

# JAMAICA COLLEGE OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION

# NEW YORK



## A LEGACY OF INNOVATION AND IMPACT

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JAMAICA COLLEGE OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK



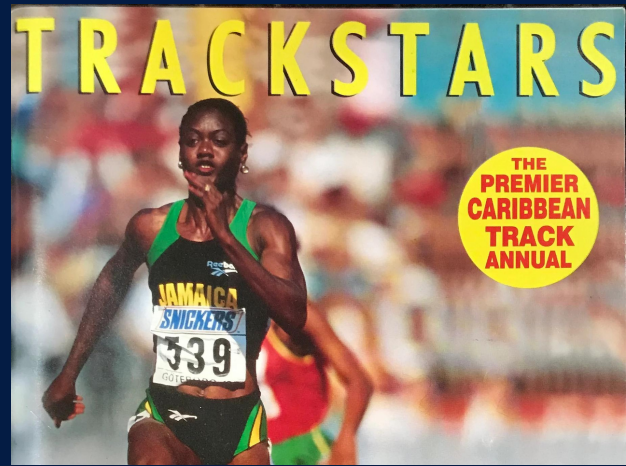
# FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO ENDURING LEGACY - THE STORY OF JCOBA-NY

In the bustling heart of Brooklyn, New York, a group of visionary Jamaica College alumni embarked on a journey that would forever transform their beloved alma mater and the broader Jamaican community. In 1990, a spark of inspiration ignited amongst **Laurence Cooper, Gary Gooden, Marlon Hew, Donovan Jones, Michael Jones, and Paul Lewis**. This group was soon joined by stalwarts **Lowell Campbell, Lance Clarke, Keith McLean, Derek Robertson, and Leslie Woodbine**, leading to the formation and incorporation of the **Jamaica College Alumni Association (USA) Inc. (JCAA-NY)**.

What unfolded transcended the confines of the Brooklyn basement and rippled far beyond.

An ambitious initiative began to blossom through a modest media campaign in the North American edition of the **Weekly Jamaica Gleaner**, heralding the inaugural gathering of the Association. Contrary to their optimistic anticipation of a surge in enthusiastic JC alums, the media outreach brought forth not a deluge but a handful plus two charming young ladies, **Paulette James** and her cousin **Junie**. That Paulette has remained an ardent supporter of JC to this day is testimony to her discerning nature. **Donovan Jones was elected President.**

Undeterred, the Association embraced innovation as its guiding principle, focusing not only on Jamaica College but also on broader nationalistic endeavors. This pioneering spirit manifested in diverse projects, leaving an indelible mark on the trajectory of the Association.



The association recognized the Penn Relays as a global platform for Jamaican excellence long before its formal inception. Leveraging this platform, JCAA-NY devised a novel approach to support and fund Jamaica College's Penn Relays team and to simultaneously provide exposure for Team Jamaica.



Thus, in 1995, **Trackstars Magazine** was born, offering comprehensive coverage of all Jamaican schools participating at Penn. This groundbreaking publication, spearheaded by a team of talented Jamaican journalists led by the late **Jimmy Carnegie**, paved the way for innovative Jamaican-style street merchandising at Penn. This pioneering move resonated with track enthusiasts and was pivotal in inspiring the inception of the now legendary **Team Jamaica Bickle**. The confluence of Trackstars Magazine and Jamaican-style street merchandising at Penn became more than a strategic maneuver; it became a narrative of innovation and foresight that reverberated far beyond track and field, leaving an indelible mark on the legacy of the Jamaica College Alumni Association and the broader Jamaican realm.



Embracing technological advancement, JCOBA-NY spearheaded the **JC 2000 Project**, establishing the first **Computer Lab** at Jamaica College, equipping the school with a cutting-edge technology platform for teaching and learning. This prescient vision was further realized through a generous donation of 80 computers from alumnus **Max Maxwell**, an English teacher at the esteemed **Lawrenceville School**.

Pioneering innovation, still in the Internet's nascent days, JCAA-NY joined forces with our energetic collaborator in Jamaica, the late **Roger Chang**—an honorary JCAA-NY member. Together, we achieved a groundbreaking milestone by establishing **campus-wide WI-FI** access at Jamaica College, marking a historic first for the nation.

**The JCOBA Online**

**About the JCOBA Online**

The Jamaica College Old Boys Association (JCOBA) website was launched in February 1995, primarily as a means of communication for JC's Alumni. However, the mission of the website took on new meaning when it was suggested among the alumni that the JCOBA Online could provide a source of information to Alumni and friends of Jamaica College. There are more than one hundred Old Boys in more than five countries listed on JCOBA Online. The list is extensive and includes alumni as far back as 1939.

The mission for the JCOBA Online continues to define itself. It now seeks to mobilize its resources to help return *the College* to its storied background of excellence in the development of powerful Jamaican men. Indeed, Jamaica College has graduated a number of distinguished men who have given selflessly to the development of Jamaica.

**School History**  
**Prayer Hymn**  
**Alumni Archives**

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**Forum**  
**Register**  
**Guestbook**  
**Other**

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**News**  
**Feature**  
**Sports**  
**Business**

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**Help**

In the wake of this achievement, JCAA-NY member Dr. David Levermore, at the helm, spearheaded the launch of the unofficial global Jamaica College Online portal ([www.jcoba.org](http://www.jcoba.org)), emerging as one of the inaugural Jamaican websites.

After a brief pause, the spirit of innovation championed by JCAA-NY seamlessly transitioned into the 21st century. The reinvigorated **Jamaica College Old Boys Association of New York (JCOBA-NY)** soared under the adept stewardship of **Dr. Dwight Williams**, followed by the dedicated leadership of **Michael McDonald**. Currently, under the capable guidance of **President Carl Bennett**, the profound ethos of innovation stands as the guiding force shaping the trajectory of our noble endeavors. A pivotal moment unfolded during Dr. Williams's tenure as President, with the establishment of an **Advisory Board** chaired by **Lowell Campbell**. This strategic move leveraged the expertise and talent of founding members and former executives, infusing the Association's leadership with a dynamic blend of experience and foresight.

## **PATTY FESTIVAL**



The mindset of progressive originality persisted in 2009 with the launch of the **Patty Festival of America**. This culinary celebration highlighted the cultural and economic significance of Jamaica's beloved patty, recently recognized as the world's third-best street food. We know it is the **BEST**.

Foreseeing the transformative power of STEM education, JCOBA-NY forged a groundbreaking partnership with **US FIRST**, catapulting Jamaica College into the exhilarating realm of robotics competitions. This visionary initiative, ignited by the students' fervid embrace of robotics, blossomed into a national movement, revolutionizing the landscape of science education in Jamaica. **Thus, the era of organized robotics in Jamaica was born.**



Thirteen remarkable years later, Jamaica College Robotics stands tall, having garnered numerous World Championships and International Awards, captivating thousands of students and inspiring millions across the globe. Ignited by JCOBA-NY's vision, Jamaica College Robotics has ascended to the pinnacle of our school's and nation's pride.

## THE GRIFFIN AWARDS

Breaking away from traditional alumni and Diaspora-themed events, JCOBA-NY rebranded its flagship annual function in 2017, launching **The Griffin Awards™ (The Griffys™)**, a modern awards ceremony honoring Jamaican luminaries in the arts, community service, education, and technology. This contemporary event seamlessly integrates Jamaican cultural heritage, marking milestones with the screenings of iconic films like "**The Harder They Come**" and "**Smile Orange**" at the SVA Theatre in Manhattan.



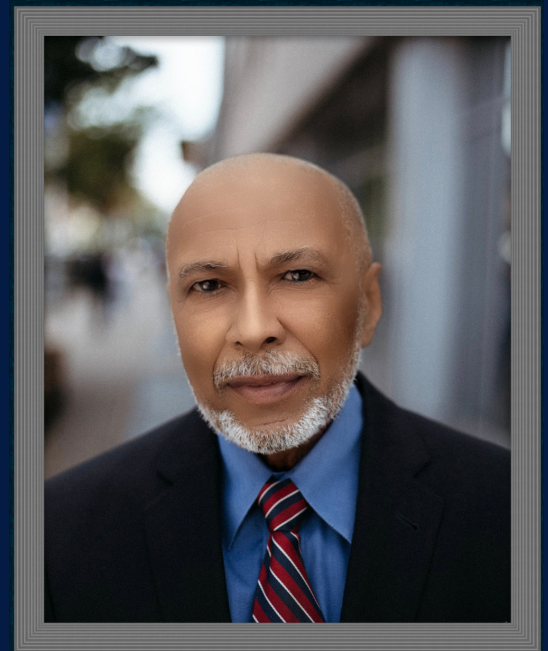


*Dr. Joseph Tait & Ambassador Audrey Marks Honorees at the 2023 Griffin Awards Boys with a Chorus of JC Old Boys*

Even in the face of a hiatus forced by the COVID-19 pandemic, The Griffin Awards, showcasing Jamaica College alumnus and renowned classical pianist Allan Hobbins, made a resounding comeback on the stage of Merkin Hall at Kaufman Music Center to widespread critical acclaim.

## DR. JOSEPH TAIT

No account of JCOBA-NY's journey can be considered comprehensive without honoring the indomitable spirit of **Dr. Joseph Lloyd Tait**. Motivated by the pioneering endeavors of JCOBA-NY and propelled by an unyielding dedication to philanthropy, Dr. Tait, a distinguished Veterinarian based in New York and a steadfast benefactor of JCOBA-NY, made a triumphant return to his alma mater.



In a gesture that resonates with grandeur and purpose, he bestowed a transformative gift of **USD 500,000 (JMD 78 million)** upon Jamaica College, establishing the **JAMAICA COLLEGE STEAM INFUSION PROJECT (JCSIP)**. This initiative stands as a shining beacon of hope, illuminating the path to a brighter future for Jamaica's educational landscape.

As JCOBA-NY embarks on the next chapter of its remarkable journey, the future holds endless possibilities. True to its innovative spirit, the Association remains committed to shaping a brighter future for Jamaica College and the broader Jamaican community.