



# The CHACONIA

The TTAO Newsletter

February 2020

Volume 11 Number 1

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## From the President's Pen

With a later than usual start to the year 2019-2020, the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Ottawa (TTAO) held their Annual General Meeting on Friday, 22 November, 2019, at the Cultural Arts Studio, 149 George Street, Ottawa.

### Elected executive members

President: Ingrid John-Baptiste

Vice President: Dianna Pierre

Secretary: Sharon Pierre-Louis

Asst. Secretary: Judy Madhosingh

Treasurer: Andrew Williams

Floor members:

Anne-Marie Bostic

Nira Dookeran

Joycelyn George-Francois

Adrian Benjamin remains the immediate Past President.

Inclement weather derailed our scheduled planning session on Sunday, 12 January, however our team was ready for action the following Sunday.

It was unanimously agreed that the organisation would be guided by an enhanced version of the 2018-2019 objectives. The goals and objectives for 2019-2020 are to:

- Find creative ways to increase engagement and membership.
- Continue to market and advertise TTAO events and fundraising activities via social media platforms.
- Engage in activities with an educational, cultural, fundraising, social and humanitarian focus.
- Review and modify the long term goals and objectives of the TTAO.

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Our team was able to identify activities that would help us meet our objectives.

The children's Christmas party was held on December 8, 2019 at the Trinidad and Tobago High Commission. From all reports, everyone present enjoyed the occasion and the children were definitely satisfied with the 'goodies' that Santa delivered.

The TTAO will once again participate in the annual 'Promoting Healthy Lifestyles' seminar. This is an opportunity to work closely with African, Caribbean and Canadian organisations to sponsor presentations by eminent representatives on health topics specifically geared to our community. Over the years these seminars have been very successful and well received.

Back by popular request, the Spring Fling will be held in May. It is an opportunity to shed the winter blues and embrace the beautiful weather that lies ahead.

We have listened to the concerns of many of our more senior members who find it challenging to attend events held in the later hours of the day. With this in mind, we have geared some of our activities to accommodate this segment of our community. On Sunday, 12 July, the TTAO will host a Sunday afternoon boat ride on the Ottawa River. Please pencil in the date, mention it to your friends and join us on what promises to be an unforgettable experience.

TrinbaGo Day is slated for Sunday, 16 August. We will provide further information on this annual event in upcoming communications.

To celebrate the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Trinidad & Tobago as an independent country, the TTAO invites you to a day of fun on Sunday, 30 August from 12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m. Details are still being worked out, but we hope to engage you with fun activities. We will be more than happy to receive your suggestions for making this event a resounding success.

For the many who have been clamouring for it, Soca-parang has been added to our roster of activities this year. It will be held on Sunday, 8 November. We will keep you

apprised of details as they become available.

The TTAO will continue to work in partnership with Federal, Provincial and Municipal agencies, other community organisations and the Trinidad & Tobago High Commission in order to benefit the Trinidad and Tobago community, as well as the wider National Capital Region community. There are also plans to re-establish links with other Trinidad and Tobago Associations across Canada.

This year we intend to increase our focus on members of our community who reside in long term care facilities. This will be done through our Humanitarian Committee. In addition to paying them visits, meals will be provided in some instances. Those members who are willing and able, will be brought to social events hosted by the association.

You, our members and friends, are really important to the success of the TTAO. We need your support and appreciate your attendance at our events. We look forward to your comments and suggestions. We also encourage you to renew your membership or become a member of the association, in support of our activities. Membership fees are very reasonable at \$20 (individuals) and \$40 (families). Fillable membership forms are available on-line and payment can be made by e-transfer to [tandtassociation@gmail.com](mailto:tandtassociation@gmail.com).

The TTAO executive and committees look forward to a successful 2019-2020 year, and with your unwavering support, this will be possible. The executive and committees will continue to work diligently on your behalf to make this year an enjoyable experience for all.

Ingrid John-Baptiste  
President

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## TTAO 2019 - 2020 List of Activities

### December 2019



Sunday, 8 December

#### **Children's Christmas party**

Trinidad and Tobago High Commission, 200 First Avenue, Ottawa

### April 2020



Friday, 17 April

#### **Meet and greet**

Location to be confirmed



Saturday, 25 April

#### **Health seminar**

Coalition of African, Caribbean and Canadian Organisations  
Details to be confirmed

### May 2020



Saturday, 30 May

#### **Spring Fling**

Ottawa Masonic Centre, 2140 Walkley Road, Ottawa

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### July 2020



Sunday, 12 July

#### **Boat cruise on the Ottawa River**

Details to be confirmed



Saturday, 25 July

#### **CARIVIBE parade (Ottawa's carnival)**

Details to be confirmed

### August 2020



Sunday, 16 August

#### **TrinbaGo day**

Details to be confirmed



Sunday, 30 August

#### **Independence celebration**

Trinidad & Tobago Association corn roast, family picnic, FUN DAY

Location to be confirmed

### November 2020



Sunday, 8 November

#### **Soca-parang**

Ukrainian Banquet Hall, 1000 Byron Ave, Ottawa

December 2020



Sunday, 13 December

**Children's Christmas party**

Location to be confirmed

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## On the bookshelf

**For adults**



**Secrets We Kept - Three Women of Trinidad by Krystal A. Sital**

An eloquent new Caribbean literary voice reveals the hidden trauma and fierce resilience of a Trinidadian family.

There, in a lush landscape of fire-petal immortelle trees and vast plantations of coffee and cocoa, where the three hills along the southern coast act as guardians against hurricanes, Krystal A. Sital grew up. Years later, to escape crime and economic stagnation on the island, her family resettles in New Jersey, where Krystal's mother worked as a nanny. The warmth of Trinidad seemed a pretty, yet distant memory.

As a child, Krystal idolized her grandfather, a wealthy Hindu landowner. But when he has a fall at home and then lapses into a coma, the women he terrorized for decades begin to speak, and a brutal past comes to light.

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Narrated in the lyrical patois of her mother and grandmother, Krystal learns about the long-held secrets of her family's past, and the strength it took for her foremothers to survive. The relief of sharing their stories draws the three women closer, while the music of their voices helps ease the painful memories.

The history of Trinidad is permeated with violence, a rigid ethnic and racial caste system, and a tolerance of domestic abuse—the harsh legacies of plantation slavery. *Secrets We Kept*, explores life on the island's plantations, its growing cities, and the family's new home in America. It tells a story of ambition and cruelty, endurance and love, and most of all, the bond among three women of different generations that help them find peace with the past.

### **For children**

*Alphabet Adventure in Trinidad and Tobago (ABCulture Collection Book 1)* **by** Nikisha Watson



Take a fun, educational journey with two boys, Patrick and Joe, as they explore the beautiful twin islands of Trinidad and Tobago. For each letter of the alphabet, they learn about food, animals, places of interest and cultural events. Adventure awaits.

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## TrinbaGo Humour



English: Hello  
French: Bonjour  
Spanish: Hola  
German: Hallo  
Swedish: Hej  
Trinidadian: yuh get fat boy

SECURITY: SORRY OUTSIDE  
FOOD IS NOT ALLOWED IN.

ME: THIS IS MY  
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ROTI

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## Move over Malibu rum



Angostura stunned us by launching a limited edition Sorrel flavoured White Oak rum for Christmas. They have since introduced a coconut flavoured White Oak rum which will be perfect for those homemade pina coladas.

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## Proud Trinbago moment

Trini-Canadian director calls invitation to join the Oscars academy a 'huge honour'.



Frances-Anne Solomon is a Canadian director. Her films have focused on everything from a black men's support group in Toronto (A Winter Tale) to a Chinese laundry in Liverpool (Peggy Su!). She also founded the [Caribbean Tales Film Festival](#), which screens films from across the Caribbean region and its diaspora every year in Toronto.

When she received an email from filmmaker Ava DuVernay letting her know she was being invited to join the Oscars academy, she thought someone was pulling her leg. "I thought it was a hoax," she told Matt Galloway with a laugh on CBC Radio's Metro Morning. "I showed it around my office and everybody thought it was

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a joke."

It took about 10 more emails before Solomon, whose latest movie Hero was released this past winter, looked into the matter further. The invitation, it turned out, was no joke. Solomon is one of 842 new members invited to join the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences this week.

Solomon's in good company. Half of this year's class of new academy members are women, and almost a third are people of colour. Invitees also include people from 59 different countries. "It's a sign that the Oscars are serious about not just opening up the field but making it less American-centric," Solomon said on Thursday.

In recent years, the Academy has come under fire for a lack of diversity, for membership that was overwhelmingly white and older, and male. In 2015 and 2016, it was for slates of all-white acting nominees. That prompted the #OscarsSoWhite movement, which Solomon credits with pushing the organization to change.

"I never thought I would see the day that the studio system would open up to the extent that it would really take on voices like mine," said Solomon. In the lead up to next winter's Oscars ceremony, she and more than 9000 other members will vote on who should receive the coveted awards.

"Obviously this year there were no women nominated for best director and that's not for the lack of women filmmakers, so I expect to see that changed," she said. Opening the film industry to more diverse voices has been a longtime goal of Solomon's.

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## Did you know?



There is a book shop, The Book Junkie, on Manzanilla Beach, managed by Activist Ishmael Samad.

Imagine sunshine, cool sea breeze on your face, quiet except for the ocean waves, the rustling of the leaves of the coconut trees, the occasional car passing by, and the swish of a turning page.

Whether you're looking for good conversation or want to read in a peaceful environment, The Book Junkie is the place for you.

Located along the Manzanilla Mayaro Road, on the stretch of coconut trees, grass, flowers and asphalt after what locals call the Cocal Bridge, and in the midst of vendors selling produce, is a shed bursting with books of all kinds. The space is small and can only host a few visitors at a time but a few chairs outside under the shade of the awning is the perfect place to just be.

The Book Junkie is a used book shop, a library where people can come and read, as well as a book club where people can pay \$100 for the year to borrow as many books as they wish. It includes a very eclectic collection of novels, books on philosophy, science, theology, history, politics, world affairs and more.

Owner, human rights, animal rights and political activist, Ishmael Samad, said they are miscellaneous books bought over the years at garage sales, book sales, bazaars, etc, and a few from his personal library. He claims to have one of the finest personal libraries in the country and one day he would like to get another "cabin" to house part of his library so people can have access to it.

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He said since he opened in mid June 2019, people have been “bowled over” by the novelty of a bookshop on the beach, and they believe he is offering people an experience. He said people visit to bring him books, but some also want to meet “Sledge,” the man who beat down the gate of the Cascade home of former Udecott chairman, Calder Hart, with a sledgehammer in 2010.

“I want the country to know that I’m no longer in the demolition business and I’m not going to lose heart over that. They will find me down at Kernahan junction promoting the love of books and reading!”

To do that he leaves his Maraval home on Fridays and opens on Saturdays and Sundays from 8 am, and sometimes 6 am, to 6 pm. He said he goes to the shop early to experience the sun rise over the Atlantic.

He said most of his visitors are intelligent, young adults because they learned about the Book Junkie on Facebook after a kind stranger took pictures and made him a Facebook page. He said he is not surprised by his main clientèle because, “Nothing will ever replace the book. I’ve always had faith in that and I think reading is making a comeback.”

Samad said reading and collecting books have been his great passions, and books are part of his DNA. As a youth he spent his days at the San Juan Library where he developed his love of reading and books. In fact, his first and last jobs were at book shops, and he used to sell encyclopaedias.

He said the idea of having a book shop occurred to him while he was conducting a bird watching tour into Nariva Swamp, Bush Bush Wildlife Sanctuary. He applied for a stall in the Sangre Grande market where half the stalls were vacant, but was told no books were allowed. Then, one day during a tour he noticed the empty shed and looked into renting it.

“The idea of the books has been coming to me ever since I started doing my birding tours. My idea was a place to store my books and hawk them on the street. I just love sharing books. Since I got refused (at the market) I was looking for another place so I grabbed it. I don’t expect to make money but maybe I would make friends.”

He said people need to get away from urban areas and Manzanilla is a great way to experience the beauty of the country. He has also had meaningful conversations with people who lost their religious convictions and he believes many others were experience such.

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“After all my activities you know what I’ve discovered? That life begins at 75! I think I’ve finally found my calling. I would like to think that providence put me here at The Book Junkie, for them to rethink why they have abandoned their faith, to give them a new perspective.

“I think I am providing that outlet for people to recharge their batteries. We have to reconnect with the natural world. There’s something mystical about nature. Every blade of grass, feather on a bird, every butterfly makes a statement that there is a God. You can’t help seeing the grandeur and majesty of the natural world and the logical explanation for it. You can’t help thanking God for the wonderful world He made.”

He said in spite of all its problems he loves TT with a passion. He said much of the landscape is still beautiful, the culture is amazing, and the food is excellent. TT, he said, has produced great people like Nobel prize winners VS Naipaul and Derek Walcott, who he said Trinidadians must claim, as well as people like the first prime minister Dr Eric Williams, economist Lloyd Best, historian CLR James, and calypsonians Garfield "Ras Shorty I" Blackman and Slinger "Sparrow" Francisco and more. “To be born a Trini is to win first prize in the lottery of life.”

Samad told Sunday Newsday he reads widely but he most admires playwright William Shakespeare who “plumbed the depths of the human condition” like no other author.

From the play Othello he quoted, “Good name in man and woman, dear my lord, Is the immediate jewel of their souls: Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing; 'twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands; But he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him, And makes me poor indeed.”

As stated in the quote, he believes his most important possession is his “character” and said integrity is his favourite word. Therefore he cannot retire from activism. What bothers him the most at the moment, he said, is the extrajudicial killings, as well as the murder rate of the country. He said he was born a Muslim and is now a Christian so he believes human life is sacred. Unfortunately life is being destroyed throughout the country.

“Something has gone tragically wrong on the hills of Laventille. The young men are

killing senselessly.... The root problem of all the lawlessness and the killing is because they don't believe in God, they don't believe there is an afterlife, they don't believe there is a day of judgement. To me the most powerful and beautiful idea to enter the human mind is the idea that there is a God... There is a quote: Devoid of a spiritual life, man is capable of any atrocity."

Acknowledging that his ideas are drastic, he said if he was the prime minister he would go live in Laventille and jog around morning and evening so that the police and army presence would bring a stop to the killing. And if he was the minister of national security he would call a state of emergency to circumvent human rights and put every man not working into a bootcamp for the army to instil discipline and teach them the ten commandments by heart – especially thou shall not kill, thou shall not steal, and thou shall not covet thy neighbour's house.

From Newsday article by Janelle De Souza - Sunday 28 July 2019

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## Pan is not in danger



Education Minister Anthony Garcia is hopeful that some of the negative feelings students experience which contribute to their disruptive behaviour, will be eliminated through steelpan music.

Garcia expressed this as he delivered the feature address at the launch of the Ministry's Music Education Expansion Initiative - Pan in All Schools Project - at the Arima New Government Primary School .

Speaking to staff and students, he shared that he recently read a story about a pupil who told his class he felt lonely which caused him to be restless. This is one of the things he hopes will be pacified through the programme.

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"Very few of us recognize that among our students, there are so many things that affect them and loneliness is one that has been brought full-scale to the front burner. We are hoping again through this music programme in our schools and in particular, through the pan, that we are going to eradicate some of these negative feelings. My pledge is that in every school in Trinidad and Tobago beginning at the ECC Centre right on to our tertiary education system, there is the presence of our national instrument; there is the presence of our steel pan."

Meanwhile, the Minister says participants of a focus group held two weeks ago, stressed that not enough was being done to assist children with special needs. He says they too, will benefit.

"Arising out of these talks, we are going to develop a template that will assist all our students with special education needs. One of the things, of which I am very happy, is the fact that the steelpan will be part of that initiative. So even in our schools that cater for children with special needs, they will be introduced to the steelpan. We will ensure that no child is left behind."

He adds that to this end, 120 music tutors will be hired to add to the existing 250 in the system. Teachers will also receive special training in music.

"I want to assure you that we are going to employ a number of teachers, a number of facilitators, a number of instructors throughout our education system so that they will be able to assist our students in the development of music right through the system. Towards this end, as a first initiative, 120 music instructors will be assigned to schools throughout the primary and secondary sector."

Noting that students engaged in extra-curricular activities ultimately reduces incidents of disciplinary problems, he says he hopes it will only be lowered.

"Although the statistics will tell us that amongst our 700 schools in Trinidad and Tobago, the incidents of violence and indiscipline resides only in about 1% of those schools, we want to make sure that we cut this down further. So that indiscipline and violence if not completely eradicated from our schools but will be on the back burner. "

Taken from Loop article by Dareece Polo on November 27, 2019

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## Carivibe 2020

Once a Trini reach in yuh fete is niceness (a line from the 2020 soca song Dear Promoter **by** Voice & Kes).



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## New High Commissioner for Canada to Trinidad and Tobago



On January 6, 2020, Mr. Kumar Gupta, High Commissioner for Canada to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, presented his credentials to Her Excellency Paula-Mae Weekes, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.



Since his posting, Mr. Gupta has begun working with Trinidad and Tobago on prison reform. Going forward, there are plans to undertake on-the-ground training for programme and parole officers in anticipation of tabling legislation for the introduction of a parole system. The objective is to move towards the rehabilitation of inmates and increase public safety for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

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## Member's Corner

To enhance what the TTAO can do for the community, we need your support so why not become a member? New members are always welcome! Does an event or committee peak your interest? If you are 16 years of age or older looking to get involved, then consider becoming a member and joining a committee that interests you the most.



### Reminder

The annual membership for the association runs from **September 1st to August 31st**. **Your membership for 2019-2020 is now due.** Please think about renewing your membership if you have not already done so.

### [TTAO membership form](#)



### [The TTAO's website & Facebook page](#)

You are encouraged to visit our [website](#). The new and improved site provides updated and current information on Trinidad & Tobago and brings you information on the upcoming activities of the TTAO and other sister organizations and details of past events.

Our webmaster Rose LeBlanc ensures that [ttao.ca](#), with its artistically inviting look, offers authentic and up-to-date information.

Please remember to like our Facebook page. Carol would be more than happy to see the number of likes increase.

Our Facebook page is at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Trinidad-and-Tobago-Association-of-Ottawa-TTAO/157550578878>.

Your feedback and comments are always appreciated.

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## TTAO Executive and Committees

TTAO Executive and committees for 2019-2020 will be kept busy planning another diverse and engaging year for you.

The TTAO has been in existence since 1983. The mission of the association is to promote and maintain the integrity of our cultural heritage and assist with the continuing development of nationals of Trinidad and Tobago.

### Your 2019-2020 Executive

President: Ingrid John-Baptiste  
Vice-President: Dianna Pierre  
Secretary: Sharon Pierre-Louis  
Asst. Secretary: Judy Madhosingh  
Treasurer: Andrew Williams

### Floor Members:

Anne-Marie Bostic    Nira Dookeran    Joycelyn George-Francois

Immediate Past President: Adrian Benjamin

### TTAO Committees

#### Education:

Chair: Dianna Pierre  
Andrew Williams    Sharon Pierre-Louis    Nira Dookeran  
Ingrid John-Baptiste

#### Humanitarian:

Chair: Pat Cholmondeley  
Molly & Maurice Taitt    Lena Baptiste    Pamela Antoine  
Judy Madhosingh

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### Membership:

Chair : Molly Taitt

Ingrid John-Baptiste    Andrew Williams

### Public Relations & Communications :

Chair : Brenda Agard Alleyne

Carol Joseph    Rose LeBlanc    Andrew Williams

### Recreation:

Chair : Earlvyn Dyer

Pat Cholmondeley    Judy Madhosingh    Carmen Dyer

Anne-Marie Bostic    Glen Mason

### Social:

Chair : Ingrid John-Baptiste

Dianna & Tony Pierre    Sharon Pierre Louis    Andrew Williams

Molly & Maurice Taitt    Pat Cholmondeley    Lena Baptiste

Trevor & Rosanna Lashley    Anne-Marie & David Bostic

Suzanne & Errol Whittier    Nira Dookeran

Carmen & Joe Dyer    Joycelyn George Francois

### \*TTAO Health Seminar Representatives:

Brenda Agard Alleyne    Judy Madhosingh    Dr. Alfredo Walker

Ingrid John-Baptiste

We are always looking for participation on our committees, which will increase chances of success. You are more than welcome to volunteer and/or share your ideas so please [contact us](#) if any peaks your interest.

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## Feedback

Interested in contributing to the next newsletter? Would you like to provide comments or suggestions to the TTAO? Send us an email, write us a letter or put a posting on our Facebook page and tell us what you think!

**The Trinidad & Tobago Association Of Ottawa**

*Invites you to a*

# **SPRING FLING**

**Saturday, May 30th, 2020**

**Ottawa Masonic Centre**

**2140 Walkley Road, Ottawa**

**From: 8:00 p.m.**

**Music by: David SuperSound**

**Tickets: (Advance = \$15.00) & (\$20.00 - Door)**

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/spring-fling-2020-a-trini-ting-tickets-91103995503>

**Dress in bright spring colours**

**Info: 613-834-1718; 613-850-0870; 613-825-2742**

**tandtassociation@gmail.com**

**Save The Date**  
**July 12, 2020**

**For**

**The Trinidad & Tobago  
Association Of Ottawa**

**Upcoming Summer Evening**

**Boat Ride**

**Email: [tandtassociation@gmail.com](mailto:tandtassociation@gmail.com) | Web: [ttao.ca](http://ttao.ca)**

**Info: 613-834-1718; 613-850-0870; 613-825-2742**

**Save The Date**  
**November 8th, 2020**

**For The**  
**SOCA PARANG LIME**

**Presented By**  
**The Trinidad & Tobago**  
**Association Of Ottawa**

**Featuring:**

**Los Pajaros**

**Info: Email: [tandtassociation@gmail.com](mailto:tandtassociation@gmail.com) | Web: [ttao.ca](http://ttao.ca)**

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