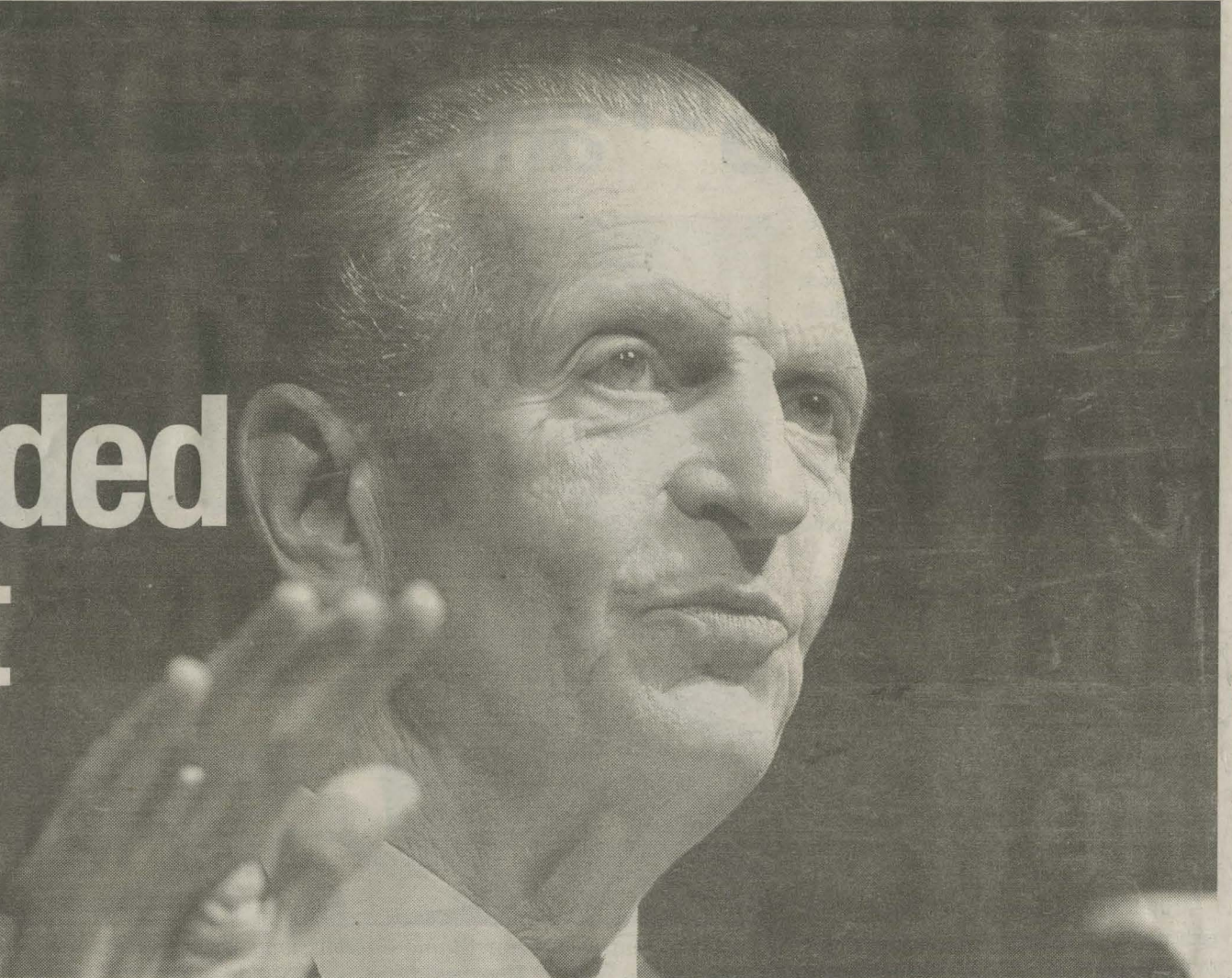


B/N Seaga, Edward

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# Seaga's honest, un-deluded account of life...



*Edward Seaga — Unlike a majority of Jamaican bureaucrats who speak before Jamaicans here, Mr. Seaga gave an honest, un-deluded account of life for the majority of citizens. He neither deluded nor diluted his research material.*



# B/N-Seaga, Edward

By Vinette Pryce

New York, USA

It was a good sign to see an eclectic gathering of Jamaicans flocking to hear a message delivered by former Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Hon. Edward Seaga in Harlem on October 20.

Promoted by Caribbean International Network (CIN) as the third in their lecture series, the address attracted a cross-section of Jamaicans that disregarded party ties in order to hear the message — "The Folk Roots of Jamaican Cultural Identity".

Often the lines are clearly drawn with stalwarts of the People's National Party supportively rallying to show solidarity with their comrades whenever they visit New York. Similarly, the pattern prevails with Labourites clamoring to laud representatives of the Jamaica Labour Party on their visits. That tradition now seems passé.

In 2006, avowed loyalists of the PNP sat together with bell ringers of the JLP to listen to the University of the West Indies' Distinguished Fellow's inaugural lecture.

## Renounced birthright

The 43-year parliamentarian seemed to sum up his life's work by explaining his dual nationality. For many, it was

the first time they had ever heard with any confirmation that Mr. Seaga breathed his first breath in Boston where his parents were visiting from Jamaica.

Some felt relieved to know Mr. Seaga was not just another white exploiter who took up residency in Jamaica, sought out the rebels of the west, claimed a beauty queen, capitalised on the music and eventually ruled the nation.

As one of the founding fathers of the Jamaican constitution in 1961, Mr. Seaga joked that after he was born, his parents took him to the island three months later and there he lived until college summoned him back to study at Harvard University.

The former prime minister did not elaborate on his citizenship, however, Seaga records show that he renounced his US birthright in 1959, becoming a full-fledged Jamaican national.

## Missing the metaphor

Hearing Mr. Seaga opine on the 70 per cent statistic that leave high school graduates "educationally lost" in Jamaica, how students are "graduating without any base to build a career, and unprepared for participating in a fulfilling life," made me cringe.

That in 2006 "shadeism is a reality in Jamaica." And that the illegitimacy

rate accounts for 70 per cent of all the births. The alarming research figures bothered me.

I wondered why members of the audience inappropriately applauded the disgraceful statistics. Perhaps, his message did not resonate as facts.

Many giggled when Mr. Seaga referenced Sizzla's "Thank You Mama" in order to support his matriarchal account and its impact on families and the entire society.

To punctuate his contention of "shadeism" Mr. Seaga quoted Buju Banton's "Love Mi Brownin'" release.

"Mi love mi car, mi love mi bike, mi love mi money and ting, but most of all mi love mi brownin'."

Many missed the metaphor that confirmed the modern

day affinity to preferential treatment of lighter-complexioned individuals in a predominantly black nation.

An individual at my side asked about the "brownin'" reference, which I tried to explain. "Oh! Really," he exclaimed, "because you know there is a handgun that is also called a Browning."

## Neither deluded nor diluted

"We live in two Jamaicas," the former prime minister stated.

"Ninety per cent (poor) knows everything about the 10 per cent (affluent) and the 10 per cent knows nothing about the 90 per cent."

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## Seaga's life

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Unlike a majority of Jamaican bureaucrats who speak before Jamaicans here, Mr. Seaga gave an honest, un-deluded account of life for the majority of citizens. He neither deluded nor diluted his research material.

From breastfeeding, to the cunning folk tales that label Brer Anancy and Brer Rabbit as role models, Mr. Seaga forged comparison between the shrewd business sense of sound system pioneers **Duke Reid**, **Tom The Great Sebastian** and others and the folk tales that parents embrace.

### On Garvey's trail in Harlem

It was ironic that the venue at which Mr. Seaga detailed Jamaican folkways and cultural identity in New York is located in the very same community **Marcus Mosiah Garvey** frequented while living in Harlem.

Mr. Seaga may not have known that the 135<sup>th</sup> St. location, which is home to the world's largest archival collection of Africans was also the central rallying point for Pan-African supporters of Garvey's philosophy.

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture's curator **Howard Dodson** in introducing the former PM explained that Garvey's legacy is legendary in Harlem but most recalled within a five-mile radius of the historic repository.

Mr. Seaga said he observed commonality



*From left Howard Dodson, chief, Schomburg Center, The Most Hon. Edward Seaga, Andrew Cocking, deputy group president, Capital & Credit Financial Group and Steven Hill, CEO, CIN TV at the CIN third annual lecture series at the Schomburg Center in Harlem on October 20.*

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with his life's work now being compiled at the UWI and the important documentation process for which the Schomburg is reputed. He said he hoped a relationship could be established where his 45-year political career would be archived at the Schomburg and the Edward Seaga Research Centre.

### Discrepancy on foreign exchange

On hearing Mr. Seaga's lecture, the facts sounded demeaning to my people. Reading the same statistics, the reality registered to be a true assessment and critical condition that should be recti-

fied. A change must come.

Retired and current politicians must fess up to their oversight and misdeeds. Many gloss over the crises to keep a majority of the population in submission to their classification. They seem to think denial will erase the problems.

Education remains a key principle to solving all of the problems Mr. Seaga spotlighted. Although I found a discrepancy in Mr. Seaga's snappy response to an individual seeking explanation about remittances sent to bolster families with lean incomes.

Bauxite, he said, rules as the number one money earner.

He said remittances account for one-sixth of

the profits. Mr. Seaga urged nationals to "send money...do it for your country. Help the poor."

This was in stark contrast to the Prime Minister **Portia Simpson Miller's** message delivered 24 hours earlier. The PM said remittances stacked evenly against the top two income generating sectors of the Jamaican economy — tourism and bauxite and alumina. Prime Minister Simpson Miller said that remittances were at the top of the list.

"The growth in remittances from the Jamaican Diaspora in the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom has been truly phenomenal. There has been a notable increase from US\$164.2 million in 1990 to US\$1.87 billion last year. Remittances now surpass the gross earnings from tourism and bauxite and alumina," she said.

Last year, Jamaica earned a reported US\$1.55 billion from tourism and another US\$1 billion from bauxite and alumina.

How the two representatives are so adversely opposed must lie with their political agendas.

When it seemed guests had exhausted their urge to query the former opposition leader, an elder who identified herself to be a former US resident that had retired and returned to the island for 13 years commented, "You did not mention jazz."

Without hesitation Mr. Seaga responded, "I know nothing about jazz."

"I will have to introduce you to it then, Mr. Seaga."

She had the last word and ultimately the last laugh too.