

Independence Message 2008

By Leader of the Opposition

The Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, ON, MP

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It is the 46th anniversary of our nation's Political Independence. Another occasion for thanksgiving and celebration.

We have come this far by faith and work – and God has blessed us along the way.

As usual, at this time of year, Jamaican talent showcased in the annual Festival, reminds us of just how blessed we are.

Our cultural expression helps to build self-confidence, reassuring people, especially the young, of the greatness that lies within us. I pause to thank the many teachers and other volunteers who give of their time and talent to support children and youth participating in Festival.

At forty-six, we still have a long way to go on our journey as a nation. These are particularly trying times, as we grapple with the crime and the economic difficulties that are showing up everywhere now – from inner city, to middle income household, to gated community.

We must never doubt that, as Jamaicans, we have the capacity within us to overcome. “Rain a fall but dutty tough”, to use a good Jamaican proverb, is not reason to give up hope. Let us see it as a call to action.

We can be proud today that as a nation, we have not failed. For the main part, we have handled our political independence with soberness and wisdom.

We have built enduring national institutions, some of which have attracted world attention and admiration.

We have produced great men and women who have made people around the globe sit up and take notice of us – leaders, scientists, entrepreneurs, champions in sports and artists.

There can be no doubt that Jamaica is a God blessed country. Yes, currently we are facing serious challenges but we have within us, as a nation, all that we need to rise above them.

Top down planning is not going to help us at this time. The complex problems call for the bringing together of the entire Jamaican family, to work in one accord. We must sit together, as families do, to develop the plans that will take us out of the current problems and shape our future.

The power to overcome is in community, and until we accept this, there will be “wrong moves.” Our history shows that every great achievement came out of the collective wisdom and required the energy and enthusiasm of the people of the country.

The words of the Right Excellent Norman Manley, who said, in his address to the opening of Independence Parliament in 1962 are still relevant today. He said, *“I believe that as an independent nation we can so manage ourselves as to demonstrate one day how, by making our great motto ‘Out of many, one people come to speak the truth about ourselves, we can become a worthwhile and shining example of the sort of world men sometimes dream to live in.’”*

Our 50th anniversary as a nation will be in 2012. Let us work together now, to ensure that at that time, we can celebrate some specific achievements:

- the taming of the beast of crime;
- major assaults on poverty; and
- the engaging of all Jamaicans in one massive drive for production and financial prosperity.

Talent abounds in our country. Great ideas are alive in people’s minds just waiting for the right opportunities to become productive enterprises. The urgent mission is to translate the winning ideas, talents and skills into wealth. We can do this, working together, with God’s help.

And so my fellow Jamaicans, with these thoughts in mind, I wish you a Happy Independence Day. I pray for the health, happiness and prosperity of the entire Jamaican family, at home and abroad, and for the perfect outworking of all that concerns us at this time.

May God bless you and keep you safe and sound in one love, as one family shaping the future together.