



Alumni Spotlight

Shadel Nyack Compton

Class of 2007
Managing Director, Belmont Group of Companies
Belmont Estate, St. Patrick
Grenada, West Indies

Alumna offers award-winning agritourism destination

Shadel Nyack Compton is originally from Grenada, the Spice Island of the Caribbean. She moved to the U.S. for schooling and graduated from Howard University in 1986 with a B.S. in Psychology. She also completed a Juris Doctor Degree and a Masters of Law (LL. M) in International Law from Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C. After law school, Shadel was admitted to practice law in Maryland, New York, Washington, D.C., Grenada and St. Lucia. She attended the University of the West Indies in Trinidad where she earned a Certificate in Legal Education, which is required for a U.S. law school graduate to practice in the Caribbean.

Armed with a wealth of knowledge, Shadel returned to Grenada to open a small law practice and be more involved with the family cocoa and nutmeg plantation.

"Soon the plantation became my primary focus and passion, as I endeavored to find innovative ways to preserve, resuscitate and

re-establish the profitability of the Estate," she said. "Given the shift of Grenada from agriculture to tourism as the primary source of income, my strategy became converting the

plantation to an agritourism destination. In 2002, we opened our doors welcoming visitors to the estate, and Belmont Estate has become one of the leading tourism sites on the island."

Belmont Estate is an authentic 17th century French plantation dating back to the late 1600s. It changed ownership throughout the centuries until it was purchased by Shadel's grandparents, Norbert and Lyris Nyack in 1944, the first Grenadians of Indian descent to own a large plantation on the island.

Belmont is a premier tourism attraction on the Spice Isle, hosting more than 25,000 visitors a year. Visitors to the Estate have a unique opportunity to observe and participate in the workings of a fully functional historic plantation. Plantation tours, a museum and a restaurant were first available in 2002 and were

popular with Grenadians and foreigners alike. Organic cocoa was introduced and organic certification was received in 2003.

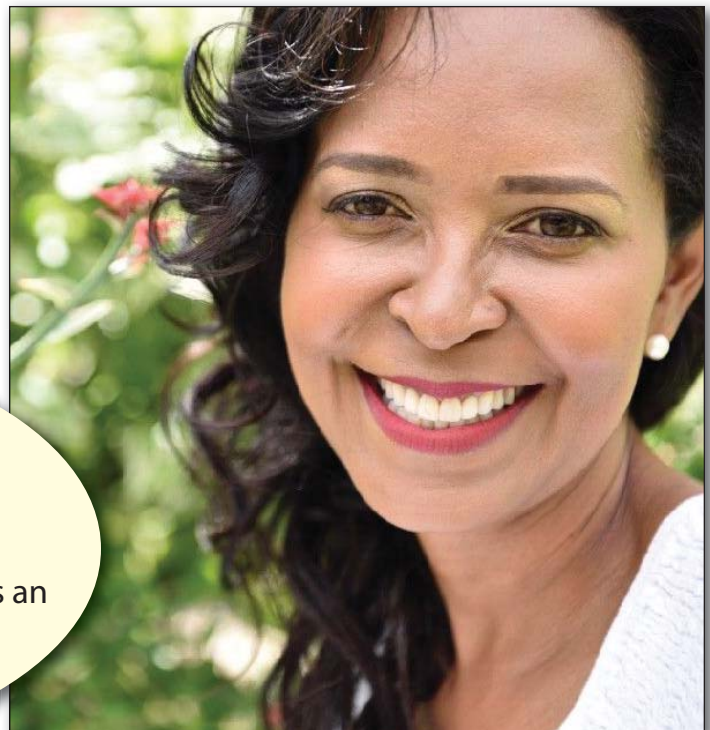
In 2004, Grenada was devastated by Hurricane Ivan, and Belmont Estate sustained severe damage resulting in the total destruction of the restaurant and museum, and significant damage to the cocoa drying facilities. The cocoa, vegetables and fruit fields were extensively damaged, and 80% of the nutmeg trees were destroyed. The tourism component of the Estate was closed for three years while restoration took place.

"Despite huge challenges my staff and I persevered to reopen Belmont Estate to visitors in 2007, offering a traditional historic plantation at work with agriculture, food, historic and cultural traditions all on show. Visitors can now enjoy numerous attractions including a heritage museum, restaurant, cafe, craft market, gift shop, produce stall, conference facilities, and small-animal farm. As well as organic products, the Estate follows the Slow Food ethos and takes its ethical conduct and corporate community responsibilities very

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Belmont Estate

Scenes from Belmont Estate

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seriously. This wonderful agritourism project benefits the whole community while maintaining historical and cultural traditions," Shadel said.

She has been able to create additional opportunities by establishing partnerships with other companies in Grenada, such as the Grenada Chocolate Factory. Belmont Estate produces and processes the organic cocoa used by the Grenada Chocolate Company for manufacture into dark organic chocolate. They also partner with the non-profit organization The Goat Dairy, which produces goat cheese with milk that comes from goats reared on the Estate. Using products grown on the Estate, they have developed a line of organic value-added products including spices, jams and jellies.

It was during the rebuilding, she began to consider further expansion and transformation of Belmont Estate's agricultural production business to capture more of the growing tourism

market in Grenada. She pursued the K-State Master of Agribusiness (MAB) program to learn skills to assist in maintaining growth, business stability and product consistency.

"The MAB program stresses sound financial management, the importance of proper logistics and planning, marketing and organizational structure. The program enables a business to develop a competitive advantage, reduce business risk and focuses on the importance of local linkages and added value in rural areas," she said.

"Another major factor in my decision to do my MAB with Kansas State University was the fact the Master of Agribusiness was an interactive distance program, with students from various backgrounds and from every sector of the agriculture industry. Having the ability to study and still manage my business and practice law was important and it benefitted me tremendously."

Throughout the MAB program, Shadel applied her homework assignments and thesis to Belmont Estate. Her thesis, *Transforming Belmont Estate: A Strategic Plan*, provided an opportunity to assess the business environment and develop a framework to support the new direction.

"I conducted a financial analysis to assess the potential financial outcome for the project. I learned that Belmont Estate was well-positioned to benefit from the increasing tourism business in Grenada, with the implementation of a strategic plan. With a clearly defined vision, mission and core values, the task for Belmont Estate was to earn and retain a competitive advantage position, long term.

"My research also revealed that for Belmont Estate to achieve this, we have to differentiate ourselves from our competition, maintain new and innovative products, services and programs as well as exceed customer expectation.

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"I also identified several challenges that Belmont Estate could face. Factors included government policies, natural disasters, and economic conditions domestically and internationally, as well as the strength of the U.S. dollar," she said.

In addition to her responsibilities with Belmont Estate, Shadel is active in the community. She continues to operate a small solo law practice, serves as the Deputy Chairman of the Grenada Tourism Authority, and is Director of the Indo-Grenadian Heritage Foundation.

"As an organic farmer, I am very involved in the promotion of organic farming through the organizations that I serve, as President of the Grenada Organic Cocoa Farmers' Cooperative and Director of Grenada Organic Agriculture Movement," she said. "Family is very important to me, and I am very grateful to God for supportive parents, family and friends. I have two children Anna (13) and Benno (11) who are already learning the agritourism business."

Rebuilding and expanding Belmont Estate was a labor of love that created a meaningful experience for guests, but also a way to honor its history.

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Belmont Estate is currently in the process of re-branding, with a new tagline: "History in the Making". Plans include increased agro-processing products, eco-chic accommodations, a cocoa and chocolate museum, and an outdoor amphitheater for cultural entertainment. Indeed, Shadel is creating history in Grenada.

For more information about Belmont Estate, go to www.belmontestate.net.

Belmont Estate Awards & Recognition:

- 2003 - Certified Organic by Certification of Environmental Standards (CERES)
- 2010 - Award for Environmental Excellence of the Year, Grenada Chamber of Industry and Commerce
- 2012 - Award for Innovative use of Root Crop - Root Crop Festival, Ministry of Agriculture, Grenada
- 2013 - Shadel Nyack Compton awarded Businesswoman of the Year by the Grenada Chamber of Industry and Commerce for the Belmont Estate
- 2013 - Awarded the Most Outstanding Organic Farm for 2013 on the Occasion of the World Food Day Celebrations, Ministry of Agriculture Grenada - 16th October, 2013
- 2013-2015 - Certificate of Excellence for Belmont Estate by TripAdvisor
- 2014 - Award in Recognition of Unique Agro-Heritage Attraction at State of the Industry Conference in U.S. Virgin Islands from Caribbean Tourism Organization and Travel Mole
- 2014 - First Prize, Mango Festival for most innovative use of mangoes and best packaging by the Grenada Marketing National and Import Board
- 2014 - Recognition in Brussels Briefing 37: Building Resilience of SIDS through Trade and Agribusiness Development - Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA)
- 2014 - Recognition from News Travel about Belmont Estate spice tours, gardens, museum, goat milk farm and restaurant
- 2014 - Fair Trade Certified with Fair Trade Sustainability Alliance (FairTSA) in 2014
- 2015 - Belmont Estate was cited by the Centre for Responsible Travel (CREST) in its article "Celebrating Women in Tourism" on the occasion of International Women's Day, March 8th



Walking the cocoa at Belmont Estate.