



**JAMAICA COLLEGE OLD BOYS
ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK**

A BRIEF HISTORY

**FROM A BROOKLYN BASEMENT TO THE
SVA THEATRE AND BEYOND**



www.jcobany.org

In 1990 the Jamaica College Alumni Association (USA) Inc. was born when Michael Jones, Gary Gooden, Paul Lewis, Laurence Cooper, Donovan Jones and Marlon Hew signed on to the project. This group was soon joined by stalwarts like Lowell Campbell, Lance Clarke, Leslie Woodbine, Keith McLean and Derek Robertson.

A media campaign in the Weekly Gleaner announcing the first meeting, yielded not the flood of eager JC alumni we naively expected, but 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.

The Association was faced with two seemingly irreconcilable circumstances - the apathetic nature of many JC alumni and the felt need among the Executive to be quickly among the leaders of the alumni movement. It was decided that only innovation could effectively solve that puzzle. We would do things differently. Our focus would be JC but also always looking to the bigger picture of nationalism in our projects.

The Association, like other groups, has supported our school's Penn Relays efforts over many years - kudos to Lance Clarke for his three decades of service on this project. After seeing the amazing platform that Penn provides for Jamaicans, plans were laid and executed in 1995-1999 to exploit it in a way no one else had. So Trackstars Magazine was born, with reporting on ALL the schools from Jamaica participating at Penn, written by a stellar team of reporters hired in Jamaica including the late, great Jimmy Carnegie. Led by Trackstars, the Association launched Jamaican style street merchandising at Penn with T-shirts, flags etc. offered for sale. This was a massive hit with track fans and one of the factors which inspired Irwine Clare to create the remarkable Team Jamaica Bickle initiative. Irwine was instrumental in the success of Trackstars before creating TJB.

In the early 1990s, during the nascent days of the Internet, the Association formulated the JC 2000 Project, aimed at creating a 21st century technology platform at the school. Computers and peripherals were supplied to JC in this period. A large donation of 80 computers was enabled by Max Maxwell, an alumnus then teaching at the prestigious Lawrenceville School. We later collaborated with a local alumnus, Roger Chang to bring campus wide WI-FI access to Jamaica College - a first in the nation. Shortly thereafter under the leadership of Dr. David Levermore the (www.jcoba.org) the unofficial Jamaica College portal was launched, which was one of the first Jamaican websites.

After a short hiatus, the JCAA-NY ethos of innovation fortunately survived in the 21st century, first under the able leadership of Dr Dwight Williams, followed by Michael McDonald, and current President Carl Bennett in the restructured Jamaica College Old Boys Association of New York, Inc. (JCOBANY).

In 2009, continuing its series of unique projects, the Association launched the Patty Festival of America, highlighting the economic and cultural importance of this great Jamaican staple, recently voted the 3rd best street food in the World. We however, all know that it is THE best.

Also in 2009 the Association began to address Jamaica's deficiency in science education with even more applied innovation. JCOBANY got JC involved in Robotics Competitions run by US FIRST. This was done after we noted the tremendous excitement for science that robotics generated among students. We wanted this excitement for science to migrate to JC and Jamaica. Board Chairman Hon. Danny Williams and Principal Ruel Reid were both receptive to the idea of a JC Robotics Club. That's how organized robotics in Jamaica started. One can read about the accolades of the Griffins on the international stage and how this project is growing into a national robotics movement on our think-tank portal www.goldgrif.org.

Breaking from the traditional and highly inefficient dinner-dance alumni formats, in 2017 JCOBA-NY re-branded its signature event as The Griffin Awards™ (The Griffys™). The Griffys™ celebrates the achievements of Jamaicans in the arts, community services, education, science and technology in a modern awards structure. The inaugural Griffys™ featured an infusion of Jamaican cultural film heritage with the 2018 screening of *The Harder They Come*, to mark its 45th anniversary. We continue this tradition with the 42nd anniversary screening of *Smile Orange* in this year's program.

What of the future for JCOBANY? We can't reveal the answer to that but whatever it is, it will be innovative.

Fervet Opus in Campis Indeed!