

Independence Message 2010

By Leader of the Opposition

The Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, ON, MP

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My Fellow Jamaicans,

As we celebrate the 48th Anniversary of our Independence let us be reminded of the hard work and sacrifices of those from previous generations whose dreams are fulfilled each time we mark our Independence.

Each step along the path to becoming a 'full free' and independent nation, represents progressive victories won by a determined people who refused to give up or to be deterred by what appeared to be insurmountable obstacles.

The events of August 6, 1962 capture the dream that begun many generations before. Independence is not to be seen as a single event.

It is part of the unending task of building a nation that exemplifies Tolerance, Decency, Respect and Unity.

It requires commitment, grit, energy and vigour.

Let us draw strength from the energies of the thousands of Jamaicans who participated in and witnessed the first Independence Day Celebration.

We must continue to fuel our journey toward national development by the great pride felt by all when the Black, Green and Gold of our National Flag was unfurled for the first time. When Jamaicans sang and danced, filled with hope, inspired by the possible and united in joy, as our nation was born.

Independence brought a heightened sense of possibility and responsibility of building a nation that would provide equal opportunity for all.

That is why National Hero, the Right Excellent Norman Manley said in his Independence Message of 1962:

“New responsibilities are ours today as we go into the World to stand on our own feet and make our way forward by hard work and great discipline.”

Those sentiments were supported by the Right Excellent Sir Alexander Bustamante in his own message on that day

“Independence means the opportunity for us to frame our own destiny and the need to rely on ourselves in doing so.”

Both National Heroes, Architects of Jamaica’s Independence, were correct in emphasizing the responsibility and commitment required of each citizen to achieve lasting nationhood.

Against this background, today’s celebration provides a platform from which we must truthfully assess the past, as we determine the approach we must take in our nation’s journey.

We are a great nation with men and women who have made Jamaica proud through their invaluable contributions in the fields of: Sport Science, Research and Academics, Agriculture, Medicine, Architecture, Engineering, Aviation, Music and the Creative Arts and Information Technology.

I now pause to recognize the recent successes of the teams from Northern Caribbean University, who made us proud by winning awards in the Microsoft Imagine Competition.

My Brothers and Sisters, the evidence is overwhelming.

In spite of our challenges, we are a great people.

It is born naturally in us to be stronger than our bodies would suggest, reach further than our origins foretell and to strive higher than circumstances compel.

That is the reserve of the Jamaican. It describes the spirit that makes us unique. It hints at our charm and our appeal, they are features of resilience.

They are the essence of the Jamaican people.

Ours is a rich and proud history and beyond that a promising future, rich with potential and guaranteed by the sweat of our brows.

We must continue to believe in Jamaica as the Right Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey had when he said:

“I trust that you will so live today as to realize that you are masters of your own destiny, masters of your fate;

if there is anything you want in this world it is for you to strike out with confidence and faith in self and reach for it.”

Jamaicans, let us free ourselves of the doubts, of fears and of negative thoughts. Let us stand tall and proud, certain that in this the land of our birth, our dreams – those dreams started in the minds of our forebears and for which they fought and toiled.

The dreams that still live on in the hearts and minds of our young talented people – can and will be achieved in this land and in our lifetime.

It won't be easy.

The development of a nation and the molding of a people are not meant to be easy. Yet with effort, sincerity of purpose and convergence of our belief in our nation, it can and will be achieved.

Caribbean Poet, H. D. Carberry said it thus:

It takes a mighty fire

To create a great people

It takes a mighty fire

To smelt true steel

To create and temper steel

Needs patience and endurance

But oh! What steel and what people are my People!

The Mold is not yet made, perhaps

That can unite and make my people one

But more important than the mold,

Is the temper of the steel;

The Spirit of my people.

And when that steel is smelted,

And when that steel is tempered;

And when that steel is cast,

Oh! What a people shall my people be!