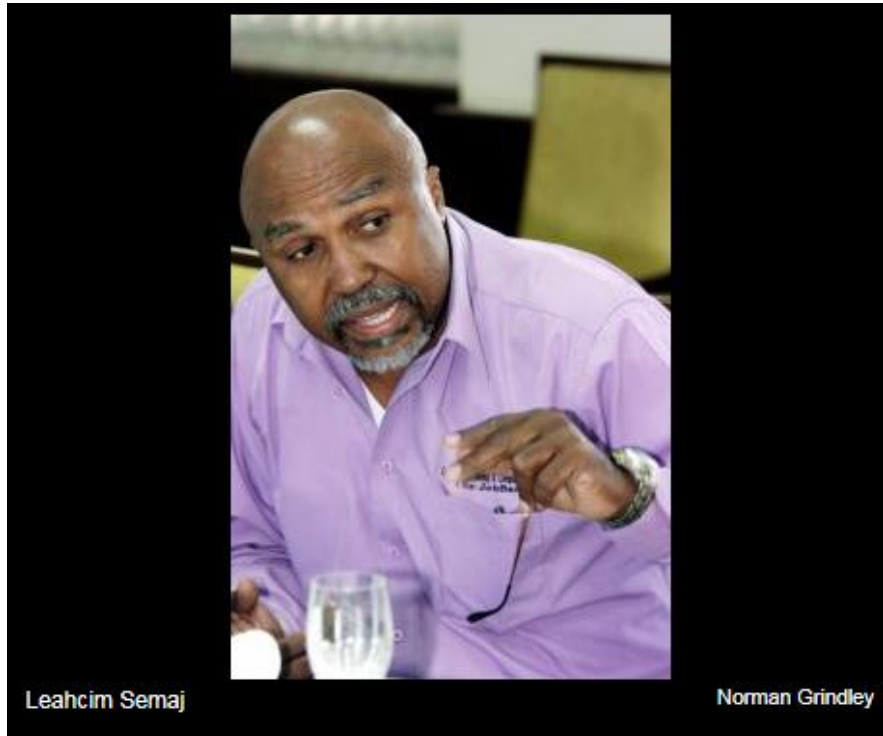


Most Within J'can Diaspora Eye Return To Homeland

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Three out of five (60 per cent) of overseas participants at the recently concluded Jamaica 55 Diaspora Conference are planning to eventually move back to Jamaica, or at least divide their time between their homeland and their current place of residence.

A Bill Johnson poll, commissioned by conference partner Jamaica National, found that only one out of four (26 per cent) of Jamaicans in the diaspora aspire to continue living overseas, with a mere 14 per cent of respondents being indecisive as to a potential move or stay.

On average, conference participants with foreign addresses have made seven trips to Jamaica in the last five years.

"The essence of Jamaica is much stronger when you live outside of Jamaica. It keeps you alive," said noted psychologist Leahcim Semaj, in speaking to the findings.

"No matter how you slice it, if you're a Jamaican living in another country, you're consciously aware that it is not home. Whether you're a resident or a citizen, the dream of most Jamaicans overseas is either to come home after retirement or to come home and contribute once they've made it, or, if they're able to, have the best of both worlds."

The Jamaica 55 Diaspora Conference was held in Kingston from July 24-26. The Johnson team polled 240 participants before the conference, with 130 post-conference interviews.

WOULD TRADE PLACES

But while the bulk of foreigners would return to 'set up shop', a recent Gleaner-commissioned Bill Johnson poll showed that those who resided on the island had other ideas and would instead trade places with diasporans in an instant.

A majority, 52 per cent, of young Jamaicans between ages 18 and 24 would opt for migration, while more than four in every 10 persons between ages 25 and 34 would also migrate in search of greener pastures.

As was the case with those Jamaicans from the diaspora who participated in the conference, the United States is the first choice of residence.

The Gleaner-commissioned poll, which was conducted between June 9 and 11, looked at the perceptions of Jamaicans after 55 years of independence and had a sample size of 1,500 persons from across the island.

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