the sun." She added that the comet is a whopping 7 billion years old, much older than our solar system.

Professor Haque has posted over 100 videos on her YouTube channel. These include safety tips on viewing a solar eclipse, and her amazement at research which suggests that evidence of an ancient planetary impact between Earth and the hypothesized planet Theia may actually still exist, hidden within planet Earth.

You can check out Professor Haque's explainer on 3I Atlas [here](#).



Mustard Seed recovery

The Mustard Seed home for people with disabilities in Montego Bay, Jamaica continues to recover after being battered by Hurricane Melissa. The home, founded by our 2006 Public & Civic Contributions Laureate, Monsignor Gregory Ramkissoon, is still without electricity and running water after being completely flooded, but the road leading to it has been partially cleared and staff continue to provide care for over 30 residents “amid difficult conditions.”

Mustard Seed Communities operates 12 homes in Jamaica that provide care for nearly 500 children and adults with disabilities. Many of those homes were damaged by the Category 5 storm that hit Jamaica on October 28. Being interviewed on CNN shortly after the hurricane, Monsignor Ramkissoon estimated that repairs would cost the community over US\$1 million. “And that’s not even talking about things like broken furniture and all that kind of stuff. But I know we’ll get the help.”

You can donate to Mustard Seed’s recovery efforts [here](#).



Ayo pleased with increasing prosecutions

Family therapist Dr Ayodele Dalgety-Dean (familiarily known as ‘Ayo’) recently appeared on a half-hour interview on the Guyana Standard’s “Frank Discussions”. The founder of Blossom Inc, a Guyanese NGO that promotes interventions and education to children and families affected by sexual exploitation, told her interviewer that she is heartened by year on year increases in successful prosecutions of sexual violence in Guyana. “Ultimately that is the outcome we are looking for,” said Dalgety-Dean.

Our 2025 Public & Civic Contributions laureate also said that receiving the Anthony N Sabga Award was timely recognition for her entire staff. “Everyone works so hard in such a trauma-related field. And I think a lot of time, people do not know or appreciate the amount of trauma that’s involved in hearing stories of sexual abuse and exploitation every single day.”

You can watch Dr Dalgety-Dean's full interview [here](#).

In T&T, Dr Adesh Sirjusingh and his team at the Directorate of Women’s Health received an award for Service Excellence in the Public Service. The honour was presented by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank.



A fitting sendoff for Danielle

Hundreds of film and television creatives gathered for a memorial service for T&T filmmaker and 2019 Arts & Letters Laureate Danielle Dieffenthaller at the Anchorage, Chaguaramas on December 2.

As producer/director of the six-season, 86-episode Westwood Park series (1997-2004) Dieffenthaller was passionate about promoting the Caribbean film industry. “She was a storyteller,” recalled Westwood Park actor Natasha Jones at the service, which streamed live to an audience of almost 2,000, all of whom were encouraged to attend in bright colours. “She could hold court with a real good story, and I really really miss that about her.”

The service also included performances by her brother, soca artiste Kes Dieffenthaller, and rapso group 3 Canal. You can watch it in its entirety [here](#).

Danielle died of complications of kidney disease at 60. The Awards programme would like to extend our sincere condolences to her family and myriad friends.



And in news of the infrastructure that supports the Awards

Minerva at the Pinnacle

Professor Minerva Thame of Jamaica will receive yet another award in an illustrious career this month. Prof Thame – who sits on the Regional Eminent Persons Panel of the Anthony N. Sabga Awards which selects our laureates annually from a deep pool of Caribbean talent – will receive a Jamaican Women Pinnacle Award in Kingston on March 14.

Thame is Professor of Perinatal and Paediatric Medicine at the University of the West Indies and was the first woman to hold the post of Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences at UWI, Mona.

She has trained generations of med students, midwives and postgraduate paediatricians who serve communities across the Caribbean. Her research has helped to illuminate the role of maternal physiology and nutrition on birth outcomes - insights critical to improving Caribbean perinatal care.

She has received several UWI awards for her research and was recently appointed Emerita Professor, an acknowledgement of the indelible mark her scholarship has left on the institution.

Congrats on your Pinnacle, Professor Thame!



Prof Bourne launches his memoir

His Excellency Professor Compton Bourne’s memoir, launched at the University of Guyana in November, “interweaves the evolution of his own personal journey with the region’s own development trajectory.” So said former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Shelton Nichols at the launch, adding that the book captured the aspirations of many who were privileged to study under its author, a noted Caribbean economist.

Currently serving as Guyana’s Ambassador to Brazil, Prof Bourne is also former Chancellor of the University of Guyana. He noted in his remarks that his central concern has been “how to make universities more central and effective in their roles as agents of social and economic development and social cohesion. And how to make higher education more accessible to students from less advantaged economic circumstances.”

“Building a Better Future: Memoirs of a Caribbean Economist” is available on Amazon. You can watch the entire launch [here](#).

In other news, Professor Bourne will chair the annual

meeting of the regional Eminent Persons Panel (EPP) on January 17 at the Hilton Trinidad. The EPP will select the 2026 laureates at that meeting from a shortlist of candidates from the 5 Caribbean territories covered by the programme.

Since the first Caribbean Excellence awards were made in 2006, 66 laureates have been recognised.



Professor Compton Bourne, OE presents a copy of his memoir to Acting University Librarian Dr Simone Bernard



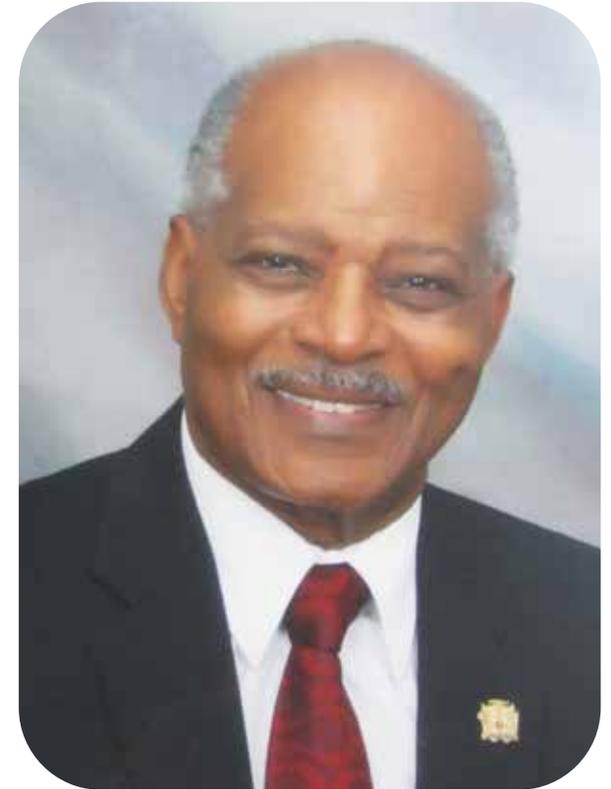
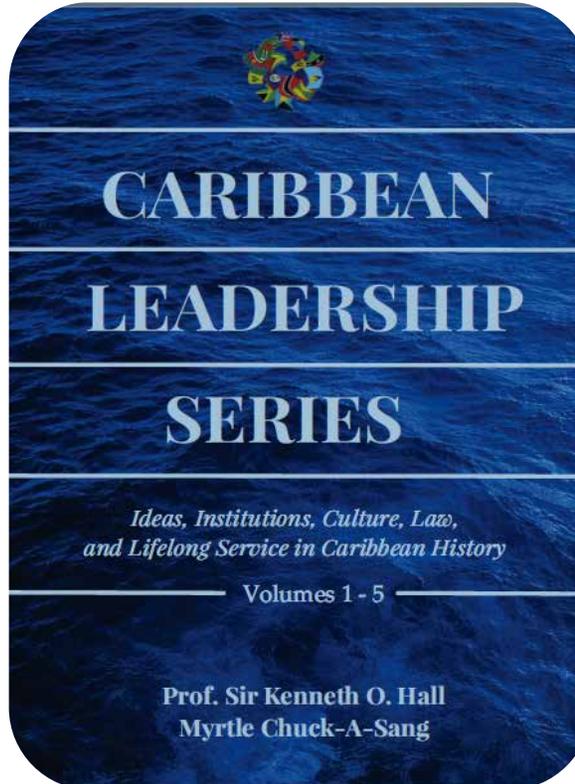
Major General Joe Singh – a member of the Awards’ Eminent Persons Panel – chats at the launch

Sir Hall explores Caribbean leadership

Professor Sir Kenneth Hall, a past member of our Regional Eminent Persons Panel, recently co-edited a five-volume reference book on Caribbean leadership. “Caribbean Leadership Series” sketches the meaning of leadership in Caribbean societies shaped by conquest, enslavement, colonial domination and structural vulnerability, and how it has evolved as these societies moved from survival to self-government.

Each volume focuses on a different type of leader, from foundation politicians such as Norman Manley, Eric Williams and Errol Barrow to intellectual leaders such as Arthur Lewis and Lloyd Best. Also included are reflections on the significance of cultural figures like Derek Walcott, Louise Bennett and Bob Marley.

Editors Hall and Myrtle Chuck-A-Sang conclude that: “The ultimate test of Caribbean leadership is the capacity to think and act regionally. Leaders who understood this—whether in politics, economics, education, or law—expanded Caribbean agency. Those who did not remained trapped within the limits of scale.”



A great Caribbean man

Jamaican attorney and businessman Christopher Bovell, who passed away in January, was not only a great Jamaican, he was a great Caribbean man.

Mr Bovell served on the Awards' programme's Eminent Persons Panel for almost 20 years, traveling annually to meet with fellow esteemed Caribbean citizens engaged in the selection of laureates from a deep field of Caribbean professionals.

He is remembered by colleagues on that panel as modest and persuasive in providing his personal Jamaican perspective on Caribbean Excellence. "His meticulous attention to details in the numerous dossiers ensured balanced judgement in consideration of nominees," recalled EPP Chairman Professor Compton Bourne. "Not only for his beloved Jamaica but for all Caribbean nominees."

