



Independence Message 2015

from Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller

6 November 2015

My Fellow Jamaicans:

The detachment of Jamaica from the British colonial scaffold 53 years ago, and our emergence as an independent nation-state, was as seminal a moment as it was sensational.

We chose to take the reins of our destiny firmly in our hands, and pledged to forge a just and progressive nation from the rejected colonialism.

We rose up in celebration of our right to sovereignty because we long desired to live within a democratic state that was respectful of the rights of citizenship.

This was the historic mission of our forbearers; this was the dream of those whose lives were destroyed in the quest for freedom with citizenship.

Our detractors did not believe that we would succeed; they said we were in pursuit of the impossible.

We set out to build a resilient, sustainable nation from our divisive and fragmented past. We have proven them wrong.

Out of many one people, we have achieved nationhood- one people, out of many.

Brothers and sisters,

Independence is a time to reflect on our journey as a nation..... a time to embrace the opportunity to chart our destiny as a people. It is a time to continue to embrace peace, progress and prosperity for ALL Jamaicans.

It is time when we celebrate the solid achievements of the past decades. It is a time when we challenge every Jamaican to contribute in some way to the national good, by re-energizing the Jamaican spirit of resilience, hard work, passion, genuine love for each other and our unflinching faith for a better and brighter tomorrow.

In this regard, our country is making considerable progress, and everywhere, at home and abroad, the truth is being spoken that Jamaica is moving up and on.

The sacrifice of our people is recognized and respected.

Much respect is due to every citizen, who in the interest of our country, has heeded the call for greater social discipline, industry, innovation, cultural creativity, and economic self-reliance.

We are looking to the future. We are doing what is necessary to protect and preserve, uplift and elevate those things we know to be the best of Jamaica.

I celebrate the enterprising and entrepreneurial spirit of our citizens, from the small commercial operators to the large investors, who have all maintained their confidence in our ability to skilfully manage the affairs of this nation despite the difficulties identified.

Fellow Jamaicans,

Allow me to say on this historic day: Jamaica is our home; We belong to her and she belongs to us.

One of Jamaica's founding fathers, The Right Excellent Norman Washington Manley believed that once we felt a sense of ownership in our nation, we would play our part in ensuring that our nation develops.

He said: “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”.

Let each of us play our part in writing a new uplifting history of hope, courage and prosperity for our people and proclaim our Independence theme: “Proud and Free: Jamaica 53”.

My fellow Jamaicans: we are at a pivotal position in our history as a sovereign nation.

As one of our National Heroes, 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 an environment of freedom for the past 53 years,, Jamaica has produced a wealth of human capital that continues to be our greatest national asset for economic growth. It is our people, supported by a system of quality education and world class training that will provide the next great leap forward for our nation. This advance must, of necessity, be fuelled by innovation and the remarkable culture and creativity for which Jamaica and its people are renowned.

We know that for some members of the Jamaican family, things are difficult. My government is aware of the challenges and is working diligently to improve the quality of life for all.

My fellow Jamaicans, despite the challenges, we will succeed, because we are the children of men and women who have historically overcome adversity.

We have outstanding athletes who are world-beaters. Their electrifying performances across the globe serve to inspire and unite us as a people.

Their success on the track, the field or on the court did not happen overnight. It is the result of days, weeks, months and years of hard work, discipline, blood, sweat and tears and a fixity of purpose.

Like our athletes, like our Reggae Boyz and Girlz, our Special Olympians, our Bobsleigh Team, our scholars, scientists and Jamaicans of all other disciplines, who, despite the

daunting odds, have climbed the mountain to victory, let us also as a people be steadfast on our journey to building a stronger nation and society with the Almighty God as our guide.

I call on every Jamaican to be the very best that you can be- as a mother, father, a professional or business owner, an artiste or public servant, and a neighbor – be the best that you can be. Fulfill your greatest potential. Never forget to lend a helping hand to your brothers and sisters.

Let us build our communities and participate in the governance of our country. This is how we continue to build our nation. This is how we bring real meaning to Independence.

Our commitment is to social justice, security and prosperity for all. We are in pursuit of economic equity and are unwavering in our commitment to the values and principles of democracy.

We have to recommit ourselves, in every way possible, to engaging better social relations to produce peace, harmony and tolerance in our families, our communities and in our nation.

We will also continue to make the kinds of contributions that have set us apart on the global stage as a leader and supporter of progressive and positive change.

Let us continue to demonstrate in our daily affairs the importance of self-reliance, and the discipline of self-determination.

I wish for all Jamaicans, at home and in the diaspora, a happy and rewarding Independence Day and God's continued blessing and guidance.

Happy Independence – 'Proud and Free, Jamaica Fifty Three.'