

South Caribbean Travel Story 2014

NANCY'S GPS MAP OF WHERE WE TOOK PHOTOS

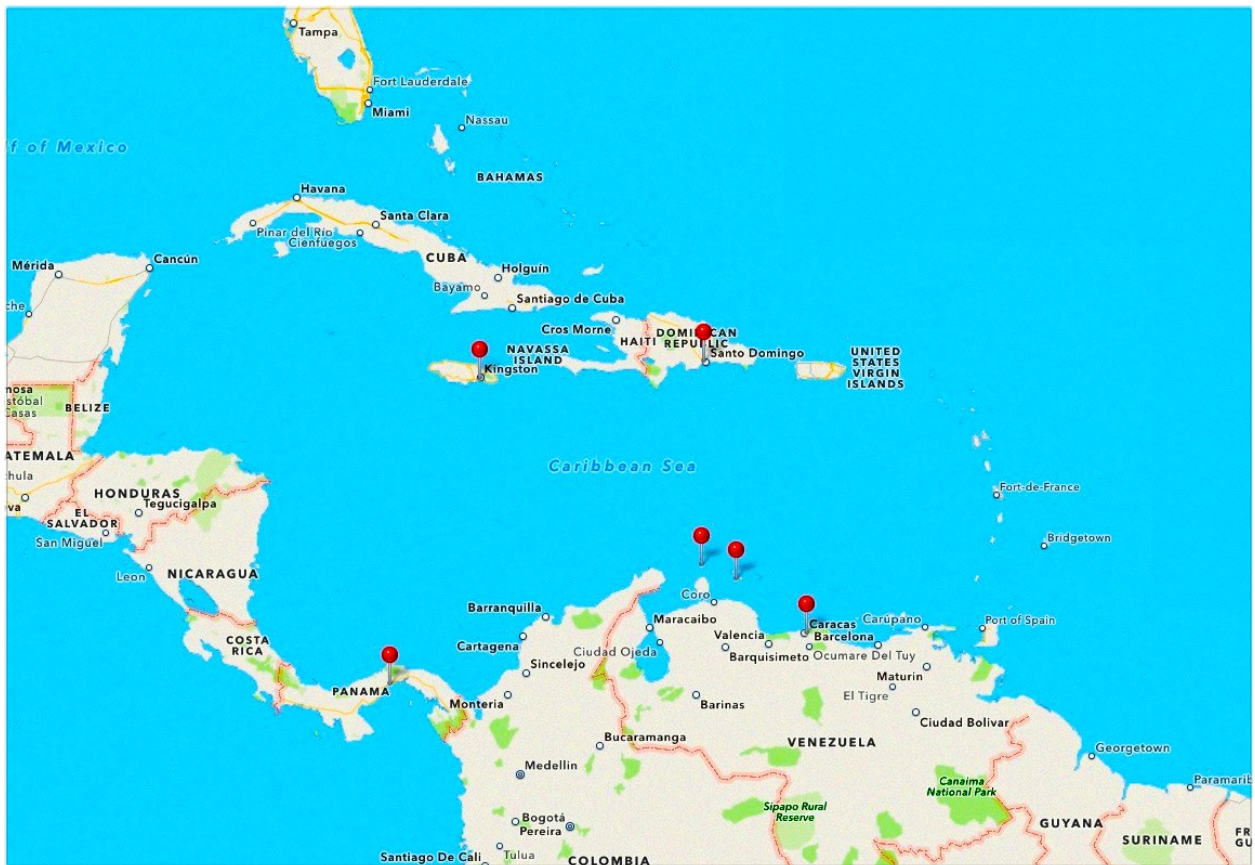


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Panama City, Panama

If you make travel arrangement to the tiny isthmus holding Central and South American together, don't be surprised if travel websites take you to Florida's Panama City. Far more Latin Americans flock to Panama than *Norte Americanos*. When you arrive in the tiniest country south of the United States, a hundred skyscrapers make it feel like the downtown Manhattan or Singapore waterfront. But when you get up close to the colorful, sharp-looking downtown buildings, scattered around them are rundown storefronts like any poor Latin American town -- a sign



of economic growth bypassing the culture of the poorer classes. Imagine seeing a skyscraper built in the middle of a tiny Africa village of mud huts. Panama has hundreds of luxury high-rise buildings with thousands of rundown shacks in both Panama City and the surrounding countryside.

We found out very quickly that the humidity is so high that you get wet all over, even under a blue sky, and that includes the dry season. Year around the temperature rarely drops below 70F nor reaches above 90F. The people are very friendly

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until they get into their cars then they get mean. Even though it rarely rains, new comers feel wet everyday, if they go outside air-conditioned buildings.

The USA has been a big brother to Panama ever since they worked out a deal for the US to build the canal. Leftovers from the era include the ability to pay for everything in US dollars and many people speak English.



Panama Canal. Since 1999, Panama has owned and run the famous and heavily traveled 50-mile Panama Canal, but it was built by the United States between 1904 and 1914. The USA brought in 50,000 military and civilian supervisors to make sure it got done at a cost of \$600 million. (Thousands of American-made residence halls and administration buildings still dot the landscape around the Canal.) Today the cost would be \$60 billion, but it would never be built today. Can you imagine the current congress and president taking on such a massive governmental project? Ironically, we allow businesses to be strategic and plan for the future but not our government. Another amazing part of the story is that President Teddy Roosevelt and the Senate made a deal with Panamanian rebels to oust the Columbian colo-

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nialists in return for allowing the USA to build the canal. This was typical U. S. foreign policy. No wonder South American views the USA as a bully.

The Canal props up the economy. The average ship pays \$52,000 to go through the locks. (One gigantic cruise liner had to pay almost \$400,000.) And the Panama Canal keeps getting bigger and bigger. A brand new set of locks will be finished in 2015 to allow much bigger container ships to pass through, greatly increasing the volume of world trade.

The Canal is mostly a man-made lake (Gatun Lake) that is 26 meters above sea level. Getting into and out of the Lake requires going through locks at either the Atlantic end or the Pacific end, which borders the City of Panama. In at 1.5 minute time-lapse video, you can travel the entire Panama Canal vicariously by watching this YouTube video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vi19z4LEi0>

Old Town and City Parks. Upon returning from the Panama Canal, we asked to be dropped off at the Old Town, which juts out into the ocean as a peninsula about 12 blocks long and 6 blocks wide. The streets are so narrow that almost everyone walks. We enjoyed watching Panamanian families doing things together on Sunday. One admirable feature of Panama City is its many well-kept city parks. Much of the waterfront consists provides places for people to enjoy park-like activities like walking, basketball, and exercise machines. We captured photos of both people and very old trees in the old city parks. As the temperatures were in the 90s, the vendors selling cold drinks were the most popular.



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Costa del Estes. Half way between Panama City and its airport rises a luxury town called Costa del Estes, arising out of the jungle along the Pacific Ocean. It follows the tradition of “new urbanism” in that it is a completely self-contained town minimizing the need to drive most places. But what is so astounding is its height and the luxury of its buildings. At least a dozen high-rises pierce the sky with 75 floors or more. It is capitalism’s answer to the new cities that China has built by the government, but that remain empty of residents. I have been unable to find any stats on the Internet about Costa del Estes. It is still a work in progress.



Challenges. I have wondered what the 1% in America does with all their money; now I know at least one place it is going. With new trade and businesses built around the Panama Canal (giving 7.5% of their GDP) and economic optimism, the result is something like a miniature Dubai without city planning. A lot of gringos don't like it here because it looks and feels like Mexico when you can't see the tall buildings. The big scandals in the Country are severe inequality, government corruption, and very poor education. None-the-less, there is hope for this little nation; later this year the Canal opens to the gigantic container ships, and the revenues will

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soar. Most importantly, the Panamanian government is pouring \$13.6 billion into infrastructure, schools, and programs for the poor.



Panama is not even one-fifth as rich as its Asian counterpart, Singapore, on a per-person basis. But Singapore would envy its growth: from 2005 to 2010 its economy expanded by more than 8% a year, the fastest rate in the Americas. The IMF expects it to grow by over 6% a year during the next five years. Panama will soon overtake Costa Rica in GDP per head. Accounting for purchasing power, it is one of the five richest countries south of our border. Yet at the same time, it is one of the poorest. Thirty percent of the population subsides on less than \$2 a day.

Caracas



In planning a trip to Venezuela, the biggest shocker is the high price of almost everything. Flights in and out are double the rest of the Caribbean, and hotel and restaurant prices are over twice those of Panama and Mexico, which are all a consequence of very

rapid inflation over the past five years. For this reason and because of high reputed crime rates, we chose to stay only two days in Caracas. Even in such a short stay it was possible to observe some distinctive features about the culture.

The building below, La Previsora Insurance, is shaped like an arrow so that at noon each day, every window receives sunlight, which only works near the equator.

Of all the 10 or so countries to which we previously traveled in South and Central America, the English language is the least likely to be used in Venezuela. Almost no one speaks English, their cable TV has no English channels, and an English newspaper is hard to find. This as undoubtedly not helped by the rocky relationship between the USA and Venezuela when Hugo Chavez came to power and started getting friendly with Cuba, Iran, and even North Korea. In return, the United States makes life miserable for Venezuela, for instance by officially describing it as an unfriendly and crime-ridden place but saying nothing about the many dangerous urban ghettos in the United States. It is also hard to find recent travel guides on Venezuela or Caracas written in the past five years, which also discourages tourism.



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Venezuela's policies of nationalization have not helped. For instance, seven years ago the State took over the large, 5-star Hilton hotel in Caracas and continued to run it under a different name. We were told that such takeovers were because the businesses owed a big loan to local banks and could not repay it. Thus, some of the unfriendly business practices in Venezuela may be just a difference in philosophy of debt and bankruptcy between the USA and Venezuela, rather than political ideology. The USA has bullied South American countries for a long time and before that it was mainly the Spanish who plundered their country's resources. One of the statues we saw labeled "Venezuela's First Tourist," which was actually Christopher



Columbus. The people in a rush of nationalism had toppled the statue and only the pedestal of the statue remains. Venezuela used to have a thriving tourist industry. We saw few other American tourists anywhere.

On the right is the new style government built housing. Above are the brightly colored slums, very vulnerable in earthquake-prone Caracas.



Venezuela had a tremendous poverty problem before Chavez and his socialistic

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policies, and it still has a huge number of poor. Half the population earns less than \$2 per day, and most of these live in shantytowns in and around Caracas. We captured some of these impoverished communities in photographs. They reminded me of the nearly identical hillsides in Brazil called favelas. The government under Chavez began an incredibly large housing program. Single-family homes and thousands of apartment buildings have been built or are under construction all over the city. As these homes are completed, the poor will be allowed to rent them at a very low cost for several years. After that, they will be given free to the occupiers. It is hard to imagine that building homes for six million people can be done fast enough to make a generous dent in tenement or shanty living within the near future. But the important fact is that they are trying, and trying a lot harder than most countries. Housing policy in Caracas and Singapore could teach the U.S. a lot. In addition to investments in housing, this year the government is spending a very large amount on building and fixing all kinds of infrastructure and on improving the educational system.

Military. Our guide was very proud to be able to show us their huge military complex and capability. The military parade grounds were huge and reminded me of military parades everyone, especially North Korea and China. As shown in the photo below, huge banners with the smiling face of Hugo Chavez on each one lined the streets and parade grounds. Also, bordering the military parade area were gigantic black statues of Venezuela's historically important military leaders. The most adored of all past leaders is Simon Bolivar. He was actually responsible for leading the uprising that successfully ousted Spain from about 10 South American countries and Panama. Compared to the other military heroes, he was only about 5 foot 2 inches, so they put his statue on a large stone pedestal, making him taller than all of the others.



Caracas, Venezuela



Catedral window showing 400 yr history



Electrical barbed wire on fences of the wealthy



Paseo de Los Proceres Gateway



Poor Housing in Earthquake-Prone Caracas



Simon Bolivar - short man statue at Paseo Los



Standing with the Military

Aruba

Aruba is a small island nation of about 100,000 people just north of Western Venezuela. We went there largely because we could not get connections within a single day from Caracas to Curacao. We stayed in the center of the capital Oranjestad, which is sometimes called Tiny Las Vegas. What dominates the little town are the casinos and the cruise ships, of which there often are five docked at a time. Cruise ship ports attract jewelry stores like a dead animal attracts maggots. During dinner at the Iguana Inn, we counted 20 jewelry stores from our table on a 2nd



floor open patio with a pleasant post-sunset breeze.

Just before we arrived in Aruba, the island was blessed with a major downpour that left standing puddles all over town. These puddles surprised us with a beautiful orange glow from the sunset. Only one cruise ship remained docked that evening,

but the streets were still jammed with people and cars. The parade of young people driving supped up cars reminded me of high school days in small town America. One added touch: people waved from boats being towed by pickup trucks.



Aruba has a reputation as a popular vacation island for North Americans. Most of the planes at the airport sported USA airline names, and almost everyone we overheard was speaking Americanized English. The US dollar is the currency of choice. Thus, I was amazed to learn that Aruba is an island of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which means they share a monarch with the Netherlands, Curacao, and St. Martins. In addition to the king, they have an island governor and a house of parliament.

As you will see in the pictures, some of the buildings have a European architectural flavor, although most look like they had been imported from Las Vegas or Atlantic City. Our hotel had outdone Las Vegas hotels with a water channel big enough for a boat ferrying 15 passengers from the hotel lobby out to sea or to another port nearby. The inside dock was three steps away from a Starbucks, so one could immediately order a latte after returning from a “stressful” boat trip around the calm harbor.





The highlight of our Aruba experience occurred on our waterfront walls. Much to our surprise, the rocks along the shoreline provided homes for dozens of iguanas of all sizes and colors and many crabs of various colors hidden in the crevices of the rocky shoreline.



The iguanas especially loved the sunshine, and while sunbathing allowed us to get within three feet of them, as if the warm sun was a sleeping pill. In the shade, however, they scurried away to stay out of sight of dangerous predators.



Curacao

By the few that visit this island nation of Curacao, it is often described as one of the most beautiful islands of the world. In contrast to the arid land of Aruba and many other Caribbean Islands, grass, bushes, trees, and cacti fill the open land and rocky spaces in between pristine white sandy beaches. Rather than being flat, it has small mountains to grace the panoramic scenes island views. Its coastline is broken up with dozens of small bays and inlets. The island is associated worldwide with an icon that is simply a photo of its charming, colorful buildings on the harbor of its capitol, Willemstad.



The hop from one island to the other took only a half hour in a prop plane carrying 20 passengers. It seemed like we waited half the day in the Aruba airport, and then the tiny, old plane did not have air conditioning.

Pronounced “cure-a-sow” with the accent on the first and last syllable, Curacao occupies twice the land of Aruba and has 140,000 residents. Whereas Aruba feels, looks, and sounds like an American resort town, Curacao feels and sounds like a Dutch vacation land. KLM has super-sized jets flying people here from Holland and more than half the people speak Dutch. Many speak the indigenous language, some converse in Spanish, but most people can converse in English as needed.

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The biggest contrast of Curacao with Aruba lies with the dominance of Aruba by American culture and American tourists, while Curacao is a product of Dutch culture with Dutch tourists. Aruba is a party town for Americans, while Curacao takes its queues from Holland where great respect is given to preserving history and building industry that works hard to give everyone a job and struggles to make policy that minimizes inequality. From my experience in working with quite a few people from Holland, I would say that the Dutch tend to be more friendly and courteous compared to bold, brash and more superficial American tourists. So, I would prefer to return to Curacao than Aruba.

Curacao felt cooler to us because of the continuous mild breeze off of the ocean, but the temperature averaged a high of 85F and a low of 75F. Our first night here was very special. We slowly had dinner on a patio where we were serenaded on one side by loud tree frogs and the other by a native band that played a mixture of music with flavors from Mexico, the United States, and the Caribbean.



In Curacao, we stayed in a 60-year old hotel build on the site of an Old Dutch fort built 200 years earlier. One of the original canons still remains. One day we spent on the beach and the other, playing tourists, walking around the capital city,

Willemstad. (Incidentally, the King of the Netherlands Kingdom is Willem-Alexander.) Willemstad is one of the most remarkably beautiful ports in the world. The iconic baroque and neo-



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classical architecture of 4 and 5 story buildings along the harbor are utterly enchanting and have become a symbol of Curacao. They look like the stately homes along the canals in Amsterdam, except these have been painted many bright colors.

Curacao had an infamous history as a hub for the

slave trade in the southern Caribbean because of its great harbor. However, since then the Dutch have been very serious about building a self-sustaining island economy while minimizing inequality. Hence, Curacao is one of the best places for both Blacks and Whites



to live in the Caribbean. In brief, they have built a model society where extravagance is frowned upon and destitution is rare.

Basic to the functioning of the harbor are three bridges. Near the ocean is the floating pontoon bridge that has to be swung open by a tugboat 2 or 3 times an hour, no matter the size of the boat. The second is a little drawbridge on a side channel where the floating market is held every day. The market is not totally floating like in Thailand, but fresh vegetables and fruits arrive by boat and then lifted onto the shops on the dock of the channel. The third bridge is the tallest bridge in the Caribbean, with a huge span and height of 200 feet allowing freighters of all kinds to pass under. A few Cruise boats dock outside the floating bridge, but they are not as common, nor do not shape and spoil the local culture as they do in Aruba.

Kingston, Jamaica

In planning this busy trip in the Southern Caribbean, the places, days, and order of countries visited were primarily determined by what flights and hotels were available within our 2-week vacation time. As we landed in Jamaica and drove to our hotel in Kingston, I had the illusion that we were in Africa. (It did not help that the book I was reading, *Cutting for Stone*, is about life in Ethiopia.) I really did feel like we had been transported from a Dutch resort island to Africa.

Even though there are relatively few pale-faced people in Jamaica, almost everyone speaks a Jamaicanized version of English, if not very well spoken British English. It makes it much easier to get around, compared to Caracas where almost no one speaks English. Right next to our hotel was a large grocery store, much like we have become accustomed to finding on Mexican vacations.



The main difference is that in Kingston the food labels are in English instead of Spanish.

In brief, the history of Jamaica began in 1500 with the Spanish subjugating the Indians; the British overthrew the Spanish 150 years later; and finally in 1962 Jamaica became an independent nation. As the African slaves greatly outnumbered the British by

the 1700s, the most important historical date for Jamaicans is the emancipation of the slaves in 1838. Emancipation Park (photo above) in the center of the city remembers that day, and that is where our tour of Kingston began. It is a beautifully maintained park with many flowering trees (see photos next pages) and several energetic games of ping-pong underway at midday. The Park is also special because



the open spaces offer panoramic vistas of the 8,000 foot Blue Mountains to the north of the City. The most imposing fixture of the park is the sculpture at the entrance to the park of an enormous black man and woman looking upward to the sky as they arise naked from the moving water.

Next, we took the 2-hour tour of the Bob Marley Museum, which will stand out as the most impressive experience of our Kingston tour. The Museum is housed in the comfortable house in New Kingston to which Bob Marley moved in 1975 after he started making large royalties from his records. He lived there for 6 years until he died from cancer at the age of 36. The museum tour of the house gives an intimate sense of Marley's lifestyle, genius, and hardships. The dozens of gold albums, awards, and hundreds of concerts attest to the remarkable impact he had on mid-20th Century culture around the world.



At the Museum we found a couple of Rastafarians (see photo) a young man in dreadlocks and an ancient women dressed in white with Ethiopian official colors on the borders. I took her picture and then gave her \$5.00, which led her to a 10-minute tirade about deserving more money than that. Which proves that not every Rastafarian takes Marley message of love, peace and harmony to heart. There were several photos and paintings of King Haile Selassie at the museum as Marley was a major leader of the Rastafarian movement that proclaimed King Selassie a God-figure; specifically the equivalent of a Biblically forecasted second Jesus





Christ. Although His Majesty Haile Selassie was deposed and died in the late 1970s, his confirmed remains were never found and most Rastafarians believe that he remains alive. At the request of Haile Selassie, Bob Marley and many other Rastafarians became members of the Ethiopian Orthodox (Coptic) Church. "Tafari" was Haile Selassie's original name. There are only a few thousand Rastafarians left but they are very religious and strict believers in the Bible. Rastafari ideas and customs, however, pervade the Jamaican culture even today, and a lot of people are interested in Haile Selassie.

Right after the Marley Museum, we drove to the shack in Trench Town where Marley had lived when he worked with other musicians creating and perfecting the Reggae musical genre. Fans of Marley and Reggae are re-



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constructing Marley's early residence, a tiny 12 by 12 room in the tenements of Trench Town, the largest slum or ghetto of Kingston. In these residences, whole families were limited to a tiny room (the size of a tool shed) plus a shared toilet and kitchen. The sheds have no heating or cooling system, except for air spaces between slats over the door. Next to a cluster of these shed-like homes, we saw the rusted out VW bus that had served Marley and his collaborators as they eked out a



living while assembling the sounds and ideas that came to be known as Reggae.

Trench Town like all shantytowns can easily leave one depressed and dismayed. Piles of trash in the streets, abandoned buildings, the lack of transportation and stores to buy food all add up to a world-space where there is little for which to be grateful except life itself, and even that has a short span. It is not a place a tourist gets out alive without a local guide or bodyguard.

Trench Town is adjacent to Kingston's old downtown, made up of tall financial buildings next to street markets. After getting a feel for downtown, we went to the suburbs for the Hope Botanical Gardens, a popular site for weddings and picnics. It is a huge 60-acre park but was disappointing because the grass and many plants

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were brown from lack of water and attention, one of the outcomes of economic austerity. As you can see, we found some unusual trees and beautiful flowers.

The final stop on our private tour of Kingston was a historical mansion called Devon House. This free attraction is known worldwide for its ice cream. National Geographic rated it as the 4th best place for ice cream in the world. It did not disappoint and turned out to be a great, shady respite on a hot winter afternoon.

Two of our evenings in Jamaica were spent with a friend I met at a conference, Julie Meeks, who holds an important position at the University of West Indies based in Kingston. UWI manages campuses in 18 English-speaking Caribbean countries and territories. We had a great time learning about living in Jamaica while getting to know her and her friends. The first night she took us to dinner with her friend Angela and the second evening took us to an unusual social event at a home with a wonderful outdoor patio surrounded by orchids and other blooming flowers. Once a week they open their home to a small network of friends to just come by for snacks, drinks and conversation. At least half of the members of this informal social club are retired and almost all have lost a spouse or close family member. A community would be much more resilience and socially sustainable with lots of informal networks like this one.

After the social, Julie drove us through wealthy estates on the side of a mountain up to a city overlook. The houses, gates and flora reminded me of Beverly Hills but two things were different. One was the size and thickness of the walls and the other was the dreadful condition of the roads. The asphalt had completely deteriorated in many places. One of the people we met that night had lost two husbands during armed robberies while they were sleeping; yet Jamaicans love their comfortable Jamaican life and do not leave. About as far as they go is to get a second home in the United States or the Bahamas. Despite the dreadful traffic jams and the high crime rates, Jamaicans thrive on their lifestyle if they are successful in business or professions. Unfortunately, the majority of Jamaicans cannot expect to live that way. However, in the spirit of Bob Marley and Reggae, many “live the life they love, and love the life they live.” Jamaican society is somewhat stratified by skin color, and the British and lighter skinned Jamaicans tend to live in the wealthier neighborhoods.

Before going on the trip, I assembled some photos and history of my family’s experiences in Ethiopia and of Emperor Haile Selassie’s history and titled it “Memories of Haile Selassie.” I intended it as the basis for a discussion or interview and sent it to Julie Meeks. The interview didn’t happen but the newspaper just put the whole article with photos in the paper. It appears in the Sunday Observer on January 12; it is included in this document as an appendix.

Kingston, Jamaica



Flame of the Woods or Jungle Geraniums in



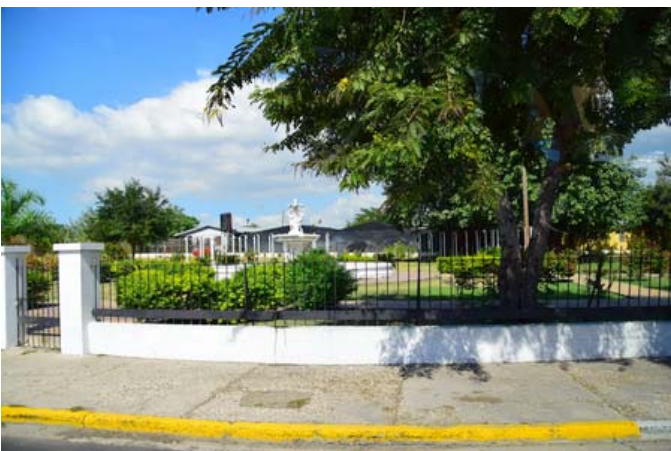
Emancipation Park Statue - Blue Mountains



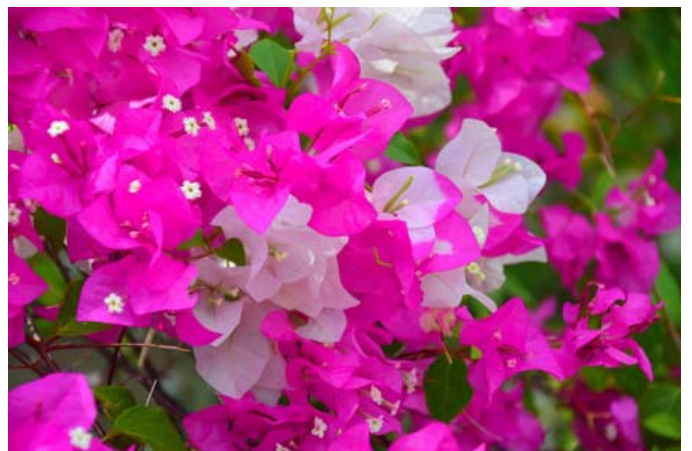
Kingston Slum



Ping Pong Competition in Eman. Park



National Heroes Park in Kingston



Bleeding Azaleas in Hope Gardens Kingston

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic



Christopher Columbus landed on the island in 1492, and Santo Domingo became the site of the first permanent European settlement in the Americas. It has become a huge city of over a million and remains the capital of Dominican Republic. The “Colonial Zone” contains many cathedrals, museums, and other edifices from earlier eras, some of them going back over 500 years. The Colonial Zone of Santo Domingo is a World Heritage Site

One of the treasures in the Colonial Zone is the Alcázar de Colón (see photo) is the oldest official building in the Americas still standing. It was built in 1517 by the son of Christopher Columbus, and now displays items belonging to Columbus' family.

Later in the afternoon, we decided to walk along George Washington Blvd (also called the Malecon) adjacent to the Ocean. The highway is in the lower cover of the above photo. Because there were no stoplights within miles, we found a pedes-

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trian crosswalk to get to the shoreline-walking path, and stood waiting and waiting for cars and trucks to stop and let us pass. No cars stopped so we decided to risk our lives because surely, if people were in the middle of the 4-lane road, the cars would stop. Well, they didn't. So, we stood on the narrow yellow line in the center of the road as cars, trucks and even buses whizzed by with in a foot or two on each side of us. Some drivers honked as if to tell us to get off the road. Finally, a tiny space opened up and we ran for "deer" life. A guy on a park bench watched us and gave us a stern lecture in Spanish about not crossing the street.

For our return trip to cross the busy road, we waited for a traffic jam and then sprinted between the cars. The irony of this opportunity to learn about Dominican Republic drivers was that all of the Dominicans we met on the trip were friendly and courteous. But even in Jamaica and Panama where the driving is ruthless, drivers still stop to let pedestrians cross a busy street.

After crossing the busy free-for-all highway, we got some very powerful shots of the heavy surf and the landmarks along the way. One unexpected find was a tiny chunk of land on the shoreline where a homeless person apparently still lived. Among the homeless person's many collections were a group of potted aloe Vera plants, perhaps for medicinal purposes. Like the United States, the government helps the homeless only with institutionalization, if that.



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After three centuries of Spanish rule, with French and Haitian interludes, the country became independent in 1821. This makes the Dominican Republic very much a Latin American country. I was so surprised on this trip to find that even though Jamaica and the Dominican Republic are relative close together, there is almost no communication and cooperation between them. To get to one country from the other, requires an airplane connection in Miami. And we found that Jamaicans don't have much interest in the Dominican Republic. In some ways, it is amazing how much influence a couple of centuries of domination by different colonial powers has on the contemporary culture of small Caribbean countries.



One of the most challenging characteristics of Dominican Republic is getting an accurate picture of its racial or ethnic composition. Most sources give a simple, crude answer: 73% mixed, 16% White and 11% Black. However, recent genetic testing has found that 70% of the Dominicans have some African genetics, that research has concluded that the “average Dominican” is 58.1% Caucasian, 35.2% African, and 6.4% Indigenous Amerindian. Since “the average person” is a fictitious construction, we cannot use these numbers without creating some misunderstandings. So, the question remains: what percent of Dominicans appear to be of African descent. Based upon eyeballing the people in Santo Domingo one day, it clearly seems like well over half are African or Black. But Jamaicans are considerable more African in ancestry, with 90% self-reporting as Black.

One fascinating cultural difference that we encountered in Santo Domingo was greater interpersonal domineering, compared to Kingston and other places visited. Perhaps it can be explained by the tendency for people in some Latin American countries to have domineering personalities. We certainly have encountered it in Mexico a lot. When we arrive at a Mexican airport, we always have about 50 (mostly aggressive men) descend on us to try to talk us in to going to a timesharing tour or use their taxi.

Here is what happened to us when we arrived at the Santo Domingo airport to go home: a man immediately started taking our suitcases out of the taxi. We told him “no, we do it ourselves,” but he ignored us, so we allowed him to take them. After

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he took us to the airline counter, we gave him two USA gold dollar coins as a tip, but he refused to take them because they were not pesos and an insultingly small tip. As we had just spent all our pesos on the taxi, we continued to barter with him, hoping that he would give in and go away. After much whining and frowning on his part, I parted with the last money we had left, a \$10 bill. He continued to frown but went away.



Our tour guide the day before had a similar tendency to be inflexible and not listen to what we wanted. He dominated our tour plan in that even though we told him where we wanted to go, he took us to all the places he thought we should see. Our tour guide in Kingston was just the opposite. Perhaps the contrast can be explained by the culture of former British colonies. For example, in Kenya, people line up single file waiting for a bus during the day, even if at night they riot in the streets.

The Latin American tendency to be very persistent in getting others to do their bidding may be related to the higher value they place on commitment to family and community. This value sometimes over rides individualism, not allowing others to depart from the norms and desires of the group.

This photo of the sculpture of black stone dancers on the Malecon Blvd in Santo Domingo, contrasts the culture with the black-figures statue in Kingston. (See photo between pages 21 and 22.) These fleshy, short figures not only touch but dance with intent eye contact, which is the opposite of the heroic but distant figures in Kingston.



Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic



Santo Domingo Botanical Gardens with Turtles



Barbed Wire Fencing in Santo Domingo



Egret fishing in National Botanical Gardens



Alcazar de Colon in Santo Domingo



Homeless Shelter on Malecon Surf - Santo



Lotus in Santo Domingo Garden

Reflections

(1) **Poverty and Inequality.** In country after country on this trip, I repeatedly felt surprise at the signs of poverty scattered in-between pockets of wealth. The per-person GDP in the USA is 10 times greater than Jamaica and Dominican Republic. All of the six Caribbean countries we visited plus the United States have more inequality than the global average. In three of the six countries (Panama, Jamaica, and Venezuela), over one quarter of the people live on less than \$2/day.

I have been reading statistics on world poverty and distress and scarce resources for many years, and I have seen extreme starvation and illness in countries like Ethiopia, Kenya, rural China, and Thailand. But on this trip to six countries in the Southern Caribbean, all neighbors of the United States, I was surprised to find extreme poverty in all the countries with the possible exception of the tiny islands of Aruba and Curacao. This made me feel sad and wonder how Americans can let so much suffering persist next door, in their cities, to say nothing of other regions and neighboring countries.

In the heart of Trench Town, the biggest slum in Kingston, I saw a tall Black woman walking down the street perfectly balancing a huge jug on her head, hands-free. I marveled at the sight because it symbolizes the power of culture so well. This is a skill that takes a great deal of practice and undoubtedly a Mother who wants to pass it on down the generations. Yet, Jamaica's schools are attempting to train its students in job skills for the 21st century and the government struggles to provide infrastructures and education that make head balancing and jug carrying obsolete. An electronics factory contemplating a move to Jamaica will not be impressed by a work force with jug-carrying skills. In the age of TV and social media, the younger generations are impatient, not willing to wait long for societies to change on their own.

Probably the biggest obstacle to economic development is slow cultural change combined with hard-to-break social stratification structures. However, the structure will not change unless the labor force has jobs and the means to change lifestyles. In cities like Caracas and Kingston, a huge portion of the labor force cannot find jobs. And that leads to not only low morale, but crime and violence as well, all of which stand in the way of progress -- a vicious cycle.

(2) **Suffering.** One of the videos in the Bob Marley Museum showed him saying that Reggae grew out of suffering. Trench Town, one of Kingston's huge ghettos or slums, calls itself the "birthplace of Reggae," because Bob Marley and other Reggae artists and producers lived in that slum during the time of its inception. Marley and others have infused Reggae lyrics with social criticisms and political reforms as well as spiritual struggles. While many of Bob Marley's songs are light-hearted and happy, his typical singing voice in many if not most of his performances has mournful, sad tones at its core. The take off of Reggae worldwide in the 1970s, along with its persisting popularity, suggests that it became a tool that could be used to embrace suffering without self-defeat.

(3) **Development.** My impression in all six countries was that something big was holding back economic progress in this part of the world. Urban mythology suggests that the major obstacles are the hot weather, a history of oppression and slavery, chemical dependency, crime and violence. Conservative economists and the World Bank tend to blame the problem on lack of fiscal discipline and over spending on social services. Liberal economists, on the other hand, attribute the drags on socio-economic progress are low and poor education, persistently high unemployment that destroys the morale of youth generations, wasteful spending of the rich, and the fact that the poor are so poor that they cannot buy goods and services, thus slowing down the economy. In conversations with Jamaicans, another explanation was offered for curtailed economic progress: bullying by the United States. As an example, the Reagan Administration hurt Jamaica's economy and political climate with its war on drugs during which marijuana eradication became rampant in Jamaica. Countries like Jamaica were threatened with withdrawal of financial aid if they did not cooperate with the USA in arresting users of ganja (marijuana) and jointly eradicating cannabis fields. The cultural damage of this invasion was not the only tragedy--the gap left by the demise of the marijuana traders was filled with the South American drug lords who also smuggled guns from the USA to Jamaica. Thus it appears that the rise in gang warfare and criminal violence in general in Jamaica, Mexico, Columbia and some other countries was in large part an unintended consequence of the puritanical, indiscriminate war on all drugs (except alcohol) by the United States. Apparently, US foreign policy toward the countries south of the border is not based so much on neighborliness as on economic self-advantage and inter-nation power. We have written many off because they are labeled socialist or because they have different cultural values, but the sad fact remains that we could learn a lot from them.

(4) **Crime.** In every country visited, we saw many if not most windows protected from burglary with iron bars. The very wealthy almost always live behind bars because of their fear of burglary. But some places, especially Caracas, the windows of dilapidated tenement buildings were covered with iron grids as well. Furthermore, many wealthier residents in Caracas install electrified and barbed wire at the top of 10-foot cement walls and heavily locked gates.

(5) **Modes of Transportation.** Many of our retired friends travel but almost all of them do so in tour groups where the arrangements are all made by the tour organization. Some take a cruise tour, which is much the same but everyone remains on the boat most of the time, rather than staying in hotels. Of course, there are those that own a second home or timeshare or rent a place and stay pretty much in the same place. But if the objective is to see the world and other cultures, there are mainly two options: the cruise tour and the tour group. This Caribbean tour was neither of these: it was a land tour but we went without a group and we made all of the decisions and arrangements on our own.

The advantage of the self-planned tour is you can go anywhere you want and stay as long as you want, except that if you wait until a month or two before leaving, the flights and hotels may not be available and if they are, they cost a lot more than if you make the reservations a half year in advance. We started planning this trip about six months ago. Our goal was to take a real vacation between Nancy's jobs because for the last few years all of our trips have been pre-determined by the time and location of a professional meeting.

As our goal was to experience a wide range of Caribbean culture, we decided to go to six places we had never been and were not likely to go for other purposes. It took me about 10 days of playing travel agent to book the trip. The challenge started with the fact that no American travel agencies book inter-island flights. Eventually, I found an online travel agency, OneTravel, that books for all Caribbean airlines, and there are about small airlines.

The problem I found was that these tiny regional airlines do not fly to their destinations every day and they often make changes in their schedules. We found out later that many of the flights among the Islands are not full, even though on the website, every flight is advertised as "only 3 seats left, book now." Another discovery was that even though two islands may be geographically close, there might not be any flights between them. Jamaica and Dominican Republic were like that. Even though they are fairly large islands and only 90 minutes apart, it is necessary to fly to Miami and then turn around and fly to the other. (We did that and it took about 7 hours.)

We took a cruise tour of the Caribbean a year ago, with the Nation Magazine Cruise, going to Bahamas, Northern Jamaica, Honduras, and Grand Cayman Island. We learned that, while it is very convenient to stay in one stateroom for a week, it is difficult and rare to learn much about the culture of a port that you visit, even if it is for 8 or 9 hours. Compared to our island hopping, a cruise offers savings of time going through airport security, and usually has a deck reserved for vigorous long walks. Also, a cruise always has lots of professional photographers that want to take your picture. And the ship usually has lots of convenient entertainment options immediately at hand. On the other hand cruise ships do NOT have free Wi-Fi and it is almost always very, very slow. While arranging your own island hopping trip is likely to be more expensive than a cruise, at least we tend eat normally, whereas on a cruise ship, where stuffing one's body is encouraged, we tend to gain about a pound of weight for every day of the cruise.

(6) What have we learned from this trip? Both Nancy and I like to explore new places, partly to find new things to photograph and partly to experience different cultures to see what we can learn from them. However, we also like to take relaxing vacations, which requires that one stay put in one place, and that why we go to Cabo (or similar Mexican seaside city) for a week each winter. This kind of trip has become a ritual for many middle class who live in the cold regions of North America.

Our trip to the Caribbean this year gave us a wealth of experience to help us decide whether or not we might want to go back again and stay longer. Panama City and Caracas were grotesque, like India, where the wealthy live in high-rises overlooking the suffering people and their shantytowns. In Kingston and Santo Domingo the gap between the lifestyles of the rich and poor did not appear so wide or so obvious. Aruba and Curacao were the most idyllic and while great places to spend a week, not likely to be big and stimulating enough to spend a year or even a winter. The image of the old television show, Fantasy Island, comes to mind. It was basically, Love Boat, but on land and potentially boring.

While the typical image of the Caribbean by outsiders is that of a paradise, that vision has been shaped by the typical vacation pattern of flying to a remote island resort where everything is prepaid on a credit card. These resorts tend to be quite a distance from the big Caribbean cities and the isolated resorts function something like a mental hospital where everyone is free to come and go as they please.

What we experienced in our 2-week trip to the Caribbean was mostly an urban view of island living, where the beaches are forgotten and people try to improve their lot on a day-to-day basis. While islands are separated by hundreds of miles of

water, they look and function remarkably alike. Unfortunately, if they could unite and work together more, they could make much greater progress on their economic and social wellbeing. Their problems of poverty, crime and poor education tend to be tucked away so tourists won't see them, but if they would be up front about their problems and work together on them, more progress overall would result.

Economic progress does not resolve all the problems of a Caribbean Island culture; in fact, it exacerbates and creates new ones. The streets become jammed with cars and angry drivers. Everyone is so busy improving their own personal welfare that they are not willing to pay for wider streets, bicycle paths and sidewalks. Nor are they willing to pay for public facilities and services. In almost every city we saw piles of trash along the roads. New political institutions are needed that are infused with an ethic of care, and education should be redesigned to support similar values and high standards of learning. The goal, then, would not be to feed personal greed but to improve the common good and make progress in everyone's wellbeing.

Acknowledgements

While I did the writing, Nancy (Kehmeier) took a lot of the photographs and prepared the GPS locator maps, most of which did not make it into the report at the last minute because of writer fatigue. I used the Apple iWorks Pages software for the first time for this report and I am still on a steep learning curve. Nancy also provided a huge amount of tolerance and moral support. I also want to thank Dr. Julie Meeks of the University of West Indies for introducing us to so much in Kingston and for arranging to get the article (see appendix) into the Jamaican Observer newspaper.

Appendix: Story appearing in Jamaican Observer, Jan 12,2014

Memories of Haile Selassie

by Ron Anderson

In 1945, at the age of four, my family arrived in the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. We had traveled six months to get to Ethiopia because my father had been offered the job of running a mission hospital in Ethiopia even though World War II was still in progress.

The hospital was, and still is, called the Zauditu Memorial Hospital, after the daughter of the emperor who preceded Emperor Haile Selassie. The photo on the right shows the gate to the hospital as my mother walked through the gate. Our house was in the walled compound behind the hospital buildings.



In 1945, my father was the only American doctor in the country and quickly established a good reputation for quality care at the hospital. Consequently, he was frequently asked to go to the palace to give medical care to members of the royal family as well as the Emperor Haile Selassie as well. With the Queen Menen Asfaw he would often come to visit family members and friends at the hospital grounds where we lived. In the 1948 photo below, the King Haile Selassie and Queen Asfaw were visiting the hospital and posed for a photo with my sister and me.



Our friend Della Hanson, author of the book, *For God and Emperor*, was chief coordinator of the palace staff for Haile Selassie. She arranged for our family to go to the palace and meet Emperor Haile Selassie. Before approaching him, we were each given instructions on how to bow to the ground and then stand before the throne with head slightly bowed. Each member of our family did the bowing ritual and then gave the Emperor a gift as he in turn gave us a gift. We gave him some religious books and souvenirs of America and he gave us each a soft gold ring.

Here is a picture taken at the palace entrance of Della Hanson, my mother, my sister Rosalie, my older brother Merlin, and myself. Merlin, who was not at all shy even at age 11, walked right up to the king as he sat on his elegant throne and said “Haile Selassie what is your dog’s name?” Probably no one had ever addressed him as anything other than ‘His Majesty’ before. And probably no one had been bold enough to ask about the dog’s name upon meeting him the first time. But His Majesty Haile Selassie was very friendly and kind.



At a later time, the Emperor was driving down the street, and my brother Merlin jumped off his horse and bowed down to the ground with the native people. Haile Selassie noticed Merlin and after that started sending him apples. Twenty years later in 1965, Emperor Haile Selassie happened to see Merlin in a US Army hospital in Asmara and he still remembered Merlin. A reporter said, “It was like old friends



meeting.” Merlin is fluent in Amharic, the Emperor’s native language, and they talked and joked about old times. It was impressive that Haile Selassie recognized Merlin even though he was much thinner than twenty years earlier as a teenager. By this time, Merlin had become a doctor and continued to practice medicine in Ethiopia for several years. Unfortunately, Haile Selassie lived only ten years after the photo above was taken. Ethiopia went through several decades of tragic civil war and oppression after that.



King Haile Selassie loved dogs as well as lions and horses. Above is a picture of him with two large dogs and Della Hanson on the front steps of the palace. Below left are two photos of Haile Selassie in the 1930s with small dogs, one of which he brought back from his exile in England.

Perhaps because Merlin has asked him about his dogs, King Haile Selassie gave our family a royal puppy, which we called Gay because it was such a happy dog. It was a fairly small dog even when fully grown, as it was in the photo on the below right. As you can see, our dog looks like a descendent of the royal dogs. We all loved the little dog very much and took it everywhere with us, until we left Ethiopia in 1953. Our dog was apparently a descendent of a dog he brought back from England.



Later, during the 1960s, His Majesty Haile Selassie made a dog Lulu very famous by taking it with him on official visits to Jamaica and Vancouver. Lulu was a papillon Chihuahua and a single color. He obviously loved his dogs.

In the photo on the right, I am trying to escape the attention of a hat vendor who was trying to sell me a straw hat that I didn’t want. This took place in the town of Massawa, which was located right on the Red Sea, and a very hot place. It is in Eritrea, which at that time was part of Ethiopia, but now a separate nation. This was probably the only vacation we took during my nine years in Ethiopia.





The above photograph shows the Crown Prince Asfaw Wossen officiating in a graduation ceremony by handing certificates to all of the graduating nurses. My father Dr. M. G. Anderson stood on the right holding the next certificate. My father started up the first nursing school in Ethiopia as part of the hospital program. Note the lions decorating the cabinets in the background.

More than any other animal, lions symbolized power and glory for Ethiopians. Haile Selassie's titles included King of Kings and Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

In the 1940s, horses were still a pretty common mode of transportation, even in the capital city of Addis Ababa. Here you can see both my brother and me on horses. We actually did not ride much except for the 2-3 miles going and coming from school every day.





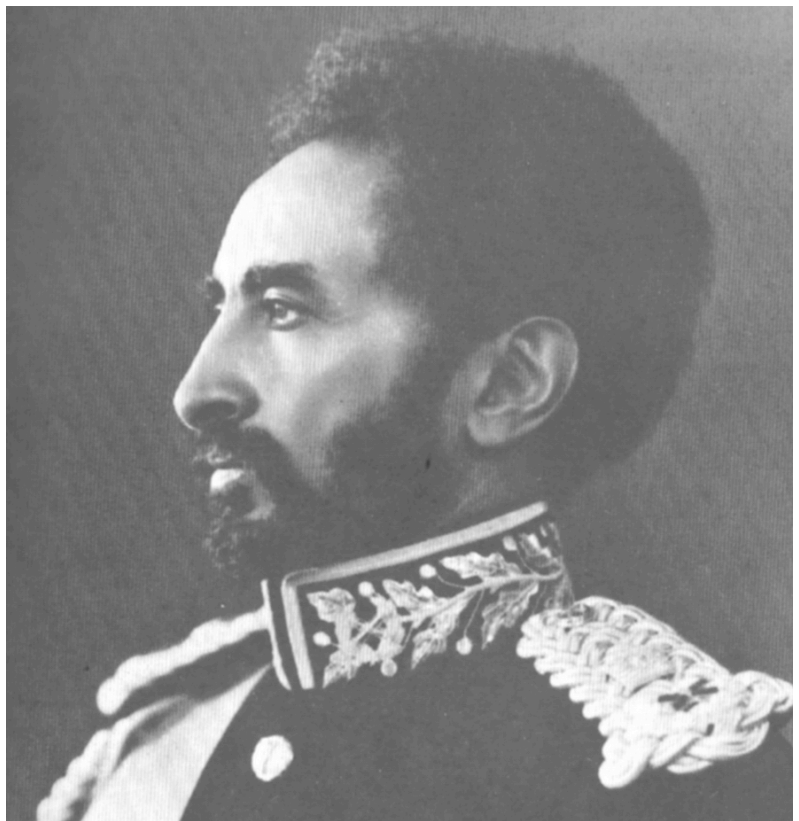
Sometimes on special occasions, we wore the official Ethiopia clothes, as you can see in the photo on the left.

One time in the 1940s, we drove to the palace to see the Emperor's Arabian horses. My mother and I sat in the back seat of the car while the others got out. It was hot and so the back door was open. Suddenly, a lion climbed into the back seat with us. As the huge lion pawed on our seat, I was terrified and my mother screamed. A palace guard rushed up to pull the lion out. Later we learned it was not fully domesticated.

At that time, everyone appeared to admire if not adore Haile Selassie, and the Ethiopians always bowed to the ground when they saw the Emperor's car coming down the road. We were the only other people in Ethiopia in the mid-1940s with an American car. Sometimes, people would bow to the ground when they saw our car, which was rather embarrassing for us. Everyone we knew referred to the king and queen as His Majesty and Her Majesty. Sixty years later, my parents still referred to them as His Majesty and Her Majesty, even though they had been dead for decades. Whenever I hear Americans

refer to the Dali Lama as His Holiness the Dali Lama, I think of His Majesty Haile Selassie.

His Majesty Haile Selassie, born in a mud hut 83 years before he died, lived through a series of fairy tale-like events. Once he rose to the top, he became a hero around the world for his work in uniting countries. Within Ethiopia he was an icon of charismatic leadership, kindness, and fairness. He made life wonderful for his friends, those living in the palace and lucky to circulate in the upper echelons of society. In his old age, either he lacked the energy or the effective managers to deal with the famines and intense suffering that millions of the poor faced time and again.



His friends and those who have written about his interpersonal style know that he was, like Nelson Mandela, a kind and caring leader. People loved to be around him and learn personal and spiritual virtues from him.

Is it any wonder that he became a God-figure for hundreds of thousands of Rastafarians in Jamaica and elsewhere? Unfortunately, he did not understand his followers and was unable to channel their energy and spirit into a powerful cultural force. Probably, if it had happened 50 years earlier when he had not become isolated and set in his ways, he would have known what to do.

Unfortunately, the facial image of Haile Selassie's legacy was grim and often sad, especially for the millions of suffering human beings in his homeland.

Unfortunately, few saw or remember the warm kindness that shines forth in his happy face on this page. If more had absorbed his genuine, generous, and truly caring persona, Ethiopian history would have been very different.

