



Independence Message 2013

from Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller

November 6, 2013

My fellow Jamaicans, at home and abroad, join me as my heart sings “Give thanks and praises, we are 51”. Fifty-one years is a short time in the life of a nation.

As we journey along our path to development we proclaim our theme “Jamaica: Triumphant, Proud and Free”.

We are indeed triumphant! Our triumphs shine through the spirit and resolve of Jamaicans who, despite our economic challenges, valiantly press on. As a people we defy the odds. We work hard and we reap successes that astonish the world.

We are proud – Proud of our rich historical and cultural heritage demonstrated by our achievements in sport, culture, international affairs, science, business and industry. We are also proud of our democratic traditions. Yes, we celebrate our independence with pride

Brothers and sisters, we are free—free to craft a glorious future for ourselves. Independence gave us the freedom to display our talent and abilities; and to enjoy the dignity and respect of our national identity.

As we celebrate that we are “triumphant, proud and free”, let us not forget the road we travelled to create a more prosperous, productive and peaceful Jamaica. As Jimmy Cliff sang, we have had “Many rivers to cross”. Yet, we are a people of courage and resilience, putting forward one foot after the other, confident that the Almighty is guiding our steps.

Let us draw on the history of our ancestors—a history of triumph over adversity. We draw on the history of our National Heroes and Heroine .We draw on the strength of Nanny of the Maroons, Sam Sharpe, Paul Bogle, George William Gordon. Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Alexander Bustamante and Norman Washington Manley. They symbolize generations of Jamaicans who fought courageously against, slavery, racism, oppression and colonialism.

The Right Excellent Norman Washington Manley reminds us that it is right that we should begin by looking back to remember those who laboured in their time and generation to bring forth this new day. He said we are “...heirs of a heritage that we should stop and give praise to”.

He urged Jamaicans to, “Remember the long hard years of the modern beginning and that it was the little people, the poor, the humble and the seeming weak who first began to blow the still living but small and hidden flame of freedom and blew till it soared like a torch and all the land began to light up around us”.

We are on a journey with one mission—. As the Right Excellent Sir Alexander Bustamante said, “Independence means the opportunity for us to frame our own destiny and the need to rely on ourselves in doing so. It does not mean a licence to do as we like. It means work and law and order... Let us go forward together into the future with faith, courage and dedication. Let us on this Independence Day resolve always to help those less fortunate among us; let us resolve to work together under the law to build a Jamaica that will last and of which we and generations to follow may be proud ”.

At this stage of the journey, it is fitting to ask ourselves as Norman Manley did in his time, “What is the mission of this generation? It is...tackling the job of reconstructing the social and economic society and life of Jamaica.

Our mission must take us briskly along the path of economic growth and national development.

Let us reconstruct our society so that all Jamaicans can meaningfully participate in the economic life of the nation.

Let us ensure that every Jamaican is accorded respect and feels a sense of belonging to our society.

Let us give full expression to the words of our Motto “Out of Many One People” as we celebrate the blending of our races and cultures and their contribution to nation building.

Let us remember that Jamaica is more than a brand, more than a name, it is the pride of a people.

Let us work towards creating a just, equitable, harmonious, productive and confident people.

We are the masters of our destiny. The future lies in our hands. We must treasure our independence by working together to build a strong economic foundation and a prosperous nation for all Jamaicans.

As Norman Manley told us “...out of the past far away and the past near at hand is born the present, in which a people coming to maturity and nationhood can look back and give praise, look around and give thanks, look forward with prayer and in humility but with confidence and strength.

Brothers and sisters, as our National Song urges:

I pledge my heart forever

To serve with humble pride

This shining homeland, ever

So long as earth abide.

I pledge my heart, this island

As God and faith shall live

My work, my strength, my love and

My loyalty to give.

O green isle of the Indies,

Jamaica, strong and free,

Our vows and loyal promises

O heartland, 'tis to Thee.

If we can all be inspired by love, driven by hope and united in the mission of nation building, then with God as our anchor, our best days are still ahead.

Let us all on this Independence Day recommit ourselves to Jamaica .God bless Jamaica, Jamaica land we love.