



## **Independence Message 2014**

**from Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller**

**6 November 2014**

My fellow Jamaicans at home and in the Diaspora, I greet you on this the 52<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of our Independence.

Fifty-two years since our flag was first hoisted; fifty-two years since we assumed full responsibility for our national affairs.

Fifty-two years since that hopeful and expectant generation passed on to us the vibrancy of a dream of a new Jamaica: a Jamaica of equal opportunity for all; a Jamaica where justice would roll down like a river, and a Jamaica for which all of us could be proud.

A Jamaica in which all of us could truly say, “This is Jamaica, my Jamaica”. A true ownership society. A Jamaica in which all of us would have a sense of place and belonging, not just a place of abode.

Founding Father Rt. Excellent Norman Manley put it well in speaking of his vision of this new Jamaica:

*“All efforts will be wasted unless the masses are steadily taken along a path in which they will feel more and more that this place is their home, that it is their destiny. They will then do more for it— work more, more effort, more thinking, more sacrifice, more discipline and more honesty...”*

*There is a tremendous difference between living in a place and belonging to it and feeling that your own life and destiny is bound up in the life and destiny of that place.”*

What profound words! How deeply relevant to the theme of our Independence celebrations this year: “This is Jamaica, my Jamaica”.

It is only when we truly internalize the view that “this is Jamaica, my Jamaica” that we can give our all to this rock.

- We have to unite for a common purpose.
- We must have a sense that we are, indeed, stakeholders.
- We have to take responsibility and be accountable for our actions.

This is true sovereignty and independence.

“This is Jamaica, my Jamaica” means that in the face of our most severe drought in recent memory, we must take personal responsibility for conserving water.

We must make the necessary sacrifices. The issues we face are national and broad-based. Because this is our Jamaica each Jamaican must own and contribute to mitigating them.

A sense of personal responsibility and ownership captured by our independence theme, “This is Jamaica, my Jamaica” means that we take responsibility for our communities and help to keep them safe.

Personal responsibility means that we look out for our neighbour and our neighbour’s children; that we protect the weak and vulnerable in our communities and take care of the elderly, the disabled, the sick and the lonely.

The work that lies ahead, in staying the course with our economic programme that will lead us toward economic independence, will require not only personal responsibility but engaging human will.

When I speak of 'human will' I speak of our will as a people **to believe** we can achieve and exceed the targets we set.

- It was **the will of the enslaved people** to be free that brought Emancipation.
- It is **human will** that caused our heroes and heroines to do that which was necessary to build our nation.
- It was the **will of the people** that ignited the passion for political Independence.
- It is **human will** that drives all movements for excellence, justice, respect, equality and liberty.
- It was a common mission and the **will of the people** that brought people together to strive for political liberty and self-government.
- **Human will** causes our sportsmen and women to excel, our innovators to innovate and our creators to create! I pause to recognize our sportsmen and women and commend those who represented Jamaica at the Commonwealth Games for excellent performances.
- It is **human will** that keeps us going, that explains resilience and prevents us from giving up and giving in as we make the necessary sacrifices.
- • It is our will, our **human will**, to create a better Jamaica for all Jamaicans that will push our efforts forward, onward and upward to the success of Jamaica, our Jamaica.

The theme, "This is Jamaica, my Jamaica" impels us to have the will and responsibility to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay and to maximize our productivity and efficiency.

This is the only way Jamaica will be strong economically and increase our exports and foreign exchange earnings.

Our fiscal prudence, our judicious management of our economy as well as the reduction in our debt and current account deficits, is a demonstration of our taking our affairs into our hands. We can't be bystanders in the building of this Jamaica. We are all stakeholders. This is our Jamaica.

It was the indomitable spirit of nationalism which gripped that generation which bequeathed to us our Independence in 1962. That generation believed passionately that we as a people had greatness inscribed in us.

That generation believed the future favoured us. It was a future that was being built steadily since the post Emancipation period, leading up to 1938 and the birth of the modern labour movement, and then the thrust toward self-Government.

Our ancestors were visionaries, men and women who lived and breathed hope and optimism.

The Rt. Excellent Sir Alexander Bustamante believed in Jamaica and spent his entire life working for a brighter future for his fellow Jamaicans. He said, *“Independence means the opportunity for us to frame our own destiny and the need to rely on ourselves in doing so”*.

Former Governor General Sir Howard Cooke, a stalwart of that generation which led the struggle for Independence, was a relentless and tireless believer in the greatness of the Jamaican people.

Today we need to recapture that pioneering spirit, that spirit of adventure in building a Jamaica our children can be proud of, a Jamaica of righteousness and justice for all.

We must believe we can do it.

Norman Manley put it memorably:

*“If we never desert our own principles; if we believe in what we are aiming at, if we appreciate those who regard this country as their home... if we can do those things and be true to what we believe in and if we can combine this with hard work and practical intelligence, then I believe... we will make... this country a real place to say that ‘we come from Jamaica”*.

“This is Jamaica, my Jamaica” means that we take responsibility for our families and our children and that we instil in them proper values and attitudes. It means:

- We become our brother and sister’s keeper, always looking out for their good

- That we become active citizens, deepening our democracy
- That we volunteer in our communities, civic groups, churches and civil society groups
- That we always cherish hope, optimism and love.

Our Independence was hard fought though no blood was shed. But people gave their lives for it. Let us not squander it.

We must stand together as one nation when the wells go dry, when the fires rage and the tempests roll. We must stand together in the knowledge that the difficulties we face are part of our historical struggle to build our nation.

We have endured struggle and sacrifice in different forms in this our journey to growth and development. It is because we are free, independent people that we have an opportunity to work together to turn the corner.

We must pull together, facing our challenges as one people – for a common cause – because – ‘This is Jamaica, my Jamaica’ – your Jamaica – our Jamaica – land we love.

I am reminded of that wonderful poem **Litany** written by George Campbell to capture *the spirit of the independence movement*:

*“I hold the splendid daylight in my hands*

*Inwardly grateful for a lovely day*

*Thank you life*

*Daylight like a fine fan spread from my hands*

*Daylight like scarlet poinsettia*

*Daylight like yellow cassia flowers*

*Daylight like clean water*

*Daylight like cacti*

*Daylight like sea sparkling with white horses*

*Daylight like sustained blue sky*

*Daylight like tropic hills*

*Daylight like a sacrament in my hands"*

Let us walk into the daylight of a brighter tomorrow.

This is Jamaica, my Jamaica", land we love.

I thank you