



Building Communities

SERVOL News



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Mighty Struggler (Earl "Whitey" da Costa) (Pg 6)



Many years ago, Servol's founder, Fr. Gerard Pantin, a man with a big heart and out-stretched hands, asked the now famous "Servol Question"...

"How can I help you?"

He observed the plight and struggle of the people residing in the hills of Laventille and its environs. Today that question is asked by the staff and trainees in every community where there is a Servol centre.

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MISSION STATEMENT

Servol is an organization of weak, frail, ordinary, imperfect yet hope filled and committed people seeking to help weak, frail, ordinary, imperfect, hope-drained people become agents of attitudinal and social change in a journey which leads to total human development. It does so through respectful intervention in the lives of others and seeks to empower individuals and communities to develop as role models for the nation.

HELPING HANDS!! (Cont'd)



Fr. Gerard Pantin C.S.S.p.
29 Oct 1928 – 23 June 2014

It is obvious that Fr. Pantin's vision and care continues to inspire everyone who enters the doors of Servol, and motivates many to make a difference in our country by extending **Helping Hands!**

This keen sense of responsibility in our staff helps to redirect the lives of those who are hope-drained, yet who seek with faith to be hope-filled. Servol's helping hands try to assist in ways that are unique to the organisation and its operations. The following statements from "A Mole Cricket Called Servol," by Fr. Gerard Pantin, continue to guide our work.

"Listening attentively, taking the time and making the effort to understand, while acknowledging the fact that you know nothing about the people in communities and how to solve their problems!!"



"Teaching others how to do for themselves and not doing it for them!!"

"Encouraging people to decide what they want to do and being supportive!!"

Servol was born out of the riots of 1970 when we reached out to the community. Recently we experienced and survived flooding and a massive earthquake which affected our centres and programmes. We experienced in these events the **helping hands** of the communities who reached out to us to help and to rebuild.

We know that this newsletter will give you the inside scoop of some of our community-based achievements, and should generate an interest for you to offer us **a helping hand**, as we continue to foster personal responsibility and inspire growth, in the lives of young individuals of this nation, which we are certain will have a positive impact on crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

By Allison Haynes Basalo, Executive Director Servol



My POP Journey

My fifteen year journey in Servol's Parent Outreach Programme (POP) began with my training period in January 2001. Our training was geared not only to teach trainees their roles and responsibilities but it also dealt with self-development which was extremely beneficial to me.

Working with parents and their children as a facilitator, I was able to touch lives that I never knew or imagined I could have. Home visits with parents enabled me to assist them to understand the importance of early intervention and to link the developmental needs of the child with practical stimulating apparatus.

Parents were also taught the skills necessary to meet the challenges of life and to encourage them to acquire marketable skills. Working in different areas of the country with people from different cultures and different beliefs taught me to accept others for who they are and not who I thought they should be. Empathy was one of the major attributes needed for the job.

Working in this programme has made a great impact on my life. The information and theories I learned was used with my own family and made a great difference in our family life and our way of looking at life in general. **Thank you Servol and a special thanks to the POP Family!**

By Lena Alcindor, Past Servol Employee



New Paths – Servol's First Parent Outreach Workers

I first heard about the new Parent Outreach Programme when I was asked to join the pilot programme along with seven other young women; we were to become the first Parent Outreach Workers. I was initially asked to do some research in my surrounding communities of Arima, Cumuto and San Raphael. At that time I did not know what it was about and where things would lead. We did sessions on Parenting in Health Centres and visited specific areas to speak to persons who would give us feedback on the needs of the people and the issues in the communities. We had to collect data on the number of pre-schoolers, toddlers and expectant mothers in these communities, especially where there may be a need for a Pre-School. I was happy that I was welcomed in the communities and information easily given.

After gathering all this information, we formulated plans for working in these areas which included home-visits, Parenting group-sessions, craft sessions, formulating relationships with existing Pre-Schools, Primary Schools and Health Centres; and also working along with SERVOL trained educators in Early Childhood Centres.

Each area was different and we were able to share our experiences. Sometimes we were mistaken for "evangelists" since we went from home to home. Some of the areas I visited were Malabar, Pinto Road, Maturita Village, Matura, Maraj Hill in Sangre Grande, San Raphael, Talparo and Mundo Nuevo! Yes, Mundo Nuevo, **and like the name says-it was a whole new world to me!**

The needs of these communities and the lack of basic facilities greatly impacted us and when we met for meetings, it was not a strange thing to see tears being shed as we related the stories of the horrors these young children and women were experiencing. I thank all who contributed for this experience.

It was terrific, horrifying, sad, adventurous, heart-warming, challenging, satisfying, hard and wonderful. **Congrats to our team!**

By Allison George, Past Servol Employee



Servol's Poor Man's Dinner 2018

This Dinner is special to Servol and serves not only as a fund raiser to help us keep our programmes afloat but also helps to make the many young people who attend aware of the plight of the poor and their responsibility to help. In 2018 we asked some of our young people to share their views, knowledge and ideas about Servol.

Francisco Lopez - Lower Form 6 Student, St. Mary's College

Servol has achieved a deed few can claim credit for, being an NGO of 49 Years since the day of its inception by the Holy Ghost Father, Father Gerard Pantin. Since then, Servol has not strayed from its ideology of helping to empower as many people as it can and today it does just that.

With Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) they assist the young of our nation, with Parent Outreach Programme (POP) they assist the parents as well and with Special Schools, Life Centres and Skill Centres they train our adolescents to be proud pillars that support this great nation; **St. Mary's College** takes much pride in this due to our support for this wonderful organisation especially since one of our own fathers, Father Ashton Pierre, now serves on its Board of Directors.

Servol has done much for our nation but is limited in the fact that its main fundraiser is **this very Poor Man's Dinner**. As such on behalf of St. Mary's I ask all those in attendance and those who were unable to come to continue to support this community of angels. They must be angels for all that they have done for our country. In these forty-eight years not once has Servol let us or our beloved land down. So to all here and even those not here let us too not let down Servol, for if we do we are letting down our sweet TnT.

Caitlin Khan and Lillie Look Hong - Standard 5 Students of Dunross Preparatory School

Father Gerard Pantin was described as a man of many visions by many of his colleagues.

In 1970, he began his life's work....**SERVOL**.

It was a dark time in our country, there was chaos, uprising and many people went astray! Father Gerry, a priest...a well-educated man, he wanted to make a difference...He knew he needed a plan! Upwards toward the slopes, he made his way to Laventille, where poverty and despair hung in the air... the people were angry and ill. He saw some fellas who were **"taking a lime"** and went over to introduce himself one time! But those fellas were rough and tough, and together they gave him a **STRONG** rebuff! But Father didn't give up... he wasn't through! Once more he asked **"How can I help you?"**

Now let us tell you what Servol's been up to all these 49 years, Servol is a great organization! It has stretched throughout our little nation. The sails of Servol's boat have unfurled and carried their teachings to other parts of the world! They grew from their little office on Duncan Street, with only 20 people in their fleet! They grew and grew, and their one little centre became a few! A few became many! Until Servol was knocking at every door! Their programmes teach skills for many careers, from cooking and baking to electrical repairs and if you like technology, there are activities galore! But their training doesn't stop there... They even do Parent Outreach and Early Childhood Care! These centres bring hope, dispelling fear, empowering the rise out of poverty and despair! Now we see clearly Father Gerry's intention, his dreams and plans have come to fruition! This work must continue...it cannot decline! It must take all our Treasure, our Talent and Time! So fellow citizens... hear our plea, Servol needs you and Servol needs me! We are ordinary men, women and children too, so let's ask the question... **"How can we help you?"**

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Francisco Lopez



(L to R) Lillie Look Hong, Allison Haynes Basalo, Executive Director Servol and Caitlin Khan

FLOODED OUT! BUT NOT BROKEN!

Heavy rains and subsequent flooding in the St Helena area badly affected the area's residents and the Early Childhood Centre during the weekend of 19th - 21st October, 2018. This nationwide disaster also affected the homes of our teachers who reside in the community.

The day after the flood the Executive visited the affected school to gain a better grasp of the situation and to lend support. It was discovered that the work done the term before to raise the front yard proved no match for the forces of nature which caused the Caroni River to burst its banks. The entire compound and the interior of the school was flooded, resulting in the loss of learning resources, teaching material, official books and documents. When the flood waters receded, they left heavy silt in the area. Clean-up efforts were started and despite being themselves affected, teacher Linda Marajh and her family continued to be a great source of support to the Centre and the neighbourhood.



**FLOODING DISASTER AT
ST HELENA EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRE**



The Honourable MP, Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, conversing with A member of St. Helena's Board Of Education

As clean up efforts continued, many came forward to offer help and support. Among them were MP Dr. Nyan Gadsby - Dolly and CEPEP workers who assisted in removing the remaining flood waters from the Centre and placing all the materials outdoors.

The teachers continued to work tirelessly in spearheading the clean-up campaign. Help was also offered by Parent Outreach Officers (POP), members of the community (especially Mr. Ramlochan) and other Servol employees. Other members of staff who lived in Maraval and areas of the North Coast were also badly affected by the flooding and land slippage.

Constant communications were kept with Programme Coordinator of the Servol Regional Training Resource Centre (RTRC). Field Officer, Field Supervisor, Programme Coordinator and members of the community, continued to offer help and support to the affected teachers and schools.



By Monifa Dennis, Field Officer North Zone

Fr. Gerry Pantin Conference Centre/ Banquet Facilities & Catering Service
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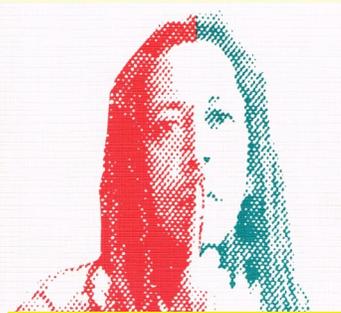
Looking Back in Time....The Mighty Struggler

Earl da Costa, known to his friends as “Whitey” and to the calypso world as “The Mighty Struggler” was laid to rest on March 2nd 2012. The congregation at the funeral service at the St. James Crematorium was held mesmerized by the eulogy given by Brother Resistance. He spoke for half an hour without a note in one of the most brilliant feats of oratory I have ever witnessed, evoking a life, an era and a community in evolution centered on the Harlem Bakery run by “Whitey” and the influence it had had on Quarry Street and Ovid Alley in east Port-of-Spain.

“Whitey,” with the assistance of Servol, started a bakery there, back in 1975 - at a time when people who lived in the community, poor and neglected, roads unpaved, trash uncollected, struggled to survive. “Whitey’s” sobriquet “The Mighty Struggler” was hard and justly earned. Men his age and the young ones coming up behind them, as Brother Resistance said, knew they were **not** destined for prosperity, they had grown accustomed to having “**make work**” programs thrown at them by a government that wanted to give them just enough to keep them quiet, but not enough to let them prosper and the picture emerged, as word by word Brother Resistance painted a community into life and the congregation joined in listing the programmes cynically thrown at them – “Crash Programme, LID, 5 Days, URP, Ten days, Orange.”



Group at the Harlem Bakery with Earl “Whitey” Da Costa in the centre and Diana Mahabir-Wyatt, Director Servol



Earl da Costa,
“Whitey” (Cover of the Silent
Prophet by
Fr. Gerard Pantin C.C.S.p.)

But “Whitey” did something different. He started a bakery with **SERVOL’S** help and he kept at it through thick and thin and there was more thin than thick. But Resistance, a schoolboy at the time, remembered the effect it had on the community. One of their own had started a business - not brought in from outside but started from within the community itself.

At the time when Resistance was being jeered at for persisting in going to school, “Whitey” was persisting in baking and delivering bread for Harlem Bakery’s customers. And in the evening the boys on the block started to lime by the bakery, as though absorbing the miracle of home-grown entrepreneurship through their skin. And Brother Resistance continued to go to school. Once again, the congregation joined in, calling out the names of the calypsonians, soca and rapso artistes who got their roots nourished in that space in front of “Whitey’s” bakery, **where it became ‘ok’ to work hard and succeed and remain in love.** The congregation called out name after name including that of calypso-lover extraordinaire Keith Smith with knowingness that only a community can have of its own.

Brother Resistance’s voice painted lives and hopes – the caimite tree saved by the community because it had a basketball hoop; when they were tossed a ten-days to do some paving and, to the supervisor’s dismay, they did it in five and came back for more - proving now, proudly, that they were not only able to produce – they were more able than the government “**fixers**” knew – and so they began to identify projects themselves – not waiting to “be picked” for a ‘ten days.’ The wall that needed building to shore-up a cliff face on the top of which perched a house – and as he spoke, Resistance’s body tilted at an angle so that you could see, taste and feel the precariousness of that one house waiting to fall. And soft voices in the congregation murmured about the house waiting to fall.

In front of “Whitey’s” bakery the community gathered – there was always a pot of something cooking – or a pot of **something**. People contributed, families with nothing at home got fed and young Resistance growing up - and the other young people listened to the stories the grown-ups told of their struggles overcome, the adventures, lives lived, wisdom learned – the university of Quarry Street and Ovid Alley which started when Earl **“Whitey,” the “Mighty Struggler” da Costa started a bakery and it became possible for others to achieve as well.** “No one will know the history of that community” Resistance said, as though daring the rest of the country to acknowledge the fabric of an unknown hero. He didn’t pluck people from burning buildings, he didn’t deflect runaway cars or snatch a child from a raging man – he just lived, he went on day after day, doing what he had to do and in so doing made it possible for so many others to do so as well. **Thank you “Whitey!” And thank you Brother Resistance** for reminding us **“Never to Give Up!”** By Diana Mahabir-Wyatt, Director Servol.

Centres' Activities...

Chaguanas Regional Life Centre ... Gives Back to Society.

On Thursday 7th February, 2019, the ADP Trainees along with the Instructors of the Chaguanas Regional Life Centre assisted the Chaguanas Senior Citizens Home with the re-painting of their building and cleaning of their surroundings. **Way to go, Chaguanas!**



Voluntary Help at Happy Venture School !

Hyacinth Valentine, a past employee of the Ministry of Social Development, volunteered her services to do a session with our students on **"Morals and Values."**

This is in an effort to help guide our young people to reflect on ways of thinking and acting and to help them to develop critical thinking skills.

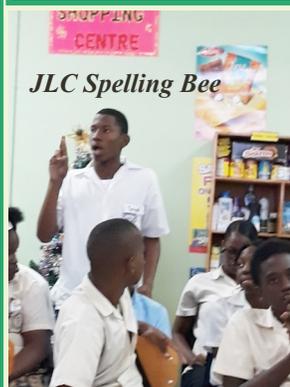
ANDALON D.S. Foundation

Servol has joined hands with ANDALON D.S. Foundation to facilitate a pilot program to provide an online learning platform for our Junior Life and Advanced Skill Training Centre (Second Chance Program) trainees. The goal is to equip our trainees with 24 hour, 7 days-a-week access through smart phones and computers to Servol's training material in order to complement instructor-led class development and learning.



Forres Park Life Centre

Trainees from ADP, Home Health Aide and Beauty Culture Departments of Forres Park Life Centre attended a session of the National Crime Prevention Programme (NCPP) on January 30, 2019. This programme is designed to engage, educate and empower communities to make crime prevention their responsibility.



Junior Life Centres

Spelling Bee Competition took place at the San Juan JLC and ALL students performed well in their categories.



Junior Life Centres

Annual Football Competition Finals at Skinner Park in San Fernando. All centres participated. This year 2018, San Juan JLC emerged winners.



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