



Carmen Brown





## Carmen Brown

Carmen Brown is an award-winning journalist who joined Caribbean Life as an Associate Editor in early 2002. Previously, she served the Jamaican Government as JIS Information Attaché at the Consulate General of Jamaica in New York. She has worked as an editor for two magazines subsequent to her graduation from Lehman College of the City University of New York, magna cum laude, with a bachelor's degree in multilingual journalism; where she was the only student to graduate from this department with honors.

At Lehman, Ms. Brown remained on the Dean's list for the duration of her studies while serving as the managing editor for the college newspaper for two years. She was named presidential scholar and was one of twelve students selected by professors to serve on a panel with the former United Nations secretary-general. This event was aired on CNN. In 1995, she was selected by the Chair of her department to represent the college at the Waldorf Astoria's hosting of the "Courage in Journalism Awards," function which was chaired by ABC's Carole Simpson and keynoted by Peter Jennings.

Ms. Brown had her first poem published at age 14 and since then has had her work published in Black Enterprise, Everybody's, Black Elegance and Unfold magazines as well as The Jamaica Weekly Gleaner and The New York Daily News's Caribbeat Magazine.

Among the awards she has won for her writing are: The Gordon Lea Scholarship Award, the Observer Internship Award of Merit, and most recently, the Ruby M. Bailey Outstanding Woman of the World Award.

Among the notables she has interviewed are Secretary of State Colin Powell, singer Kenny Lattimore, actress/producer Sheryl Lee Ralph, Wall Street Icon Bert Mitchell of Mitchell & Titus, LLP and Wall Street whiz Joseph Jett. She has covered events Keynoted by Maya Angelou and Mrs. Kofi Annan, wife of the current United Nations Secretary-General.

Inspired by the ingrained belief that words have the power to make a difference in people's lives, she mentors cub reporters and is a member of the National and New York Associations of Black Journalists. Ms. Brown is fluent in Spanish, and a prolific writer, who is currently working on her memoirs. She is the proud mother of an 11-year-old daughter, Samara, whom she regards as the center of her joy.







Reverend Shirley Brewster-Cicero





## Reverend Shirley Brewster-Cicero

Reverend Shirley Brewster-Cicero is an ordained Minister of QKingdom Ministries, Inc., The Mystical Temple of the Rose and Flame. She currently serves in the office of Assistant Pastor under the dynamic leadership of the Rt. Rev. Sylveta Hamilton-Gonzales. In addition, Reverend Cicero is a member of the Board of Directors of QKingdom Ministries, now shouldering responsibilities for other QKingdom Ministries divisions which include MACADEMY, the Student Exchange Program, Ecumenical Convocation, The Homeless Ministry, The HIV/AIDS Ministry, Mount Horeb and Mount Bethel Spiritual Churches of Trinidad and Tobago and The Second Chance Ministries of Connecticut.

Rev. Cicero was born in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, and attended the Progressive Educational Institute where she completed her academic studies in Secretarial Science. After graduation, she was employed as a clerk by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in the Ministry of Health Department.

While employed at the Ministry of Health, Rev. Cicero worked with many people who were ill. This experience coupled with her love for God was instrumental in her decision to further her studies to become a God-fearing nurse. Her heartfelt compassion and burning desire to care for those who suffered through illness prompted her migration to the United States of America, where she would pursue her studies in nursing and recognize her gift of healing.

As Rev. Cicero's passion burned to embark upon a new career, she registered and attended the Jewish Hospital and Medical Center. Upon completion she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing. Rev. Cicero cared for the sick at several hospitals in New York using her healing gift to help her patients regain health. After many years of serving the adult population she decided to work exclusively with children.

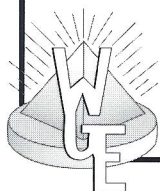
Over the years her healing hands have cared for many children who have experienced the supernatural powers of God on their healing journey. Her work marvels doctors, parents and her colleagues. Rev. Cicero is truly a medium through which God's healing powers are daily manifested. God's awesome presence and participation in the healing of God's children are evident in Rev. Cicero's continued nursing career. She is a great woman of extraordinary faith.







The Honourable  
Dame Lois Marie Browne-Evans, DBE, JP, MP  
Excellence Award





## The Honourable Dame Lois Marie Browne-Evans, DBE, JP, MP

**D**AME LOIS MARIE BROWNE-EVANS is the Attorney General of Bermuda and Minister of Legislative Affairs. She is Bermuda's first female lawyer, first Black woman elected to Parliament, first female Opposition Leader in the British Commonwealth, first PLP Minister of Legislative Affairs, first PLP Attorney General and the longest serving PLP Member of Parliament.

The Hon. Dame Lois Browne-Evans has stood at the forefront of law and politics in Bermuda for more than four decades. Often hailed as a living legend, she is without doubt one of Bermuda's most respected and influential citizens. She was made a Dame by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, in her June 1999 Birthday Honours.

Upon the completion of her studies at Middle Temple, London, she was subsequently called to the Bermuda Bar. In 1963, she won a seat in the House of Assembly and five years later, became Leader of the Opposition Bermuda Progressive Labour Party. Thereby, gaining world-wide recognition and acclaim as the first female Leader of the Opposition in the Commonwealth.

Dame Lois is currently the Island's longest serving Member of Parliament, having represented her Devonshire North Constituency for 35 years without interruption. Her victory in 1963 marked the first election ever contested by the Progressive Labour Party. She served as Leader of the Opposition from 1968 to 1972 and from 1976 to 1985, when she voluntarily stepped down on both occasions.

Dame Lois' outstanding debating skills have served Bermuda well, particularly at the historic London and Bermuda Constitutional Conferences and as a delegate to numerous international conferences in the Caribbean, Africa, New Zealand and the USA. Her many talents and abilities have enriched not only Bermuda's political arena and the field of criminal law where she is a leading player, but also a variety of local and overseas organizations in which she holds membership. Dame Lois is a founding member of the Bermuda Business and Professional Women's Club.

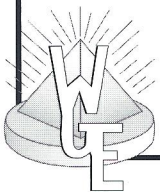
After the Progressive Labour Party became the Government of Bermuda, His Excellency, the Governor swore Dame Lois in as Minister of Legislative Affairs. In March 1999, she was also named Attorney General. Dame Lois and her husband John have three children, Ernestine, Donald and Nadine, and are the proud grandparents of Cassandra, Ariana and Rodney Ka.







Reverend Carol Mussington-Howe





## Reverend Carol Mussington-Howe

Reverend Carol Mussington-Howe was born to be a shining star for hope and peace in Central Kingston, Jamaica. In her early years, she demonstrated that caring characteristic that has become her national and international trade mark of "unconditional love." Growing up in the impoverished and sometimes violent neighborhood of Central Kingston has been a mind opening experience for Rev. Howe. During her childhood she was taught the responsibility of caring for the less fortunate and how to resolve differences without violence. Rev. Howe sees the members of her family and community as one unit.

Rev. Howe believes that what hurts the family will affect the community and what affects the community can destroy the family and the fabric of society. This philosophy is responsible for her devotion to peace in Central Kingston. For Rev. Howe, conflict resolution is the key to a peaceful society. She has seen her fair share of violence, suffering and death. Political warfare was and still is a prominent part of her Central Kingston community, therefore, everyday of her life she works tirelessly to help members of the community stop the violence and resolve their differences through dialogue and education.

It is not unusual to hear Rev. Howe teaching other children in the community the values that she embraces herself. She has counseled and assisted many youth within her community including her three children, Robert, Richard and Daneel Esther Howe, to push forward in pursuit of their educational/career goals. Her caring and generous characteristics are traits that are also evident in her children. Rev. Howe also teaches love for life and strategies for non-violence. All the children in her community are treated as members of her family. This vivid picture of family and extended family would become one of the primary factors in her community life. Love for family and neighbor is key to her existence.

Rev. Mussington-Howe is married to Domingo Howe and is an ordained minister of QKingdom Ministries, Inc. She serves as an education advisor at M.A.C.A.D.E.M.Y. where she was a volunteer teacher. Her commitment to education and a peaceful community is not only known at home in Jamaica, but also held in high regards in the United States, England, Trinidad & Tobago and most recently the Cayman Islands, where she has traveled to share her love and peace.

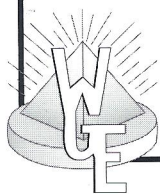
Rev. Howe is a minister, mother, educator, counselor, friend, an advocate for peace and above all a noble woman of compassion; carrying out the legacy of her Grandmother, Mariam Ann Carr.







Gwendolyn Smith Iloani





## Gwendolyn Smith Iloani

*M*s. Iloani is the President and CEO of Smith Whiley Company, a privately owned investment firm. Smith Whiley has \$205 million under management from institutional investors. The firm is currently in the marketplace raising its third fund, a \$400 million private equity and mezzanine debt fund. This firm specializes in management buyouts, recapitalizations, acquisitions and growth capital private equity, and mezzanine debt investments. Ms. Iloani directs the firm's investment advisory and asset management business, and is the Chair of the firm's Investment Committee. She is also the General Partner of the various Smith Whiley investment funds.

Ms. Iloani has over 23 years of investment experience and she oversees Smith Whiley's investment and portfolio management activities. Prior to forming Smith Whiley, Ms. Iloani was a Managing Director at Aetna Inc. where she invested in excess of \$4 billion and managed a \$9.2 billion portfolio. Ms. Iloani has extensive industry experience working with companies in the following sectors: broadcast media, publishing, industrial products, utilities, telecommunications, technology, healthcare, transportation and financial services.

Ms. Iloani is a graduate of Colgate University and received her MBA from The University of Hartford. Ms. Iloani holds Series 3 license (Commodities), Series 7 license (General Securities), Series 24 license (General Securities Principal), Series 63 license (State Securities), Series 53 license (Municipal Securities Principal), and Series 65 license (Investment Adviser Law).

She is active on numerous boards of companies that she invests in through the firm's private equity funds. She also has a long history of civic involvement and community initiative through her active associations with a wide variety of organizations. Ms. Iloani is a member of the Board of Trustees at Colgate University, and is Chairperson of the Audit Committee as well as a member of the Finance Committee. Ms. Iloani is also a member of the Board of Directors of The Crisis Publishing Company, the country's oldest continuously published African-American Consumer Magazine which happens to be the official magazine for the NAACP. She is also a newly appointed member of the Investment Committee for the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Ms. Iloani's hobbies include collecting art, and traveling. She and her three children, twins Brandon and Byron (5 years old) and Corey (9 years old) reside in Farmington, Connecticut.







Dr. Marilyn J. John





## Dr. Marilyn J. John

*M*arilyn J. John has been involved in Public Health for more than sixteen years, on the local, national and international level. Ms. John sits on the Board of several Private and Public Health institutions including Aesclepius Medical Society, SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Prevention Education for Women) and Conscious Contact of New York City. Recently she was nominated for inclusion in Who's Who in Female Executives and Professionals. Ms. John has received numerous awards for her work and commitment to HIV/AIDS locally and internationally.

Her work in the areas of Women's Health, HIV/AIDS, International Health, Community Organizing and Cultural Diversity have gained Ms. John great respect as a presenter, trainer, program developer, consultant and advisor to several public health institutions both in the United States and abroad.

Presently, Ms. John is the Director of the Women and HIV/AIDS Program for New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Bureau of HIV/AIDS. She consults for several organizations including federal and state governments, around women and HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, program development and minority health issues.

Ms. John has designed and continues to work for several African and Caribbean countries in designing culturally sensitive programs, as well as, providing training for key personnel in these regions. Ms. John has been very instrumental over the past two years in directly addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa. In 2001, she was the Key Note speaker for World AIDS Day in Accra, Ghana. Last year, through her affiliation with A Heart Relief, a Ghana based Non Government Organization recognized by the United Nations; she was and continues to be instrumental in securing fellowships for Doctors from Ridge Hospital in Ghana at UMDJ in New Jersey. This ongoing project is to increase awareness around HIV/AIDS and to provide them with the opportunity of meeting the expertise in HIV/AIDS treatment, as well as, building the country's capacity. She has designed and implemented a State of the Art Female Condom education and distribution program for New York City, a model which is replicated in several states and other parts of the world.

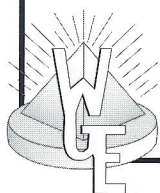
Ms. John is a minister and travels the world as an Evangelist. She works with the church community worldwide, not only in spreading the gospel, but as a mentor. Ms. John assists in helping countries to understand their roles in the era of HIV/AIDS, thereby breaking down walls of homophobia, racism, sexism etcetera. Ms. John is a mother of two wonderful sons, Kendall and Jerell.







Lady Anne Liburd





## Lady Anne Liburd

*A* stalwart, a champion, a dedicated activist, fund raiser, mobilizer and motivator. What words can be used to describe this lady who, for over forty years, has been to the forefront of politics and the Labour Party? Throughout the Caribbean region and beyond, Mrs. Anne Liburd is a living legend.

In 1974 when 'Labour Women' was launched in St. Kitts and Nevis by Dame Hilda Bynoe, Mrs. Liburd was elected as its first President. In that same year, Caribbean Women Association (CARIWA) was formed in Guyana and Anne Liburd was elected as its first President. She was re-elected to that office four times and served for a total of eight years. In 1975, she introduced to St. Kitts and Nevis the Toast Mistress Club (now the International Training and Communications Club), which trained women in communication skills. As a member of that club, Mistress Liburd attended many international conventions in Atlanta, Las Vegas and Washington, DC. This woman of great fortitude and character is well known internationally for her great works.

Mrs. Liburd was selected in 1975 by the Labour Government to attend the United Nations' launching of The Decade for Women in Mexico. She again represented St. Kitts and Nevis at the Mid-Decade Conference in Copenhagen, and was present in Nairobi in 1985 when the decade was brought to a close.

She was also one of the policy makers at the Caribbean Women for Democracy Conference, held in the Bahamas. In 1996, she was invited by CARIWA to attend the after Beijing meeting held in Barbados.

In St. Kitts and Nevis, Mrs. Liburd is the President of the National Council for Women, an association embracing non-governmental organizations. The council launched the popular Learn to Earn Program which was not only applauded by the other Caribbean islands, but was also hailed in Canada as one of the most successful projects ever implemented in the Caribbean.

As an executive member of the St. Kitts and Nevis Trade and Labour Union she has represented that organization at several workshops and several training sessions abroad.

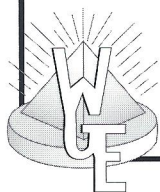
With her wealth of knowledge, Mrs. Liburd is a goldmine of information and a valuable resource person, both nationally and internationally.







Her Excellency  
Dame Pearlette Louisy





## Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy

Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy was born in the southern village of Laborie and attended the Laborie Girls' Primary and Mixed Infants School, from which she proceeded on a Javouhey Scholarship to St Joseph's Convent in January 1960. On completion of her secondary education, she joined the staff of St Joseph's Convent in September 1965.

She began her university education in October 1966, having obtained a scholarship from the Canadian International Development Agency to study for a Bachelors' Degree in English and French at the University of the West Indies at Cave Hill in Barbados. In 1972 she was awarded another scholarship under the Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan to study for a Masters Degree in Linguistics, in the field of Didactics at the University of Laval in Quebec City, Canada. In 1991, she took up studies at the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom where she read for a PhD in Education. Her doctoral studies focused on the management and provision of tertiary education in small nation states.

In 1999, she was awarded with the Honorary degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D) by the University of Bristol.

Dame Louisy's entire professional life has been spent in the field of education. She was first exposed to the classroom when she served as a pupil teacher at the Laborie Mixed Infants School while she waited for an opportunity to begin her secondary school education. She later served on the staff of St Joseph's Convent during the years 1969 - 1972 and 1975 - 1976. From 1976 - 1986, she served first as a tutor of French, and then as Principal of the St. Lucia "A" Level College. When the "A" Level College was merged with sister institutions to form the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, she served as Dean of the Division of Arts, Science and General Studies. Later, Dame Louisy served as Vice Principal and Principal, a position she held until her appointment as Governor General on September 18, 1997.

In 1999, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II conferred on her the title of Dame Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George.

Dame Louisy complemented her abiding interest in education with a love for culture and the performing arts. She was an active member of the Creative and Performing Arts Society (Drama and Chorale), the New Day Theatre Movement, and more recently the Bel Canto Choral Group. In culture it was the Folk Research Centre and the Mouvman Kweyol Sent Lisi which spearheaded her work in the promotion of and research into Creole Culture and language, an interest she still actively pursues.







Marlene H. McKetty, Ph. D.





## Marlene H. McKetty, Ph. D.

*M*arlene McKetty was born in Jamaica, the third of seven children. She attended St. Hugh's High School and the University of the West Indies from which she graduated with a B.S. degree in Zoology and Chemistry.

After immigrating to the United States she attended the Mt. Sinai School of Radiotherapeutic Technology and completed courses at Hunter College in New York City. She worked for a year as a radiation therapist before embarking on a doctoral degree program in Medical Physics in the Nuclear Engineering Department at the University of Florida. She obtained her M.S. in December 1976 and a Ph. D. in August 1978. While a graduate student at the University of Florida, she won several awards, most notably the Lucy Session Award from the Society of Black Students in Engineering- a leadership award based on her volunteer work providing mentoring to high school students who were interested in careers in the sciences, and a national award from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (IEEE). She was also awarded several fellowships including one from the National Fellowships Fund/National Science Foundation. For her graduate assistantship, she was selected from a competitive pool of applicants to work 20 hours/week in the Medical Physics section of the Department of Radiation Therapy at Shands Hospital of the University of Florida. This assistantship provided invaluable experience as a dosimetrist and physicist.

Upon graduating from the University of Florida, Dr. McKetty returned to New York City where she worked at Mt. Sinai Hospital as a physicist in the Radiation Oncology Department. She subsequently moved to Howard University Hospital where she is the chief physicist in the Department of Radiology and on the faculty of the College of Medicine. She also serves as the Chairperson of the Radiation Safety Committee and oversees the radiation safety program at Howard University and Howard University Hospital.

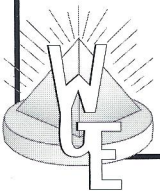
She is a member of the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM), the Health Physics Society (HPS), the American College of Radiology (ACR) and several other professional societies. She has served in leadership roles or on committees for each of these societies. She was on the Board of Directors of AAPM from 1997 to 2000. She is currently on the Board of Directors of CAMPEP – Commission on Accreditation of Medical Physics Educational Programs Inc. She has also served on advisory committees of the Food and Drug







Professor Lan Young Moon





## Professor Lan Young Moon

Professor Lan Young Moon started a dedicated career in helping and educating women and children in both North and South Korea, shortly after graduating from Sookmyung Women's University, with a degree in English Language and Literature. In 1990 she received a Master of Divinity degree in Theology, from Hanshin University, School of Theology. Since 1992, she began to broaden her compassion and, started organizing and dealing with international activities and events concerning women, children and family issues. In 1994, Professor Moon became Secretary General of the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP-DOK).

This most committed professor has organized and contributed much of her exceptional leadership skills to various organizations and events throughout the world. In 1992, Professor Moon organized The 1st WFWP World Convention, in the city of Seoul. There, 400 women leaders from 60 countries were present. Three years later, Professor Moon would organize The 2nd WFWP World Convention, attended by 500 women leaders from 62 countries. In 1994 and 1995, this accomplished organizer shared her talent and prepared the 1st and 2nd Korea-China Women's Seminar, where the guests were leaders from the All China Women's Federation, the Beijing Women's Federation and the Education Committee.

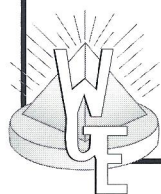
Presently, Professor Moon holds various positions, such as Director/Executive Committee member of the Sun Hak Scholarship, Associate Professor at Sun Moon University, South Korea, and President of WFWP-International. Her many contributions speak of her dedication to servicing women and children throughout Asia, Africa and Europe. In December 1996, Professor Moon contributed to a Skills Training Center in a Bhutanese refugee camp in Nepal and to a Christmas event for the "School of Love" children in India. Prior to that, she sent over 24 tons of clothing to African nations via Clothing of Love. In 1999, Professor Lan Young Moon was a Steering Committee member in the 1999 Seoul International Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations, and structured a workshop on Family Ethics and Values with 400 participants from 12 countries. That same year, Professor Moon was a panelist at the 2nd Women's Forum for Reconciliation between North and South Korea, themed "A New Millennium of Peace Cultivated by Women".







Commissioner Dolly Williams





## Commissioner Dolly Williams

*A* Brooklyn resident for over 32 years, Commissioner Dolly Williams, VP and CFO of A. Williams Construction, epitomizes the spirit of New York. She along with her husband Carl and their two children Keith and Sally immigrated to the United States from the Caribbean island of Trinidad and Tobago in search of the "American Dream".

During her earlier years in America, Dolly held many jobs including: store clerk, receptionist and administrative aid before becoming an entrepreneur Par Excellence. However, Dolly Williams is not a woman to settle for those minimal occupations. She realized that education was an important component for her success and decided to enroll in St. Francis College full-time, where she earned an A.A. in Business Management and a B.S. in Accounting, both of which have been invaluable to her over the years.

After graduation, she partnered with her husband Carl to establish A. Williams Construction with a five thousand dollar investment which was later transformed into a multi-million dollar firm. Her responsibilities include managing the internal as well as the external operations of the company. With much hard work and perseverance Dolly has successfully assisted A. Williams Construction to be recognized as one of the best known construction firms, in Brooklyn. The company is widely admired in the industry for its honesty, reliability, financial stability and excellent track record.

Dolly serving as Vice President and CFO of A. Williams Construction, is forced to reckon with the difficulties faced by women in the construction industry. Despite the obstacles and bureaucracy, her ambition and determination has been instrumental in her firm being awarded several major projects in New York State and which were successfully completed. Currently she is working on a \$19 million Excavation/Foundation project for DASHNY in the Bronx.

Dolly's work in the industry has not gone unrecognized. She has received numerous awards from the public and private sector agencies for her company's excellence in the field. Among these are: Crain's Small Business Award and Contractor of the Year Award. Recently, Dolly was appointed New York City Planning Commissioner by Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz.

Additionally, Commissioner Dolly Williams is an advocate for the growth and expansion of women and minority owned businesses and a mentor for "The Nissan Young Women of Israel/Palestine". Dolly is involved with several of Brooklyn's cultural institutions such as the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Her membership extends from the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce, to Board Member of the New York State Association of Minority Contractors. She is a sponsor in the West Indian Day Parade.

This dynamic entrepreneur is the proud mother of two children who are graduates of New York University. Keith holds a Ph.D. in Neuro-endocrinology and Sally, a B.S. in Business. They both have joined their parents at A. Williams Construction.







Devora Monique Willis



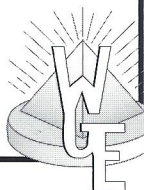


## Devora Monique Willis

Presidential Award Winner, 10 year-old Devora Monique Willis, is a former student of M.A.C.A.D.E.M.Y., founded by Rt. Rev. Sylveta Hamilton-Gonzales, in honor of Miriam Ann Carr, recipient of the Seventh Woman of Great Esteem Posthumous Award. The President George W. Bush Education Award was given to Devora based on her FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) scores. This award is the highest award given for academic excellence. The President's Education Award was presented to Devora during her graduation ceremony at Fairway Elementary School, in Miramar, Florida. Her excellent score on the FCAT has also afforded her the opportunity to be accepted in the Pre-Med Magnet Program at William Dandy Middle School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Devora was born in Livingston, New Jersey to Sandra Wills-Wiltshire and Owen Wills. At the age of three, Devora with her family moved to Brooklyn where she started her academic studies at M.A.C.A.D.E.M.Y. Preparatory School. The primary goal of M.A.C.A.D.E.M.Y. is to bring about a greater degree of intellect and social competence in its students, thus teaching them how to effectively deal with their present environment. M.A.C.A.D.E.M.Y. is known for academic excellence among its students, many of whom have gone on to gifted programs in science, health, math and reading. Devora is one of the many excellent role models from M.A.C.A.D.E.M.Y. Her academic achievement is the manifestation of the success of this most prestigious institution and her family.

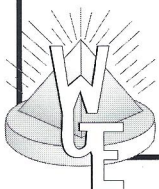
Devora has been on the Honor Roll at Fairway Elementary School in Miramar, Florida. She was inducted into the National Achievers Society on December 15, 2001. She attended Rose of Sharon Ministries and on December 22, 2002 she was crowned the First Runner Up of Little Miss Rose of Sharon. She loves to sing, dance, play music and read. Her proud mother and step-father Mr. and Mrs. George Wiltshire, Jr. have been devoting their time and effort in helping Devora meet her future educational goals.







Elizabeth Israel  
a.k.a. Ma Dampo





## Elizabeth Israel a.k.a. Ma Pampo

Dominicans have only recently become aware of Elizabeth Israel, a.k.a. Ma Pampo. At 128 years of age Ma Pampo is believed to be the world's oldest living human being. She is truly a phenomenon. I had the privilege of meeting Ma Pampo one hot, sunny afternoon at her home in Portsmouth, Dominica, W.I. Ma Pampo has lived for nearly a century in this tiny wooden house, purchased in the early 1900s for \$19, a considerable sum at the time for someone earning just pennies a day.

Ma Pampo has welcomed many visitors since she was first brought to the country's attention by DBS radio announcer Alex Bruno. On her kitchen table near her front door sits a guest book filled with the names of visitors from around the world, such as Princess Anne and Rt. Reverend Sylveta Hamilton-Gonzales and her husband Mr. Laurence Gonzales, among the most prominent. Ma Pampo presented Princess Anne with a special bouquet of herbs used for making a bush tea with medicinal properties. Ma Pampo had assured her it would work wonders for her grandmother-the Queen Mum, herself age 101. During Rt. Reverend Hamilton-Gonzales' visit, Elizabeth Israel, fondly known as Ma Pampo, gave advice on the potency and healing properties of bay leaf, mint and other herbs.

Ma Pampo speaks clearly and forthrightly, although her memory of some events comes and goes. Once she gets warmed up, however, she has plenty to say, most of it bang on target. She prefers to speak patois, but can also handle English. She is blind and can no longer walk but is by no means as frail as might be expected. What struck me most were her hands. Her long tapering fingers were barely wrinkled, with not a trace of arthritis.

According to her baptismal records, she was born on January 27, 1875, when Alexander Graham Bell was still tinkering with an invention later to be known as the telephone and just forty-one years after slavery had been abolished in the British West Indies. Somewhat of a living miracle and worthy of serious scientific research into the basis for her longevity, Ma Pampo enjoys reciting the list of foods that have sustained her throughout her life. Convinced that callaloo, dasheen, dumpling, crab and fish have been major contributors to her continuing good health. The Mayor of Portsmouth, Julian Brewster, feels Ma Pampo's frequent use of the local hot-water springs for bathing had also benefited her health!

Remarkably, Ma Pampo has two neighbors who are also centenarians: Rose Peters, who is 119 years old, and Virginia, 102. Ma Pampo is cared for by Florestine Lewis, one of nine ladies who alternate the caretaking duties. Ma Pampo and Mrs Lewis are representative of many rural women in Dominica and elsewhere in the region who have been the





backbone of their families and their communities. They are characterised by their hard work, simple lives and strong faith. Ma Pampo is reportedly up and praying at five o'clock each morning.

People who have known her for many years describe her with a familiar Dominican expression: Ma Pampo not easy, you know. Eighty-one year-old Benjamin Ames, who lived on Picard Estate as a young boy, recalls Ma Pampo as a kind woman with a sharp tongue.

A faithful member of the DBS radio audience, Ma Pampo enjoys especially the programme done in patois, called *Esperians Kweole* (Creole Experience), and she never misses the news. She was in good form when the host, Felix Henderson, called her during a programme in recognition of her 126th birthday. Using the opportunity to speak to young people, Ma Pampo made it clear that she had not lost touch with the world. She discussed the issues of the day and warned young people against the dangers of drug use. Ma Pampo hopes to continue welcoming guests to her home and disarming them with her frank and humorous commentary for at least a few more years. She has said that she would like to make it to 130, adding that she knows such decisions are in the hands of the Lord.



Deacon Laurence Gonzales and Ma Pampo



Woman of Great Esteem Rev. Alice Jacob and Ma Pampo.



Rt. Rev. Sylveta Hamilton-Gonzales and Ma Pampo

