

Independence Message 2009

By Leader of the Opposition

The Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, ON, MP

6 August 2009

“I BELIEVE IN JAMAICA”

My Fellow Jamaicans,

Independence is the Day that signaled the birth of our nation; the Day we took charge of our own destiny.

August 6, 1962 represents the culmination of the sacrifices and struggles of scores of Jamaicans.

They came from all walks of life and dared to believe that as a people we could and should chart our own path.

This day requires that we recall the journey our people have taken since winning political self governance.

While many emphasize the weaknesses and missed targets over the period, we must focus on the several landmark achievements.

The theme for this year’s Independence Day is “I believe in Jamaica”.

Belief in Jamaica is about confidence in who we are as a people.

It reaffirms that we are capable to chart the course of this nation to a common destiny, in which each of us can share as equal stakeholders in the wealth of our country.

Belief in Jamaica means the future is ours to determine; not for others to grant us.

As National Hero Norman Manley asks:

“But who with blood in his veins and pride in his heart would not serve, when to serve is to help to build your own country, for its own people, for your children and mine?”

This is the essence of true nationhood; the commitment of each to contribute so that all can partake.

To believe in Jamaica is a belief in the Nation-Family.

We must strengthen the bonds of love, respect and peace within our own families and within the national family.

All of us must honour our responsibilities as citizens, relating to each other with respect.

We can all take strength from the outstanding achievements of our people in the areas of sport, the sciences, art and education, in academia, music, and culture.

We must rely on our natural talents and skills that make us unstoppable, genius, innovative, entrepreneurial, altruistic, gallant and inspirational.

On this day we should celebrate the innovativeness and creativity of the Jamaican people; recognizing that the solutions to the modern struggle lie within us.

After all, we are the land of ***“tun you han mek fashion”***

Our mothers have sustained their families on little or nothing.

Our fathers toiled in the hot sun in the cane fields of Westmoreland, the banana plantations of St. Mary, navigating the Rio Grande in Portland, selling food on the winding roads of St. Thomas.

Bending tired backs in the vegetable gardens of St. Elizabeth and the potato fields of Manchester.

They are the fishermen in St. Catherine, the taxi drivers in Clarendon, the tourism worker in St. James, the medical professional in St. Ann, the fireman in Hanover and the teacher in Trelawny.

They are the captains of industry and the law enforcement officers in Kingston and St. Andrew.

Nothing has ever stopped us!

The colonial masters could not kill our spirit and hurricanes never permanently kept us down. We know how to overcome and we know how to soar.

We do it through hard work, determination, grit, pride and that deep hunger to make Jamaica not just the pearl of the Caribbean but the jewel in the crown of the entire world.

These are the strengths that are alive in us, passed on through time and for generations as indomitable traits coded in our very DNA.

As we approach our fiftieth Anniversary of Independence we must forge a new accord as a society.

Each of us must take on the responsibility to strengthen the institution of the family.

Strong families are the building blocks of a quality society; they are the cornerstone of safe communities.

We must continue to strengthen the role of communities, the church, the school and other civic organizations so they are reflective of the aspirations of our people and responsive to the needs of society.

Let us forge a national commitment to renew ourselves as Jamaicans; each with a stake in the wealth of our society.

This Independence Day –let us emphasize our strengths, and work together to achieve our national goals.

As Marcus Garvey said in 1932, and which is still relevant today:

“Those of us who love our country cannot, but interest ourselves in this desire to see our country taking a place and standing second to none in the world”.

My fellow Jamaicans,

Let us embrace a national fellowship as sons and daughters of Jamaica; standing and striving together as our ancestors have done.

I believe that we have a unique opportunity in today’s Jamaica to replace everything that was suppressed, repressed or taken away during the days of slavery – with something worthwhile, meaningful and lasting

Happy Independence Day my brothers and sisters; and May God continue to bless and protect us all!