

*Women's History Month*

## Black Immigrant Woman Strikes "Gold"

By Vinette K. Pryce  
Special Assignment

**E**lusive to many stories about immigrants are the joys of growing up in societies that focus more on people and less on technology. Often tales of past terror, despair and suffrage overwhelm and dominate conversations about why families migrate to Canada, Great Britain and America.

However, "Demerara Gold" squarely embraces the simplicity, freedom and unique aspects of growing up in a one-woman production set in a region sometimes referred to Caribbean, sometimes Latin America and always Third World country.

Once known as Demerara (because of a river that runs through it) later British Guiana and now Guyana, a bedrock for yellow, gold portrayed by (Ingrid Griffith), the engaging presentation provides innocence, glee, excitement, angst, pride, hope, carnival, and a banner of tri-color that blazed independence when it embarked on self-rule from Britain in 1966.

There is history, geography and life lessons that transcend generations. Through a one-woman journey from a 7-year-old youth to adolescence and teenage transition, Griffith takes audiences from the rural community she was born to the big city of Queens, New York when she is reunited with her immigrant parents.

She uses the voices of 18 individuals clearly nuanced by individuals she is intimately acquainted. That it is staged in Women's History Month, the delightful showcase integrates her parents, grandparents, sibling, relatives, and friends with char-



Actress Ingrid Griffith performs "Demerara Gold"

acters that come to life as role models that shaped her youth.

In a recurring dream, it is a woman emerging from the sea that haunts her sleep. And when her grandmother remains loyal to her husband despite the fact he left for many years without a hint of reason returning with a large stash of gold to appeal to her feminine resilience it is pure 14 carat metal.

At times the patois is poignant, particularly in prayer when little Ingrid appeals to a higher authority saying "gentle Jesus meek and mild..." Growing into womanhood, Ingrid blossoms becoming adorable when disguising a longing for her mother's presence by rebelling combing her hair and when she defies her grandma's discipline or licks her lips after sneaking macaroni and cheese.

Hilarious and often reminiscent of experiences relatable to every Caribbean national there are some dark moments that resonate with reality and balance.

Ironically it is during adolescence when she arrives in the USA that she fully blooms to understand the ramifications of her father's casual rum shop stops, his mood swings and her mother's total devotion to him when she was a mere child.

Stress on this mainland amplifies the naivete she might have overlooked back home. But with added novelties, pop radio blaring "Shaft," the Sugarhill Gang, and the "I Love New York" theme song, a hip Yankee schoolmate, dalliance with sex, Seventh Day Adventists and a full-blown alcoholic father, a battered mother and all the ame-



(L-R) NYU Dental Student Emer Bajuelos from Cuba joined Actress Ingrid Griffith following One-Woman Showcase about her immigrant experience. (Photo: Vinette K. Pryce)

nities that encompass finding the American Dream, the lively, carefree, Caribbean upbringing morphs into a nightmare.

Griffith's talent cannot be overstated. From face, fingers to feet she successfully captures images absent from the set. At times, video projections and music enhance an 80-minute non-stop bio-drama that tackles domestic violence, ambition, family values, migrant concerns, and adjustment to a new society.

"Demerara" is the sugary, sweet nostalgia that should travel through the boroughs. "Gold" is the brilliant mettle that decorates the jewel in her crown. Together, they bring

platinum patent to BRAATA's treasure trove of annual presentations.

Griffith's singular appearance merits many more outings and far-reaching audiences deprived of the limited engagements some were privileged to enjoy recently at the New Perspective Theatre.

It is productions such as "Demerara Gold" that the late Vivian Robinson must have appreciated when she perceived an AUDELO Awards in 1973 to honor excellence in Black theater. Hip-hip, hooray Griffith struck gold and it shines with excellence, charm and brilliance.

*Disc-Chat*

## Morgan Heritage Wants Everyone To Feel Good

Edited By  
Don Thomas

**A** year ago at this time, Morgan Heritage was 20 days away from winning its first Grammy Award for Best Reggae Album with its 10th studio album, *Strictly Roots*. Now the critically acclaimed group is ramping up a world tour and finishing up its forthcoming new album -- a taste of which premieres exclusively on Billboard.com.

"Reggae Night" featuring DreZion finds Morgan Heritage directing that "everyone take a load off" as the group shifts into fourth-gear jam mode. Providing the inspiration for the

upbeat anthem -- co-produced by DreZion, also a keyboardist for the band -- was none other than Reggae Icon and Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Jimmy Cliff.

After receiving the track from DreZion and playing it on the tour bus last year, Morgan Heritage Vocalist Peetah Morgan recalls, "All we could hear was Jimmy Cliff's song 'Reggae Night.' And like many around the world, we are big Jimmy Cliff fans. The song basically wrote itself once we were singing the hook and just vibing."

Vocals for the track were recorded last October in a studio the group set up in its



hotel room while in Zimbabwe. Available now, "Reggae Night"

is the second single from Morgan Heritage's yet-untitled 11th

studio album.

It's due this Spring via the group's own Cool To Be Conscious (CTBC) label. The project's first single "Selah" was released last summer. "We wanted to start the year off with a song to get people feeling good despite all that's going on in the world today," the entire group concluded.

Morgan and his four siblings--Una Morgan (keyboard/vocals), Roy "Gramps" Morgan (keyboard/vocals), Nehemiah "Lukes" Morgan (rhythm guitar) and Memmalatel "Mr. Mojo" Morgan (percussion/vocals)--will personally deliver that message when the quintet kicks off its world tour.