

Jamaicans proud of Powell's political ascent



President Clinton and Gen. Colin Powell make a joint appearance in 1998 to discuss a then-just released report on the nation.

BY MATTHEW J. ROSENBERG
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOP HILL, Jamaica - At the tin-roofed boyhood home of Colin Powell's father, they swell with pride over "our big man up north."

Though born in the Bronx, George Bush's pick for secretary of state draws from the strong values of his family's humble, hardworking West Indian roots, his relatives in Jamaica say.

"We're proud people, maybe not rich but we've got dignity, and dignified people - they know how to behave," said Powell's cousin, Muriel Meggie.

When they don't behave, she said, a little army-style discipline never hurt a future general: "A child has got to know his place, when to play and when to work."

Meggie, 65, stood in the red dirt yard of the home of Luther Powell, Colin's father, looking over the sloping hills of the southern Jamaican farming community.

Luther Powell left Top Hill in the early 1920s. Around the same

time, Powell's mother, Ariel, left her small western Jamaica town. The two met and married in New York City, where Powell was born in 1937.

He is one of countless children of Caribbean migrants who left their sun-drenched homelands for North America and Europe, looking for a better life.

In his book "My American Dream," Powell wrote: "I look at my aunts and uncles, their children and their children's children, and I see three generations of constructive, productive, self-reliant members of society."

Slavery in the British Caribbean colonies ended a generation earlier than in North America, and after emancipation "West Indians were left more or less on their own," he wrote. They had schools, good jobs and "they did not have their individual dignity beat down for 300 years, the fate of so many black American slaves and their ancestors."

Coming from countries where blacks are the majority has given Caribbean immigrants greater self-confidence about getting

ahead through hard work, said Selwyn Ryan, a political science professor at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad.

"We grew up feeling that there were no insurmountable barriers," Ryan said. "Even though there were constraints in Caribbean society, there was always the perception that one could do well, given they had an education and were persistent."

Many of the adults in Powell's family hadn't lived in Jamaica for decades but the island culture pulsed through his youth and has stayed with him.

As a child, Christmas dinner was carried goat, a Caribbean specialty, he wrote in his book. Afterward came dancing to calypso and Appleton rum. "In my family, to serve anything else was considered an affront."

When he was chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, calypso tunes drifted from his Pentagon office. His aides "did not get the pidgin lyrics and missed most of the innuendo," he wrote. "But then, you do not hear much calypso

See Powell on A8

Gang member gets damages

NNPA WIRE

WASHINGTON - Former gang member Javier Ovando, 23, now wheelchair-bound, will receive \$15 million from the city of Los Angeles as a result of a police shooting and framing which led to the loss of his legs and jail for three years for a crime he did not commit.

The settlement represents the largest police misconduct award in the city's history.

He is the first man to be

freed in the Rampart police scandal, the worst in Los Angeles history. Investigators found a massive, organized network of police corruption wherein black and Latino youths served as cannon fodder for police illegal activity.

The City Council voted unanimously in the case as an emotional Ovando said that he would use the monies to help bring his mother and sisters to the United States for a better life and education. He is a

native of Honduras.

"I believe this is a fair and acceptable resolution to a terrible miscarriage of justice," said Mayor Richard Riordan.

Yet, Los Angeles, which pays out millions of dollars in police brutality settlements each year, is one of the nation's leading cities of incidents of excessive force by police. It was the center of disturbances across the nation after the police assault on African-American motorist Rodney King.

Gov. Hunt writes book detailing strategies to improve N.C. schools

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

RALEIGH - Gov. Jim Hunt on Dec. 21 unveiled a book he has written which outlines the steps North Carolina must take to make its public schools the best in the nation by the end of this decade, a goal that Hunt last year challenged the state to meet.

Hunt met with students, teachers and parents at Raleigh's Ligon Middle School to preview "First In America: An Education Governor Challenges North Carolina." The 90-page book reviews Hunt's First In America initiative goals and lays out his proposals for improving public education in the state.

"As people read this book, I hope they will understand the five goals - the five parts of the plan that can make us First in America," Hunt wrote in the introduction to the book. "More than that, I hope they will get ideas about what they can do personally to meet this challenge - and be motivated to do so."

Hunt and the state's Education Cabinet believe North Carolina's public-school system can become the best in the country by 2010 by focusing on five goals: 1) having

every child start school healthy and ready to learn; 2) hiring and retaining quality teachers and administrators; 3) maintaining safe, orderly, and caring schools; 4) demanding high student performance, and 5) building strong family, community and business support.

In his book, which will be distributed free of charge in January, Hunt traces the history of education progress in North Carolina, particularly the strides made in the 1990s. He details how he became an enthusiastic champion of public education, and the lessons he learned about education as a public official and during his mentoring experiences with public-school students. The book also features Hunt's memories of his own school years and the special influences on him, including his teachers and his mother, herself a schoolteacher.



Gov. Hunt

Under Hunt's leadership, education experts and political leaders have lauded North Carolina across the nation for public school achievement. The state has shown dramatic progress in student performance, higher standards and accountability measures, improving teaching, galvanizing business and community support, and its comprehensive approach to better early childhood education.

The book is being published by the First in America Foundation and is being paid for by support from various corporations in the state. Distribution plans will be announced in January. A foreword from U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley is included, calling the book an excellent blueprint for the state and urging all North Carolinians and all Americans to read it.

Habitat

from page A1

Membership Corp. is putting in temporary power service and is providing licensed electricians to install wiring.

EnviroLink of Spring Hope is providing workers to rush in plumbing.

Sprint planned to send a group of workers to help with the build.

Several other businesses were planning to participate.

Homeowners of the new Habitat homes and their families are diligently working on the project, Webb said. Homeowners must work 500 "sweat equity" hours, including 250 hours before they move into their homes.

Habitat for Humanity homeowners have 20 years to pay back their zero-interest mortgages.

The 12 new Habitat homes are "the best Christmas (presents) they could have asked for," Webb said. "They are so blessed. Every one of them will tell you they are blessed."

Webb said it made her Christmas when she went along with

homeowners to Lowe's when they excitedly picked out their own vinyl siding, carpeting and light fixtures.

Webb said she hopes homeowners will be moving in the new homes on Jan. 15.

It will be a nice cul-de-sac with six houses on each side, she said.

After the blitz build is completed in Princeville, Habitat plans to build 60 more homes in 2001 in areas of North Carolina that were damaged by Hurricane Floyd.

Dedicated to eliminating poverty housing, Habitat for Humanity International is an ecumenical Christian ministry found-

ed by Millard Fuller and his wife, Linda. HFHI and its affiliates in more than 2,000 communities in 76 nations have built and sold more than 100,000 homes to partner families at no profit with zero-interest mortgages.

If you would like to participate in the blitz build in Princeville, call Webb at 1-252-903-0944.

"We have housing available at the National Guard Armory, with a full kitchen," she said. Also, heated tents are available on the build site.

"We are providing lunch every day," she said.

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Quotables:

"Some white people are so accustomed to operating at a competitive advantage that when the playing field is level, they feel handicapped."
- Nathan McCall, author

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