



Bridging Past and Present with **LYNDA R. EDWARDS**

Exploring 'Friendship Estate' and the Power of Caribbean Storytelling

In the vibrant tapestry of Caribbean literature, Lynda R. Edwards emerges as a beacon of storytelling prowess, weaving intricate narratives that delve deep into the heart of Jamaican history and culture. Born against the

Lynda R. Edwards: A Visionary Storyteller, Bridging Past and Present with 'Friendship Estate'.

backdrop of Mandeville, Jamaica, in 1967, Edwards carries within her the legacies of eight

Lynda R. Edwards discusses the inspiration behind "Friendship Estate," blending history and imagination, emphasizing unity, resilience, and the beauty of Jamaican society

generations, each thread of her family's story intertwined with the rich soil of her homeland.

Her latest literary offering, "Friendship Estate," stands as a testament to her boundless imagination and unwavering commitment to illuminating the complexities of Caribbean societies.

In this exclusive interview

with Reader's House Magazine, Edwards graciously invites us into the labyrinth of her creative mind, offering insights into the genesis of "Friendship Estate" and the meticulous research that underpins its narrative tapestry. Rooted in her familial heritage, the story burgeons from the seeds of history, blossoming into a utopian vision of Jamaica's past, where the tendrils of colonialism

are gently pruned by the hands of unity and resilience.

Central to the narrative are the characters of Brixton and Dexter, whose fraternal bond transcends the societal divisions imposed by colonial rule. Through their unwavering love and solidarity, Edwards endeavors to explore themes of race, identity, and the enduring spirit of Jamaican resilience. Indeed, "Friendship Estate" serves as a poignant reminder of the shared humanity that binds us all, regardless of color or creed.

Yet, it is in her portrayal of Jamaica's alternate historical

Friendship Estate: A Captivating Tale of Unity and Resilience, Illuminating Jamaica's Vibrant History and Culture.

trajectory that Edwards truly distinguishes herself as a visionary storyteller. With meticulous attention to detail, she navigates the labyrinthine corridors of Jamaica's past, reimagining a world where the echoes of abolition resound far louder than the shackles of slavery. Drawing inspiration from the island's rich tapestry of racial diversity, Edwards crafts a diverse cast of characters, each imbued with a depth and complexity that reflects the kaleidoscopic nature of Jamaican society.

As we journey through the pages of "Friendship Estate," guided by Edwards' masterful hand, we are reminded of the power of storytelling to transcend borders and bridge divides. With each word she writes, Edwards serves as a bridge between the past and the future, a custodian of Jamaica's rich cultural heritage, and a beacon of hope for a more inclusive and compassionate world. In her own words, she is "the bridge to reconciling history and healing our future," a testament to the transformative power of literature in the hands of a master storyteller.

What inspired you to write "Friendship Estate," and how did you develop the concept of a utopian vision for Jamaica's past? Can you discuss your research process for this novel and how you balanced historical accuracy with imaginative storytelling?

This story invaded my imagination in 2020 and didn't let go until I wrote "The End." It's very loosely based on research my brother did into our family's history in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica.

My 3x great-granduncle Thomas made the request the book opens with to Dr. Duncan Robertson, his physician. Upon his death in 1786, Thomas asked Dr. Robertson to marry Thomas's young wife, Anne. He wanted to leave Friendship Estate to her but feared the law of Primogeniture and the fact that Anne was Jamaican-born would prevent her from inheriting. Anne and Duncan married in 1787 and ran Friendship Estate together. Then my brother introduced me to a book written by my great, great, great grandfather, Bernard Martin Senior, in 1835. That book helped me to find the voice and the direction I wanted FRIENDSHIP ESTATE to take.

The relationship between Brixton and Dexter is central to the narrative. What inspired their characters, and what themes did you aim to explore through their bond?

The relationship between Brixton and Dexter is not complicated, at least not to them. They were raised as brothers and had no reason to question their love and devotion to each other even as they navigated the two Jamaicas they lived in. That was because of the women in their lives, who realized that Colonialism was the greatest transgression humanity would propagate upon itself. Racism and bigotry were to achieve colonialism's final solution: divide and conquer so someone could benefit economically and politically. Jamaicans have been able to do what most have not; they have embraced the shared yoke of colonialism as a bond. Rejecting what it was meant to do: create irreparable

divisions based on class and color, and that's the legacy I want the world to see in this story. In teaching two brothers to love each other as equals, these women broke the back of slavery.

"Friendship Estate" presents an alternative history where Jamaica joins the abolition movement. What motivated this divergence from actual historical events?

I realized that in Jamaica, while the will may not have been there for the story to be true, the way definitely was with the creation of the manumission system in 1747 and the Abstract of the Slave Law, adopted by the Jamaica House of Assembly in 1826. This law gave enslaved people many of the rights the abolitionist movement advocated and did so eight years before slavery was officially abolished in England and her colonies. This came about because of the complex racial hierarchy that emerged in Jamaica. Colonials, whites born on the island, held status below their European counterparts. Children of mixed race, were loved by both parents, black and white, who wanted them declared free so they could be educated, hold positions of authority, and guide their island home's future.

Your novel features a diverse cast of characters. How did you approach character development, particularly in portraying individuals from different backgrounds and social classes?

I love this question because it gets to the heart of what it

means to be Jamaican. I grew up in a society that didn't define itself by skin color because we all 'mix up, mix up.' While the rest of the world lived in terms of black and white, Jamaica, in fact, all the Caribbean islands, lived the rainbow. This is what I tried to convey in FRIENDSHIP ESTATE. Everyone had to work together to survive and build a society of inclusion. To steal a line from my good friend, George Graham, "Where Jamaicans may be unique is that we are far less obsessed with skin color and ethnic origin than any other multiracial society I can think of." He's right; Jamaicans never refer to themselves as anything but Jamaican. We are exceptional with that title alone.

I am a Jamaican writer and a Caribbean woman. I grew up where the worldwide trading system began, where the ruthless exploitation of human and natural resources began. I am the bridge to reconciling history and healing our future. It's time to tell the stories of how we came together when all seemed lost, to build a society based on the many becoming one. What a message for the world to hear!

