

**“SPLENDOR IN DECEMBER”**  
**Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation Dinner**  
**Destiny Banquet Hall**  
**Toronto Canada**  
**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2009**

**Speaker: Dr. CB Peter Morgan**

**THE QUIET REVOLUTION**

**Introduction**

Tonight I acknowledge and pay tribute to all who are present here, both to the Jamaicans and the wanna-be-Jamaicans. Those of us back home are proud of the image of Jamaica bourn by many of you across the world. No matter how we are caricatured, the Jamaica image still sells.

Former Prime Minister the Most Honourable Mrs. Portia Simpson Miller once stated:

*“Jamaica is more than a name. Jamaica is the pride of a people. It includes the pride of achievements, pride in hospitality, and pride in the landscape and in the character and personality of our people. What the American Dream is to every American, 'Jamaican Pride' should mean to every Jamaican.”* (Sunday Gleaner, July 27, 2008)

The report given this evening by your President, Mrs Sharon Ffolkes-Abrahams, speaks clearly about the progress and achievements of this group in Canada, and about the support given to the less fortunate in Rose Town and Southside, two inner city communities in downtown Kingston, Jamaica.

**National Day of Prayer**

In my own involvement largely with the Church community, I recognize the interest you displayed, and your involvement, in the National Diaspora Day of Prayer which took place on August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009 in Canada, and elsewhere in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

A pod cast of a services from one of the twenty five participating churches in the New York area was streamed live to a global audience. It generated tremendous inspiration throughout the major Jamaica Diaspora communities. The project raised more than US\$4000 for two selected charities, the “Pregnancy Resource Center of Jamaica” (PRCJ) and the “Coalition in Support of Adolescent Leadership Training” (CSALT). We are grateful to all who contributed.

Already the Coordinating Committee is planning toward staging the event next year on August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010. We plan to expand the scope of the project to reach and involve an even larger segment of the Christian community from the Jamaica Diaspora across the world.

### **PARADIGM SHIFT**

There is a significant paradigm shift occurring globally associated with the fortunes and misfortunes of both developed and developing nations. This is beginning to reshape the way many of us at home and abroad think about the future development of Jamaica economically, politically, socially and culturally.

### **OTHER DIASPORA COMMUNITIES**

From research studies being made of India, China, the African states, Latin America and Israel, it is clear that the current economic development, social transformation and political stability in many countries are attributable largely to the involvement of their respective diaspora migrant communities.

Whether that involvement occurs through scientific and technology transfers to the homeland, or through injection of foreign capital into the economy, there is enough reason for Jamaicans to hope for a better future in the development of our nation

At the Launch of the African Diaspora Policy Centre in 2006, **David Gakunzi**, Head of the Europe-Africa Dialogue, was quoted as saying

*“The sixties were the decade of hope and fight against under-development. The seventies were the decade of bad development. The eighties were the decade of no development and the nineties were the decade of a deafening caw. The first decade of this century should be the decade of the active diaspora; one wherein the diaspora are included in the dialogue and debate on Africa, not because they hold the key to Africa’s solutions, but because they are still valuable partners/stakeholders in the development efforts regarding Africa.”*

It is interesting to note the rapid transformational impact in such African states as Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda during this decade, especially in the areas of rural development of towns, land reforms, large scale agricultural projects, peace initiatives and political stability.

Of course it must be acknowledged that the effectiveness of these movements came about as a direct result of the various initiatives which respective home Governments undertook to engage the Diaspora in the nation's development.

### **More than a welfare source**

Dennis Morrison (Journalist in the Sunday Gleaner Sunday 13th, 2009) has cautioned the Jamaican diaspora when he stated:

*“Jamaica continues to view its diaspora as a welfare source, assigning to it a limited role in our social and economic development. The pockets of high-skill and managerial influence are still to be weaved into powerful networks for investment and trade as in the case of India or China and in some Latin American countries. Meanwhile, remittance flows to Jamaica are being primarily allocated to consumption or unproductive uses.”*

### **MESSAGE OF HOPE**

Without cataloguing the list of global challenges facing the world today, and without having to profile the ills of our own nation-state, I wish to bring a positive message of hope and of encouragement to you. This comes not only from the observable trends in other nations but from my own observation, and personal engagement in transformational initiatives in Jamaica,

I can confidently report that in spite of all the challenges being faced by us, ***there is a quiet revolution taking place in Jamaica***. It is transformation in process, not always discernible and not always in a forward movement, but unmistakably optimistic in its drive to create a renewed people and the rebirth of our nation.

The following are a few examples of this changing trend.

#### **The “I Believe” Crusade.**

The Governor-General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen, issued a challenge to the country to seek to recapture the “things that money cannot buy.”

*“I think we can all agree that in our rush to modernization, and modernize we must, we did not emphasize and safeguard, as much as we should, some of the basic values that define us as a nation,”* he said.

He was addressing the nation at the launch of the “Fresh Start” National Transformation Movement on July 29, 2009, a mobilization programme coordinated and led by Rev. Al Miller out of the Prime Minister’s Office.

He urged all Jamaica to take part in the programme and to embrace its mission.

This was a follow up to the “I Believe Crusade” which was the theme of his Inauguration address, and which is gathering momentum like a prophetic wind awakening the consciousness of our people. He stated:

*“I believe’ must be etched in every classroom, the screensaver on every computer and cell phone, it must be internalized in the heart of every student until dreams are born as to when they can become, and the contribution they can make to the development of their nation. It must be the theme in the morning papers and the optimism of the evening news until the waves wash away our shame and we evolve into a nation destined for greatness.”*

### **A New Economic Order**

In July of last year (2008), in the face of the fall out from the retail foreign exchange industry, otherwise referred to as the “unregulated investment schemes”, I stated in an article published in the Sunday Gleaner July 27:

*“It is time for the banking sector together with other business houses to examine the need for reform in the conduct and role of banking in our developing economy, and especially given our acute social needs. We could contribute to a new paradigm in the banking industry, which the international and global markets themselves are demanding.”*

It is my personal conviction, shared by many outside the major corporate institutions, that retail investments and small business enterprises are a critical part of the economic solution for our people. And where there are negotiations at the macro-governmental level to rescue the economy, there is a quiet determined and unstoppable force among the people militating for a new economic order. In short, it is part of the quiet revolution.

### **Public Sector Reform**

More recently, a growing and more robust media editorial echoed the minds of the people:

*“The bottom line is that public-sector reform must not merely be an accounting exercise for dealing with immediate fiscal problems. It is part of a revolution...”*

*This revolution will, of course, face tough challenges, including many that require political consensus. Some of these include legislative changes to further modernize the economy, fight corruption and improve security and justice.”* (Gleaner Wednesday December 9, 2009)

### **Leadership Integrity**

In the public domain there is an aggressive call for leadership integrity. Some have identified various models: the Busta/Portia populist image, the intellectual Phillips/Golding brand and the no-nonsense hard nosed Greg Christie (Contactor General) / Danville Walker (Director of Customs) executive type.

The bottom line is that the nation is recognizing and gravitating towards leaders of integrity, courage and determination as part of the transformational way forward.

### **Community Transformation**

With communities labeled garrisons being the stage for more than 80 per cent of the murders across the island, the calls have been increasing for a dismantling of these enclaves. Garrison communities are characterized predominantly as electoral strongholds for partisan political favours preserved by means of intimidation. The most ready response to this call for redress has come from the security forces, with mixed results.

But without question, there is a quiet revolution taking place within the inner-city communities, especially in Kingston and Montego Bay. This quiet revolution is being facilitated in the main by the Church, and other social intervention agencies with the assistance of resource support from the business community.

While the garrison structures are slow in being dismantled, the mood is definitely changing. Evidence of this is being tracked by the media in the regular testimonials being published of lives (mainly young men) being radically changed from crime to Christ, or from gangsterism to entrepreneurship.

Only last week an unprecedented event took place in Southside where five outside garrison communities were invited to take part in the open Christmas street festival. Hundreds of children and youth braved traditional taboos and frolicked through the streets with their neighbours in spite of political and “tribal” inhibitions.

You may even have read reports of the experiment of the Christmas markets in Downtown Kingston sponsored by Scotia Bank, the Chamber of Commerce, The KSAC and the Gleaner Co. which had thousands of people from up town and down town jamming the streets of Kingston in a commercial and festive experience dubbed “Kingston Come Alive!”

### **The Old Order is Changing.**

There are many more threads being sewn into the tapestry of this quiet revolutionary movement toward a new Jamaica. Yet all is not well. There is still the shame of poverty, the pain of alienation, the threat of violence, the polarization of politics, the struggle for power, the underground economy of drugs and extortions, and the culture of ginalship.

But the old order is changing. There is a new pride, self confidence, and responsibility that is not dependent on traditional patronage. The people are willing to partner with others in the liberation of their own lives and the building of their own community.

***Adversity carries with it the seeds of reformation and inventiveness. Only those who are prepared to dismantle the past and take new initiatives without prejudice and greed, can embrace the future, create institutions and provide services with benefits to satisfy the needs of all.***

John F. Kennedy saw ahead of his time many years ago what others had failed to see:

*"A revolution is coming - a revolution which will be peaceful if we are wise enough; compassionate, if we care enough; successful, if we are fortunate enough - but a revolution is coming whether we will it or not. We can affect its character, we cannot alter its inevitability."* - (JFK. Jr)

### **Call to Radical Engagement**

I share all of this to thank you on behalf of those “back a’ yaad”, all you who over the years, individually and in more organized ways through this Foundation, have invested in our people and in our nation.

I have shared so that you can in an even more structured and strategic manner generate the wheels of change that the revolutionary process may be facilitated even against the most stubborn resistance.

I have shared so that you might begin to see that this is not simply a one sided exercise. We are all beneficiaries together on both sides in this movement, at home and abroad.

We often humorously claim attachment to the homeland because “mi navel string bury dey.” Or we have a sense of “home-sickness” that keeps us locked into the traditions, experiences and relationships of the past.

But, what is demanded of us today, requires more than an attachment to the past. We will need an even stronger commitment to the future driven by a common vision and purpose for a new Jamaica.

Transformational engagement is not a romantic enterprise. It is one of sacrificial commitment. It makes demands on our time, energy, knowledge, skill, and financial resource to produce a corporate people of nation pride.

### **A Jamaican Renaissance**

I would like to re-iterate a statement made at the launch of the Jamaica Canada Diaspora Foundation in 2005. At that time I stated that Jamaica *"needs a national renaissance, a rebirth, re-awakening, revival, reconstruction, renewal, restoration and resurrection"*.

I have been inspired much by the impact of the Jewish diaspora movement which we can trace from biblical times. But over the last sixty years it has been championed in part by the aggressive liberal nationalistic and visionary energy of both religious and secular Zionism, which have literally re-established and developed a strong Jewish state in the midst of its traditional enemies and its violent past.

***Like the Jews, we as Jamaicans must buy into a sense of corporate destiny with which we are all inextricably bound, with a determination to shape the course of a nation people with which we will always identify whether we are assimilated into our new found state in Canada, the USA or Great Britain, or whether we anticipate returning one day to the land of our birth.***

- Spiritually, it is an internal impetus toward the shaping of a corporate cultural soul, and the development of a national conscience.
- Pragmatically, it is the politics of being Jamaican at home and abroad driven by a moral imperative toward the liberation of our people and the achievement of excellence in every field in which we engage ourselves.
- Globally, it is the pride of bearing the Jamaica brand, a unique image that characterizes who we are: a Renaissance People of contagious hospitality and creative energy.
- Ultimately, it is a confidence that we are driven by the providential hand of God toward a goal that will make our people stand together with dignity and pride in the commonwealth of nations and play our part in the advancement of all mankind, to the glory of God.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen, proud Jamaicans of the “Quiet Revolution”!