



## NIFCA case heading to court

**THE SAGA involving Praise Academy of Dance and the National Cultural Foundation (NCF) may be moving from the stage to a showdown in the law courts.**

The group is vowing to take legal action in the High Court after losing its appeal against the NCF's judges' decision to disqualify its theatrical production **Speak Life** on October 27 in the **National Independence Festival Of Creative Arts (NIFCA)**.

In a release last Friday night, the NCF said Senator Gregory Nicholls, the appointed arbiter for competitions produced by the Foundation, had rejected the complaint brought by Praise Academy.

In the ruling, dated November 17 which the NCF stated was disseminated to both parties, Nicholls, an attorney, said "there is no basis to interfere with the prior decision of the judges of the entry **Speak Life** which was disqualified under Rule 9B of the **NIFCA** Rules.

"The rationale for my decision to dismiss the complaint is that the **NIFCA** judges are experienced practitioners in their respective fields and are carefully chosen by NCF to judge in its competitions."

He added: "The judges determined that the entry was in breach of the rules, more specifically, in that it exceeded the bounds of good taste. The entry was adjudged to have denounced various gender identities of the LGBTQ community via raging characterisations and expressions. This was a determination that the experienced panel of judges were entitled to make.

"The rules in question have been in place for many years and the complainant has entered **NIFCA** under the said rules. This demonstrates that the complainant agreed to the rules of the competition and to abide by the same."

However, attorney for Praise Academy, Davida Maynard-Holligan, told the **MIDWEEK NATION**

yesterday the arbitration did not address the constitutional argument brought by the group, and that Nicholls was not qualified to make such a decision in the first place, leaving them no choice but to take matters to a higher level.

"We really have to go to the High Court. The matter was beyond the jurisdiction of the arbiter to begin with, but we were simply following procedure based on the rules of **NIFCA** which said to take grievances to the arbiter. When the matter went before him, the case of Praise Academy was that the decision of the judging panel was arbitrary and unconstitutional, that they made an illegal decision which went against the human rights of each member that performed the piece.