

August 8, 2025

Minister Crowns Jamilya Wells - WASA Emancipation Queen 2025

The Honourable Barry Shiva Padarath, Minister of Public Utilities, was on hand to crown WASA's Emancipation Queen 2025, Jamilya Wells, at the Authority's African Emancipation Queen and Cultural Show, which was held today – Friday August 8, 2025, at The Greens, Head Office, St. Joseph.

The show themed *"BI NKA BI: Shaping Sustainable Futures Through Reparatory Justice"* was also attended by the Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Public Utilities, Shivanna Sam, members of WASA's Board of Commissioners and the Executive Evolution Team, led by Acting CEO, Jeevan Joseph, along with guest speaker, Dr. David Muhammad, Founder and Director of the Black Agenda Project Organisation and the Kwame Ture Education Centre.

Minister Padarath, in his remarks stated that when you consider after centuries of emancipation of our African brothers and sisters, our forefathers who laboured and toiled to build Trinidad and Tobago, it cannot be that you are replacing one form of slavery centuries later, with another form of slavery. He suggested this is done by not appreciating workers such as those at WASA, who have been a bastion of support to many communities, particularly along the East-West corridor.

Parliamentary Secretary, Shivanna Sam, also commented that our African ancestors did more than just survive. She said they taught the values of unity, dignity of hard work and the importance of passing on traditions that remind us of who we are.

Acting CEO Joseph, while delivering opening remarks at the event, encouraged employees that as WASA marked 60 years of service on September 1 2025, to reflect on how we can embody emancipation in our daily work by breaking barriers through innovation; strengthening unity; and leading with compassion.

From his standpoint, Dr. Muhammad provided a historical lesson on the African slave trade, identifying several persons of African descent from Trinidad and Tobago, such as Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture), who rose to global prominence in the civil rights and Pan Africanist movements. He said that *"even after going through the African Holocaust and coming out on the other end, we were still able to rise up to not blame slavery and say that we're down because of slavery, but we are in a position to say that we can come up in spite of slavery."*

Six exceptional contestants competed for the prestigious WASA Emancipation Queen title, with Jamilya Wells, of the Strategic Programme Development and Implementation Division, and representing Burkina Faso, claiming the crown. Derecia Ali, of the Human Resources Division, representing Senegal, placed second; while Rebecca Murphy, of Kew Place Office, representing Benin, took third place. In a surprise move, Minister Padarath, so impressed by the high standard of

competition, committed along with the WASA Executive Evolution Team, to doubling the prizes for the top three winners.

The cultural showcase featured powerful performances including spoken word artistry by WASA's own Kyle "Skeeto" Amos, dynamic song and dance by the Top Premier Performing Academy, and an electrifying performance from the Evolution Band that kept the audience dancing. Guest speaker Dr. also delivered thought-provoking remarks on reparatory justice, perfectly complementing the event's theme.

This vibrant celebration of African heritage attracted strong support from WASA's leadership and staff, demonstrating the organization's commitment to cultural preservation, while promoting unity, education, and sustainable development. The event successfully highlighted the enduring significance of emancipation through its blend of pageantry, performance, and meaningful dialogue.



L -R Cavelle Mc Alister, of the WASA Sports and Cultural Club, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Public Utilities Shivanna Sam, Jamilya Wells, WASA Emancipation Queen 2025, Minister of Public Utilities, Barry Shiva Padarath and Acting WASA CEO, Jeevan Joseph.

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About WASA:

Governed by the Water and Sewerage Act Chapter 54:40, WASA is Trinidad and Tobago's national water utility, committed to providing safe, reliable, and equitable water and wastewater services while promoting conservation and sustainable resource use.