

Del Friday Committed at Work and Play

Written by Helena Kaufman

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Del Friday's life so far has been a series of typically Canadian balancing acts. Born in Calgary into a bi-racial family and raised in North Delta, Friday drew strength from both her Trinidadian and Canadian roots.

"We were usually the only black kids on the block or in school," she says. Standing out, helped her fit in well later when she attended university in BC for a psychology degree and then law school at Toronto's famed Osgoode Hall. "There were other West Indian students hoping to find both their own place at school and also others like themselves," says Friday. She swam successfully in the culturally diverse Canadian sea. Del Friday negotiated the east-west divide, a liberal arts and law education and multi culturalism.

Now she negotiates in the corporate and commercial law practice she is establishing as an associate with the Waterstone Law Group. Her career plans include partnership and continued specialization in financial issues that affect the clients she works with - both companies and lending institutions.

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“I approach my law practice in an entrepreneurial way,” says Friday. Like the small business and real estate clients who seek her legal counsel, she updates her marketing and business management education.

She is equally committed to community through service organizations like the Rotary club and her own cultural community. “I identify racially as black and culturally as Trinidadian Canadian.” In light of her positive family life in Canada and warm visits with the branch in Trinidad, Friday helped bring about an intergenerational program in New West.

A seniors’ group socializes, practices and performs in a steel pan band. They also teach. “Music, art and culture sessions like the most recently held masquerade costume building workshop bring them together with young people who have come for school or work and are missing their elders.”

“Community members need to take part, be involved and take ownership,” she says.

Friday has served as Vice President of Trinidad & Tobago Cultural Society of BC and is now in her fourth year on the board of the Caribbean Days Festival. As Chair of the 2008 event slated for July 26 and 27 at Waterfront Park her mission includes, “getting more youth involved.” She notes that the board and planning committees now have younger members who will learn and eventually lead community events.

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Her aspirations for the community are to keep up the biggest aspects – culture, arts, costume building, story telling and to continue to draw support and participation.

The festival is one such culmination of people who come together to organize and plan. And, groups beyond the T & T community like to join in the fun including the Brazilians, a pipe band and others.

Friday sees the inclusive ambience much like Trinidad's attitude to multiculturalism. "It's more actively open and less concerned with being politically correct. Our Vancouver Festival enjoys representation from all of the Caribbean community and beyond."

On balance, Del Friday's experience leads her to say, "You can be supported in places you simply don't expect. We must be open and reach out to other communities because they want us to participate more than we even think."

Helena is a Vancouver based business writer and communications coach. Reach her with column suggestions or communications queries at www.theafronews.com