

Courting the Diaspora

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SINCE Guyana became an independent nation, elected leaders have always invited Guyanese resident abroad to return home and invest. Some have answered the call by physical remigration. Others have opted for dual residency, maintaining homes in Guyana and their adopted country. Yet others have found other ways to 're-migrate' without being physically there.

Those who cannot or chose not to return, have made known various reasons for same. Some of these are jobs, financial obligations, family commitments in the adopted country, and situations such as crime, standard of living, health care, and education, which they see as comparatively worse in Guyana. There is no intent to debate or debunk the merit or demerit of any claim, but merely to acknowledge some of the push-and-pull factors for migration and emigration through the lens of Guyanese resident abroad.

That having been said, none would deny love for country and those living at home, even though in moments of crisis or concerns about the management of the country, or who has responsibility to manage it at any given time, the inclination may be to 'done with Guyana.' This is understood, because as a people we expect and want better for our country. Continued efforts by Guyanese in the diaspora to invest in Guyana confirm this view and it is to this view that attention is paid.

Personal remittances (PR) continue to play a major role Guyana's economy, with figures recording in the tens of billions G\$. According to World Bank data for the period 2011-2015, PR contributed 10.6 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The sending of barrels, establishment of overseas-based chapters/organizations, and various ways of collaborating with Guyanese at home, are acts of investing.

The symbiotic relationship brings with it benefits such as cross-fertilization of cultures and skills transfer, which bode well in a diverse and competitive world economy, and the strengthening of connections between groups. This relationship is putting new meaning to the cliché, wanting the best of both worlds, because in today's globalized environment, it can actually happen. Being

physically away from Guyana or choosing not to return (at least for the time) presents no hindrance to investing in Guyana. Consequently, it is encouraging to see the diaspora taking on new and additional features such as investment conferences and leading business delegations to Guyana, seeking out investment opportunities and presenting investment portfolios.

What this is communicating to Guyanese at home is a pro-active nature to do something for country and self, where evidently the heart remains, and this is good. The pro-active pursuit will increase awareness and possibilities of what can be achieved when the mind conceives and acts. Where there may be questions and uncertainty as to how to proceed, the sharing of best practices and attitudes/application in dealing with issues could provide needed assurance and guidance. With the technical help and support, issues such as time management, setting and meeting goals, customer service, civility, and the value of accountability, are practices that can be cultivated and improved at home.

Conversely, the somewhat relaxed pace of doing things in Guyana and neighbourliness lend for de-stressing and meaningful interaction. While the former can at times be off-putting on matters of work, when one wants to unwind, slow down and enjoy the breeze of nature, this can be welcoming, coupled with friendliness with neighbours and on the streets, which are rarities in metropolitan societies.

Not forgetting the sea/ocean and land breeze, fresh fruits, vegetables and wild-caught seafood to name some, though rear and pricey abroad, are relatively accessible and reasonably priced at home. The taste of a ripe Buxton or spice mango devoid of chemical sprayed to preserve it, and haggling with the market vendor to reduce the price or add a special cut of meat, are things that uniquely identify Guyana. Yes, investing in Guyana allows Guyanese abroad to have the best of both worlds. And while it is understood some may not physically want to, or cannot re-migrate, every legitimate effort made, in whatever form, helps to improve the quality of life for Guyanese, reinforces the pride of building Guyana, and makes Guyana a better place.