

## **NEW CARIBBEAN DRIVE AIMS AT CITIZENSHIP**

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### **Body**

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The Williamsbridge and Wakefield neighborhoods of the north Bronx are saturated with **Caribbean** families, many of them Jamaicans, who own row after row of one and two-family homes.

Like the Caribbeans in Brooklyn's Crown Heights and East Flatbush, they identify themselves as hardworking, intensely religious and upwardly mobile people.

Irvine Clare and Winston Tucker want many Caribbeans to think of themselves as something else citizens.

"Many of us say we are here for five to seven years," said Clare, who with Tucker formed the **Caribbean** Immigrants Services in Queens earlier this year. "We want to get rich and go home. But what we've found is that those five to seven years turn into 57 years."

Immigrants from other countries are not excluded from the services provided by CIS, Clare said, though Caribbeans are the main focus.

The services include **citizenship drives** like the ones held earlier this month in Williamsbridge, Queens and Hempstead, L.I.

The **drives** are designed for those who already have green cards. Workers help immigrants fill out Immigration and Naturalization Service forms, answer questions and take the fingerprints and photographs required for the **citizenship** application forms.

CIS was invited to the neighborhood by Hugh Beckford, founder of **Caribbean** and American Family Services a group **aimed** at keeping **Caribbean** families intact and preventing their children from ending up in the city's foster care system.

"I had worked in the foster care system as a case worker and as an educational coordinator" in the 1980s, said Beckford. "I noted that there was not much understanding of the growing number of **Caribbean** kids coming into the system."

Beckford, a native of Jamaica living in the Bronx since 1980, formed CAFS in 1991, providing after-school adult literacy, and immigration programs at St. Luke's Episcopal Church.

After seeing seven families nearly torn apart when one parent was deported, Beckford said immigration services are an integral part of his goal of keeping families together.

"You have families here where one parent is here legally and another parent is not," said Beckford. "You have to counsel them in terms of getting their residency before they're forced apart."

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But Clare said he has other goals.

In Crown Heights and Flatbush, high concentrations of Jamaicans, Trinidadians and Barbadians have achieved some political influence, Clare said. But large numbers of them remain without ***citizenship***, limiting their ability to participate in a political atmosphere increasingly hostile to immigrants.

According to the Department of City Planning, there are roughly a half million non-Hispanic people from the ***Caribbean*** currently living in ***New*** York, with concentrations in central Brooklyn, the northeast Bronx and southeast Queens. Jamaicans and Guyanese account for more than half of the influx, followed by natives of Haiti and Trinidad and Tobago. "We formed ***Caribbean*** Immigrants Services as a reaction to the anti-immigrant sentiment in Congress. But we're not partisan. We're more interested in voter preparation than mere voter registration," Clare said.

"When you know what the issues are that are facing you as a citizen and as a group, you don't need me to tell you who to vote for," he said. "What we're doing falls under the realm of community empowerment. It's not just about voting. It's about civic responsibility. It's about participating in the school board and the PTA.

"We impress on the people that we serve that they have to set an example of empowerment for their children," said Clare.

## Graphic

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CLARENCE DAVIS DAILY NEWS SIGN TIME: Hugh Beckford, ***Caribbean*** and American Family Services founder (r.), carries sign with Hugh Cunningham.

## Classification

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