

PRESENTATION OF BOOKS

Image Factory Belize City, Belize

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My perception of Image Factory is that it is a place of/for Art, of creativity, of learning—continuous learning. I deliberately did not use the term education, as it gives a perception that the end product is the earning of a degree or two, then returning home and wearing it!

I look at my two offerings today as continuous learning, which is the out product of conducting research. It is also a work of art—starting from a blank canvas, a piece of wood floating on the shores. You create an outline on paper while sipping fevergrass under a mango tree and listening to the Piam Piam and shooing away the Guana. Then you fill the outline with your findings, design the layout and covers. That is a complete work of art.

In filling in the outline one has to be always conscious of who will view your work, so that language as in choice of words is important. In terms of the Book on Adugurahani, it is partly the lived experience of Buyei John Mariano. He had always advocated that traditional knowledge, our way of life be documented as one way of sharing. It is a detailed description of the Dugu and all its nine rituals. The book proffers the following as a definition of Dugu: Consisting of nine highly structured rituals, Dugu is a sacrosanct ceremony which is the authority system in the spiritual health of the Garifuna people. Its opening and closing rituals recognize the importance of upholding kinship through the Afunahoutiana and the Mali ritual as central to the healing process. It is widely practiced in Belize and it is the life or what gives credibility to the Garifuna people. To treat it as anything else is downplaying its contextual meanings, and it may be happening---the lifting of ugúendu (sacred) songs of the Dugu as punta/paranda dance hall music may be sacrilegious and un-garifunaduau, but also it is the taking of someone else's creativity or knowledge and claiming it as one's own. One example is the song now called Wamada—which is a sacred ugúendu song usually raised in two particular rituals in the Dugu, similarly with Wala Gayo by another artist which is the ugúendu song in the primary healing of the Dugu called the Mali and lastly is the use of the Mali ritual as the opening act for ceremonies. I am hoping that this book will help to pass on information on our traditional knowledge.

Belize is virgin territory for research and many outside scholars are aware of this and are making use of Belize as their canvas. Both offerings are well-researched and triangulated and presented in a scholarly manner. I used the qualitative research methodology and several of its techniques—participant observation, ethnography, focus group interviews, content and narrative analyses. The book on electoral politics is my second major offering, the first being my 1993

publication entitled “Who and What in Belize’ Election 1954 to 1993”. I have also shared with the public several manuscripts and brochures as an endeavour in voter education during my tenure as Chief Elections Officer. Since then my public has been demanding information on the municipal elections. In my analysis I have tried to highlight what the data say, nothing less and nothing more. For example, a voter turnout of 42% speaks; a party popularity decline of 20% screams; the traditional lack of women on the ballot carried into 2011 cries out. These are national in nature. Then at the local level—a community that votes in new comers as opposed to a community that is looking only for local leadership, speaks volumes regarding maturity and independence of thought. You catch my drift? Then lastly the political party! RED or BLUE, BLUE or RED, but that is the reality. However, the Party has a very important task, as the Party via their members gets to decide the candidate for the ballot. These candidates on winning get to make decisions for all of us as members of the legislature and/or as members of the executive. It is a very powerful task that the parties have, but at the same time there are no laws to regulate or define the parties that have been given such an important task in our democracy—food for thought!

Election is one of the primary methods of participation in our democracy—every five or three years. While traditionally these have been dynamic events, we need to maintain this by improving on the quality of our democracy. This book has identified three bodies to be held accountable for our democracy, and as such should practice good governance principles. These are the election management body, the Political Party and the Media. Our role is to ensure that they do due diligence in the role that each play in our democracies.

I want to thank so many people for their support: with Adugurahani—Cannon Jerris Valentine, Ms Helen Laurie of LA., Ms Heather Cunningham and Dr. Malcolm Servio-Mariano of New York, and last but not least Mrs. Meg Craig. This book is written in memory of Buyei John Mariano.

With the electoral book: several persons shall remain anonymous. This book is dedicated to my grandchildren and their generation, may they improve on the political dialogue for a wholesome Belize.

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