



# Caribbean Studies Association

## CSA Secretariat

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**2018 Conference: CSA Business Meeting**  
**Date: Thursday June 08<sup>th</sup>, 2018**  
**Venue: Tryp Habana Libre Hotel, Havana Cuba**

### Welcome from President (Yolanda Wood)

The President, Professor Yolanda Wood, introduced all the members of the Executive and those at the head table (Catalina Toro Perez (Vice President), Dwaine Plaza (Treasurer) and Kenia Dorta (Local Organizing Committee (LOC) Representative)).

The Minutes of the last meeting held in Nassau, The Bahamas, was approved and the membership was invited to suggest changes to the agenda. The membership in attendance voted to approve the agenda; there was one abstention.

### Treasurer's Report (Dwaine Plaza)

The Treasurer reviewed some of the main financial issues in relation to the CSA 2017 Nassau Conference. The members at the meeting had the opportunity to view the 2017 financial reports and give their comments. The 2017 financial reports were also posted on the website. The review of the income and expenses of the 2017 conference were central to the discussion.

Dwaine Plaza explained that the organization runs on mainly two revenue sources:

1. Membership dues (US160 (non-Caribbean members), US85 (Caribbean members) and US55 (students and retired past CSA members); and
2. Registration (US150 (non-Caribbean members), US125 (Caribbean members), US50 (students and elders), US200 (non-members), US65 (non-member students and elders))

It was explained to the attendees that CSA subsidizes the participation of students who pay the very minimal along with CSA Retired Elders to afford them the opportunity to participate as these are the two groups of participants who usually request a reduced rate.

The Treasurer highlighted that a major problem facing the Association, year after year is that some persons come and only pay for their membership or their registration and then there are those who pay neither membership nor registration. An appeal was made to those in attendance who were still to pay their fees to visit the secretariat office to do so before they left the conference. We had estimated this to be about forty persons.

In terms of the figures reported, Dwaine Plaza explained that after covering the expenses of the Bahamas conference, the incoming President, Professor Yolanda Wood, had to work with about US\$30,000 to undertake the 2018 conference in Cuba. He went on to say that it is usually the case for about \$60-70,000 to go over to the next president for organizing the next conference. Some of the main events that CSA had to cover which depleted the Association's revenue during the 2017/2018 year included the CSA banquet for which an event planner was hired and the cultural night, also the CSA had to fund the travel of the guest speakers.

Dwaine mentioned that Yolanda Wood helped CSA to build its revenue by cutting back on a number of expenses. For instance, for the Cuba conference there was only one guest speaker and the next President was encouraged to pull guest speakers from the cohort of participants who usually participate at CSA so that there would be no need for CSA to cover the travel expenses of its guest speakers.

It was estimated that Yolanda's conference would be turning over US\$150,000 toward the planning of the 2019 conference. The Cuba Conference was a financially well managed one.

The membership was invited to ask questions:

1. Russell – In terms of the accounting, who does it? How is the data compiled?

Dwaine: CSA hires a consultancy firm based in New York to process its financial reports. At the end of each conference, we provide all our financial data of income (donations, membership and registration funds), expenses which are supported by receipts to produce CSA's financial reports (income statement, balance sheet) and to file taxes.

Alana Griffith (CSA Member) – Does the CSA Banquet help to bring in revenue as well? Why does the President have so much authority in terms of their spending power? There is an executive board and there should be some protocol for guiding and decision-making process to ensure that there is accountability for actions taken and expenses made. In the case of the Bahamas conference, much is being said about the spending of CSA funds to host the conference, why were these decisions made and approved? The President should have to consult with the Executive Board before any money is spent. Is it possible to have a process in place?

Dwaine: It is a very good suggestion and it is difficult because Executive Members are from different locations and liaising for feedback could be delayed. The 2016/2017 President had a different approach and was hardly consulting with persons on the Executive. He could not be contacted since December of 2017.

Concerned CSA Member: The membership should try to urge the importance of making these changes a reality. If CSA members have concerns of the way that the Organization is managed then they need to also make themselves available when issues come. The Association is being managed by a few who give of their time to support the Association and we need to have more persons making an effort to offer their support.

Okama shared the view that when the financial report is provided, the membership should get some background information before the final report is presented at the business meeting. It should be made available before the business meeting especially when the Past President is most present so that he or she could give feedback and provide some justification for the figures being presented. She expressed the view that when a financial report is provided, the membership needs to fully understand the issues and further discussion of the financial report should be postponed until when the report is fully substantiated.

Rhonda: What is the spending power of the CSA President? Could we put a limit on that amount?

Alana: Proposed a motion - *The President can use, and get up to US10, 000 without the approval of the Executive Council to manage conference expenses.* It was seconded and had a majority in favor.

Concerned Member: We need to discuss this matter further and take into account all factors involved, we should not make this decision among ourselves in this rash manner. We had presidents who were too strict and too tight. There were things that they did that we did not agree to as a membership but we need to discuss this further. Also, the Past President, whose actions we are discussing, should be present to defend himself and be given the opportunity to explain further; this is unfair. This has not been the norm at business meetings; let us be calm and act in a responsible way.

In the case of good accountability, we need to have quorum, consider previous reports and also consult with the bylaws of the constitution before we try to create or propose any changes. In terms of the review of membership issues, based on the constitution, there has to be 50 votes or more so that we can continue pass the policy or law.

Michael (Executive Council Member): Is the President able to make each one of the transactions? What is the position of the EC in helping the President with decisions as regards financial matters?

Yolanda: Consultation comes from the EC. No decision for the Cuba conference was made without consulting with the EC. It is very complex and time consuming because the EC needs to be informed and consulted on most if not all matters. Based on my experience, I consulted with the EC when I felt that I needed the members' input in how to spend in budgeting wisely. Even the amount US10, 000 is quite large and requires further consultation. Establishing that the president should have US10, 000 limit should be thought over carefully. Can we vote this motion?

CSA Member: Does the consultation go to the Executive? Where should the consultation go to? Is there a Financial Committee? Or is it discussed with Members of the EC?

Tavis Jules: As a membership, we need to look at the constitution and decide what could be used to confirm the expenses that the Association can incur. According to the constitution, what is the

spending power of the President? Under what circumstances can the President be allowed to spend more than 10,000?

Chenzira: There are many other points on the agenda and we should move on with the other areas to be discussed. We have the opportunity to put the issue of the President's spending power on the table for discussion but this does not have to be decided now. We also need to consider previous conferences of previous years in debating this issue.

Proposed a motion to move on with the agenda items and include the Executive Committee in giving the President the possibility to spend 10,000.

Alana – The motion is whether to approve the spending power of the President to 10,000 USD (22 approved votes)

Beverly: We need to agree on the amendment and vote on the amendment. The motion cannot be approved with 22 votes. Do we agree to consider this motion for further discussion? The bylaws should guide us and there is need for constitutional reform if we decide to make amendments. (CSA currently has 13 bylaws).

As a current EC member, Beverly motioned to move on with the rest of the agenda (majority in favor of continuing with the agenda).

Elaine: Raised concerns about not having buses to take persons back to the conference hotel after the cultural function. She expressed the view that the panels were excellent, accommodation was great but transportation to the events was disappointing.

Dwaine Plaza: Based on the registration numbers, the total at the conference is 716 persons. Unfortunately, there are people who are here who have not paid and you know yourselves, so please go to the secretariat office and pay. Next year we may enforce the need for persons to have their badges in order to present at the conference and enter sessions. We shall discuss this policy at the next Executive Council meeting.

#### LOC Report: Chair of the LOC – Kenia Dorta (LOC Representative)

Kenia Dorta has been quite active as a member of the LOC from the start of planning for CSA to be hosted in Cuba. She gave thanks to the CSA Executive for allowing her the opportunity to serve as a LOC member for the 2018 conference and having the opportunity to deliver the LOC report.

In hosting the 2018 CSA Conference, the LOC tried to showcase Cuban's culture and to warmly invite participants from across the world. Dorta explained that each country has its own dynamics and that we are all aware of the tensions between Cuba and the US which was particularly a challenge in hosting an international conference. Dorta congratulated Yolanda for her excellent presidency in navigating and leading the planning process despite the inherent challenges. Through her vision and leadership, Yolanda established that culture and education should be essential in setting the theme of the conference. The idea in establishing the LOC was

to ensure that all aspects of the diversity of Cuban society were well represented. The initiation of the LOC and selection of its members took place in August of 2017. Kenia reported that there were contributions in-kind and she highlighted the contribution from the Ministry of Culture and the University of Havana. Transportation costs, sound editing, professional fees for translation editing and design of the program were all in-kind sponsorship and, therefore, all costs that CSA did not have to pay. The University of Havana provided two rooms for the panel sessions for which CSA did not have to pay. With the LOC working closely with sponsors who gave their time and efforts to provide various services for no charge, this was Cuba's way of thanking the CSA for supporting Cuba's participation over the years at the CSA.

### Program Chair's Report – Gabriela Ramos

Gabriela thanked the CSA for the opportunity to be the Program Chair of the 2018 conference. She explained that because of the difficulties to gain internet access, it was a major challenge but one that she was determined to get done.

The Program Committee consisted of 4 persons; Gabriela Ramos, Guido Rojer (Past Program Chair), Roberto, Professor Ian Bennet of the University of the Bahamas and a Professor from the University of Haiti. Gabriela explained that she worked with the advice of her three colleagues and the President and they were able to pull the program together and review all the submitted abstracts mainly from January to May in preparation for the conference in June. Gabriela explained that she was only able to access the internet during work hours and that was a major challenge.

Jan 1, 2018, was the first deadline for submitting abstracts and then that was extended to Jan 31. Once the deadline had expired, the Program Committee started the review process to select suitable papers for presentation. The team had to reject some the proposals mainly because of the number of submissions was quite large. The Committee met March 2018 (Ian, Roberto and Yolanda) and Yolanda took up the job of how to eliminate and decline some of the submissions. In the case of sending out acceptance letters, there were some errors in the count of submissions. In total there were about 1,200 submissions. The review process meant having to go through each proposal individually which took a great deal of time, and caused some delay in sending acceptance letters.

Apart from not understanding the software quite well, we also had to further extend the deadline for payment; membership and registration. Gabriela reported that the Program Committee tried to accommodate all requests and received more than 200 emails requesting changes. On May 4, 2018, the final changes were made and even despite that, the Program Chair was working during the conference week to further revise and amend the program in order to accommodate persons' requests.

Carole thanked the Program Chair, President and the LOC for taking the CSA to Cuba.

An appeal was made to have all the minutes and updates of reports submitted to be posted on the website.

Dwaine congratulated the Program Chair for the work she and the Committee were able to accomplish considering the circumstances and challenges she had described in her report. He also promised that members of the LOC and Program Chair would be compensated for any expenses they had to personally cover particularly in relation to accessing the internet in order to communicate with participants.

#### Travel Grant Chair's Report: Mamyrah Prosper

In total there were 32 applications. The Committee members included Mamyrah Prosper, Beverly Bain and Anita. Fourteen grants were awarded. The CSA covered USD5, 000 in the travel award grants. USD300 was sponsored. There were 5 full grants (700US for airfare), and 9 Partial (350US). The University of Havana provided students with housing for a small fee. The awardees were from Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and England.

#### 2019 Conference: Yolanda introduced Catalina (2019 CSA President)

Yolanda thanked the Executive Council Members for their support and the work of the CSA Newsletter Editor (Meagan Sylvester), Student Representative (Keisha Wiel) and the Web Master (Kiah Graham) for their hard work in the planning and executing of the 2018 conference.

Yolanda thanked Catalina for her support as well, saying that it was a pleasure to work with her as the VP and introduced Professor Catalina Toro Perez as the 2019 CSA President who gave some insights into what persons who which to attend the 2019 CSA conference could expect

#### Conference 2019 and Voting Results

- Catalina assured Yolanda that she was looking forward to working with her as the Immediate Past President to learn from her experiences and advice.
- The 2019 CSA Conference would be in Santa Marta, Colombia
- The Program Chair will be assisted by the Programme Committee consisting of members of the EC, professors from the University of Colombia and also the advice of Past Program Chairs.
- The University of Magdalena is also quite eager to assist with the planning of events on the ground in Colombia to welcome CSA to Santa Marta.
- A video of Santa Marta was shown and then the members in attendance were invited to ask questions.

Members were mostly concerned about the location and logistics of getting to Santa Marta from various locations. They requested that the video be posted on the CSA website so that persons who were unable to attend the Business Meeting could view it. The date of the conference was confirmed as the first week of June.

- Catalina announced the results of the 2018 election. There were 2 candidates for the Vice President Position: Tavis Jules won with 102 votes.

- The EC Committee Members; Samuel Fure Davis was re-elected and Myriam Moise won and joined the EC with 180 votes.
- Catalina, is the 2018-2019 CSA President who shall lead the newly elected and returning EC members in planning the 2019 CSA Conference.

**Meeting ended at 10:08PM**