



Anthony Morgan

## **Excellence recognized at Jamaica's independence gala**

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**By RON FANFAIR**

At almost every turn in life, women were there to steer lawyer and social justice activist, Anthony Morgan, in the right direction.

He paid tribute to them last Saturday night at the annual gala to celebrate the Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA) and Jamaica's 54th anniversary.

An associate at Falconers LLP specializing in civil, constitutional and criminal litigation, Toronto-born Morgan was the recipient of a Community Service Award.

"My commitment to social justice and the passion for doing this work comes from having a strong foundation in the home with my parents giving me that education, my grandparents, a church community and also a broader community of nurses, social workers and teachers who surrounded me," he said. "They have been principally Black women who have reached out to me and saw the potential that I have had. That's not to say that Black men have not been around and provided me with encouragement."

Singling out his maternal grandmother – Hazel Graham – as his biggest hero, Morgan dedicated the award to her.

“My parents had me and my two other siblings when they were very young and grandma, recognizing that kids were raising kids, stepped in as an elder and provided us with a foundation,” he said. “She has been a main contributor to my sense of commitment to giving back and being excellent in the things that I do.”

Graham migrated from Jamaica in the 1960s.

“Still young, she came as a domestic and landed in the middle of winter in Nova Scotia with a 45-pound bag and a dream of a better life for her children and their children,” said Morgan who authored The Universal Charter of Media Representation of Black People four years ago. “I can’t imagine myself going to a place where I have little to no real context, dropping myself there and trying to make a life for my family. It worked out for her and I am eternally grateful to grandma for her courage and tenacity.”

Called to the Ontario Bar three years ago, Morgan – the middle of three children – was a Grace Kennedy Ltd. law intern in 2007, a research assistant to McGill University professor Adelle Blackett, a judicial intern to retired Quebec judge Juanita Westmoreland-Traore, a Humber College instructor and human rights, equity and diversity adviser and a policy & research lawyer with the African Canadian Legal Clinic before joining Falconers last April.

His older sister, Tonika Morgan – a high school dropout who was once homeless – is pursuing a Master’s in Education at Harvard University.

Morgan shared the spotlight with recent Osgoode law graduate, Knia Singh, who launched a constitutional challenge to carding last year and activist/journalist, Desmond Cole, who were also presented with Community Service Awards.

“It’s an honour to be recognized at the same time with Anthony and Desmond,” said Singh who has been a candidate in municipal, provincial and federal elections on six occasions. “We represent the new breed of young social activist leaders who play a critical role in complementing each other.”

The Community Service Award to an organization went to the Carpenters and Allied Workers Local 27 that represents over 7,000 members working in a variety of skilled trades, including carpentry and resilient flooring.

“We give back and are deeply involved in communities, so this recognition is meaningful,” said Jamaican-born Chris Campbell who joined the union two years after coming to Canada in 1987 and sits on the executive. “In addition, the union has a large number of Jamaicans and the former head of the Ontario District Council (Ucal Powell) migrated from Jamaica.”

Twenty five Years of Continuous Service Awards were presented to former JCA vice-president, Dr. Billroy Powell; Thelma Carey-Thompson and Pam Reynolds.

Fluent in French and Spanish, Dr. Powell taught physical & health education in Jamaica and Spanish in Cuba before relocating to Toronto in 1989.

Two years ago, the senior policy analyst with the provincial public service published his first book, *Settling in Canada: Jamaicans Have A Story To Tell*. A graduate of St. Andrew High School for Girls in Jamaica, Carey-Thompson taught art at Merl Grove and Meadowbrook High Schools and Jamaica and Kingston colleges and honed her artistic skills at the Edward Annison Studio in London, Albert Pels School of Art in New York and the Lillie Hand Décor Studios in Long Island, before returning to Jamaica in 1972.

Out of a studio she set up in Havendale, Carey-Thompson created designs for kitchens, bathrooms and greeting cards that were donated to charitable organizations in Jamaica and North America.

She has also illustrated and written a children’s book – *I Saw Santa* – to support the Project for the Advancement of Childhood Education in Canada. A mortgage agent, Reynolds is the JCA membership services committee director.

“I started volunteering with this organization as a teenager before I became a member,” she said. “This is my home away from home.”

JCA’s Saturday Morning Tutorial Program co-ordinator, Vilma Garnett, was presented with the Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award, Raphael Walters was the recipient of the Lifetime Award and educator Aldaine Hunt received the President’s Award.

In the keynote address, Jamaica's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Kamina Johnson-Smith, encouraged Jamaicans at home and abroad to celebrate and reflect on the greatness of the country and its people and look at ways in which they can contribute to national development.

She also acknowledged the Jamaican Diaspora in Canada for their selfless acts of giving.

"Your contributions, particularly in health and education, have had a massive impact on many, many lives," said Johnson-Smith, a lawyer and founding member of the University of the West Indies Dance Society in Barbados.

"We, as an administration, would like to focus on a shared partnership for prosperity and we wish to encourage members of the Diaspora to invest in Jamaica and do so in a way that will not only boost national development at home, but the prosperity of your families in your chosen homelands."

The JCA was established shortly after Jamaica secured its independence on August 6, 1962.

The founding executive comprised its first president, Roy Williams who attended the gala; Bromley Armstrong, Phyllis White, Mavis Magnus and the late Violet Carter, J.B. Campbell, Esmond Ricketts, Ira Dundas, George King and Owen Tennyson.