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TOURISM STUDENTS EMPOWERED TO GET ENGAGED IN CRAFTING THE TOURISM THEY WANT



Kristopher DaCosta (2nd right), Digital Marketing Manager, Jamaica Tourist Board has the attention of his fellow panelists during the Tourism Youth Forum. (L-R) Jeffrey ‘Agent Sasco’ Campbell, recording artiste and entrepreneur; abian Brown, Director, Internal Organization and Corporate Social Responsibility, Bahia Principe and Janet Silvera, Moderator

MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA - In commemoration of Tourism Awareness Week, the Jamaica Tourist Board hosted a youth forum for its Tourism Action Club (TAC) members at the Montego Bay Convention Centre recently under the theme *Rethinking Tourism*.

“The day’s activities hold opportunities for networking, and empowerment. This is about how you as the future will find innovative ways to stand out, do business, learn and build your net worth,” said moderator Joel Nomdarkham, Journalist, Marketer, and Social Impact Creator.

One hundred and fifty students from schools across the island benefitted from impactful and instructional nuggets shared throughout the sessions by expert panels. The forum was set against the backdrop of UNWTO's World Tourism Day activities under the theme Rethinking Tourism, and the students who came from 15 schools had the opportunity to ventilate the theme throughout the day.

Carolyn McDonald Riley, Director of the Tourism Linkages Network noted that the seven passion points of the tourism sector hold untapped opportunities for young people to be creative and contribute to the industry.



Students participate during the session

The diversity of the resource persons present, offered insight to the possibilities for career paths available. For Ashley Rousseau, designer, artist and business owner of BeenyBud, a Jamaican company that creates handmade straw products, "Craft is something you can do on the side, after hours, and students can start right now and do it on weekends and the resources are grown in backyards." However the sector needs an injection of attention and resources to ensure its longevity to attract young minds. She is concerned that, "Unless we invest and strengthen the art and craft programme throughout schools across Jamaica, we are never going to get the continuity."

Kristopher DaCosta, Digital Marketing Manager at Jamaica Tourist Board spoke of the opportunities in the tourism sector, "Everyone has a story with the power of that story and the ability of everyone to share that story. Today we are capitalizing on local talent, relying on ourselves on people not much older than you are to tell our authentic own stories. There are videographers, photographers, writers and producers. That's one of the opportunities that you have, once you have a vision of what you want to do."

A nugget that the students won't soon forget was made by Fabian Brown, Director, Internal Organization and Corporate Social Responsibility, Bahia Principe when he articulated, "Professionally infuse yourself into spaces where they have what you need and they will benefit from what you have," as he challenged them to seize or even create opportunities for themselves as they rethink tourism the way they would like to see it.

Britanie Hanson, of the UWI Tourism Society agreed as she expressed, "We need to be involved in the decision making process. We are the future and we have ideas: whether in parliament or within our own (TAC) clubs."



Sanecia Taylor (2nd right), Junior Tourism Minister making her presentation during the youth panel. Others on the platform are from left: Britanie Hanson, Secretary, UWI Tourism Society; Theondra Hamilton, Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Tourism Essay competition winner and Xavier McFarlane, Moderator

The students were eager to hear from Jeffrey ‘Agent Sasco’ Campbell as he shared in his capacity as Owner, Mulberry Valley Estate Eco Resort. “I am open to new visions and adapting to what changes come. At about age 16 my life changed when I realized that I can be paid for my ideas. I invite you to consider as young people that any business is the business of an idea. Everything starts with a vision...it’s all about vision, it’s all about being creativity. What I am doing now is pursuing another idea Mulberry Valley Estate Eco Resort.”

To the student who asked how they can activate their vision with limited connections, Agent Sasco said, “Recognize that you have ideas and you have tools that didn’t exist 10 years ago. You can see examples of people who made it work for them. Be authentic. Start moving in a particular direction and somehow the pieces start to come together.”



Carolyn McDonald Riley (centre Director of the Tourism Linkages Network) addresses the forum as Ashley Rousseau (left) of BeenyBud and Joel Nomdarkham (right) Moderator listen

The call for action also came from within TAC as Sanecia Taylor, Junior Minister of Tourism encouraged her fellow students to “Get engaged try new things. Being engaged and involved is the reason I am the Junior Tourism Minister. I got to travel to the Cayman Islands, express my views and interests and meet new and very important people. It gave me great exposure.”



Jeffrey 'Agent Sasco Campbell' (left) engages a student during the Youth Forum

DaCosta’s closing remark was a pivotal take away for the students, “Walking out of here everybody should have everybody’s handle and form a community and groups...support each other, share your ideas and work as a community. You all have a common interest which is tourism and want to build a career in tourism. The successes will come, the failures will come but at least you have that community to learn from each other.”

The day ended with the students enjoying a live performance from Agent Sasco.

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For more information about Jamaica, go to www.visitjamaica.com.

About The Jamaica Tourist Board

The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB), founded in 1955, is Jamaica’s national tourism agency based in the capital city of Kingston. JTB offices are also located in Montego Bay, Miami, Toronto and London. Representative offices are located in Berlin, Barcelona, Rome, Amsterdam, Mumbai, Tokyo and Paris.

This year, the JTB was declared the ‘Caribbean’s Leading Tourist Board’ by the World Travel Awards (WTA) for the 14th consecutive year and Jamaica was named the ‘Caribbean’s Leading Destination’ for the 16th consecutive year as well as the ‘Caribbean’s Best Nature Destination’ and the ‘Caribbean’s Best Adventure Tourism Destination.’ In addition, Jamaica was awarded four gold 2021 Travvy Awards, including ‘Best Destination, Caribbean/Bahamas,’ ‘Best Culinary

Destination –Caribbean,’ Best Travel Agent Academy Program,’ as well as a *TravelAge West* WAVE award for ‘International Tourism Board Providing the Best Travel Advisor Support’ for a record-setting 10th time. In 2020, Jamaica was named the WTA’s ‘World’s Leading Wedding Destination,’ the ‘World’s Leading Cruise Destination,’ and the ‘World’s Leading Family Destination.’ Also in 2020, the Pacific Area Travel Writers Association (PATWA) named Jamaica the 2020 ‘Destination of the Year for Sustainable Tourism’. In 2019, TripAdvisor® ranked Jamaica as the #1 Caribbean Destination and #14 Best Destination in the World. Jamaica is home to some of the world’s best accommodations, attractions and service providers that continue to receive prominent global recognition.

For details on upcoming special events, attractions and accommodations in Jamaica go to the JTB’s Website at www.visitjamaica.com or call the Jamaica Tourist Board at 1-800-JAMAICA (1-800-526-2422).

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