

NIA

National Integrity Action

**THE TEN THOUSAND MEN AND THEIR FAMILIES PEACE AND LOVE MARCH
SPANISH TOWN REVIVAL IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE SPANISH TOWN MINISTERS'
FRATERNAL – THEME: “SPANISH TOWN, NO VIOLENCE, *FORGIVENESS IS A MUST, NO IFS NO
BUTS*”.**

MARCH 22, 2015

**MESSAGE FROM PROFESSOR TREVOR MUNROE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL INTEGRITY ACTION; HONOURARY VISITING PROFESSOR, SIR
ARTHUR LEWIS INSTITUTE (SALISES), Mona, UWI**

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Let me first thank Bishop Rowan Edwards for inviting me to bring a message to you on this very special occasion. He and I have spoken many times on my radio program, **Jamaica Speaks**, about the “Ten Thousand Man March”. And each year, as I learnt more I had to congratulate him and his team ‘on air’ for their growing success. It is the first time however, that Bishop Rowan invited me to bring a message; naturally, I readily accepted and again thank him for the opportunity to share this occasion with you. I now also wish to offer public congratulations on behalf of myself and National Integrity Action (NIA) to Bishop Rowan, to the Spanish Town Revival, to the Spanish Town Ministers Fraternal, to the Spanish Town Area Development Committee and to all of you who each year contributes to this splendid effort.

And you, here in Spanish Town, may not be alone; you may be leading the way. I say so because within recent months and over the last two years, I have had occasion to deliver messages in a number of churches – at Boulevard Baptist, at Sts. Peter and Paul, at St. Andrew Parish Church, to the Moravian Synod in Malvern, to the Anglican Men’s Fellowship in Mandeville and to dialogue with

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the Executive of the Umbrella Group of Churches. From these experiences, from observing the congregations, from listening to the pastors, **I sense a new wind beginning to blow in the church, a new movement beginning to emerge in Jamaica for peace and love, for integrity, against violence and hate and corruption.**

When I look at this gathering here this afternoon, I think the time is coming to take this fledgling movement from the church hall and the pulpit, into the highways and byways, into the communities and into the streets. In this, Bishop, I believe you are a pioneer, a harbinger, and not a voice crying in the wilderness. Again I congratulate you and your team.

Just imagine not if, but when, every pastor up and down the length of Jamaica follows suit! Remember we have many records, not only Usain Bolt in the 100 and the 200; amongst our records is one in the Guinness Book of Records – **Jamaica has the most churches of any of the 192 countries in the world per capita.** On last count, over one thousand six hundred churches (1600); almost three for every single square mile! Just imagine that day when all sixteen hundred were to do what you are doing today in Spanish Town and in St Catherine, galvanizing men and families to march and to gather for peace and love and integrity against violence, hatred and corruption to begin a revival in Jamaica. What an impact it could have!

Can it be an accident that in South St Catherine, between January 1 and March 7, 2015, compared to the same period in 2014, murder and shooting is down by over a half, robbery is down, break-ins are down. We have to do the same in the North so that your theme may become a reality: “Spanish Town No Violence”.

And don't tell me it is not possible in Spanish Town, and indeed all over Jamaica, for a revival of values, of peace and love and forgiveness! It is not going to be easy and the men and young boys have to play a key role in turning away from violence and from wrong-doing. But it can be done. **Just look at our history. In 1860 one hundred and forty five years ago we Jamaicans came together in a vast revival movement, from Negril to Morant Point, in every single Parish, and that revival did make a difference at that time.**

What a difference such a revival would make in Jamaica today. Would not the powers that be have to listen, take note and mend their ways? And their ways need to be mended so that the top of the stream and the river may be made clean! So that violence against the law may stop

Take two issues – **the issue of National Solid Waste Management/ the Riverton Dump and the issue of Tax Evasion.**

Regarding Riverton many of us, in my family and in yours, are still suffering from the after effects of the fire. Now we are hearing from the Board Chair that there may be corruption at the NSWMA. Who can be surprised? For too long the laws governing the NSWMA have been broken, repeatedly, over and over again and with impunity; no one has been called to account. If you want to know what I mean, read the most recent report of **Jamaica's Auditor General 2013/2014. The report is on-line. It tells us "NSWMA failed to table ten years audited financial statements and annual reports in the Houses of Parliaments"**. Ten years breaching the law, **sections 12 and 13 of the NSWMA Act, which requires such reports to be prepared and tabled in Parliament.** Yet no one in the leadership of the NSWMA has been brought before the courts, prosecuted nor

fined (in accordance with the **Public Bodies Management Accountability Act**). This is violence against the laws of Jamaica; it cannot be condoned because it is committed by people in high places.

To add insult to injury the **Office of the Contractor General in a Special Investigation of the NSWMA in February 2014** found that contracts were awarded “to unregistered contractors...” and contracts were awarded in an “irregular manner” in 2007/2008. The budget for the NSWMA each year is about one billion dollars, no doubt less than is needed, but for that very reason we must make sure that the money is properly spent; that the law allowing the checks to be done is no longer violated yet there is proper accounting for how the money has been. I see where the Mexican Government is helping us with 30 million in this year’s budget to help improve Riverton. Let us make sure that no violence is done to this grant and that it too does not go up in smoke!

Take the second issue of tax payments. Recently the Minister of Finance told the Parliament and us the people about corporate tax payments by companies earning one billion dollars and more per year. He said three out of every four are paying corporate income tax,. That is good. Those companies must be commended for living up their obligations, for behaving with integrity in difficult times. But what about the 40 odd very big companies , the one out of every four which are neither paying nor filing, depriving government of funds to provide water supply, to fix the roads, to equip the clinics and to outfit the schools- in effect doing violence to the public purse. These large tax payers must be investigated and where the evidence exists must be prosecuted and punished. Some cannot get away scot free while the rest of us, big, medium and small, live up to our obligation. We all must pay our taxes!

Our 10,000 man march must cry out: one law, one justice for all; for the man who steals ackee from the Governor General's residence and the man who steals revenue from the people's treasury. Persons at the top must be punished for breaking the law, just like those at the grass roots.. This is one critical way for leaders to practice what they preach, to set an example for the man in the street, to encourage integrity at the middle and at the base of the society. And we certainly need less corruption there as well, particularly in the family and home, where us men have a critical role to play.

Just a few days ago, on March 9 our Governor General, Sir Patrick Allen, shared with us the following insight. **“Very often a child's first introduction to corrupt practices is in the home. They witness parents or guardians stealing water and electricity and eluding the authorities for those and other illicit activities. In these instances they are used as the ‘look out’ and later forced or enticed into crime”**. Is this not too often too true? It has to stop and we men and our families must rise to the occasion.

So too we must come together in gatherings like this across Jamaica to replace the murder and mayhem , the violence against one another, the breaking of the law, at the top and at the bottom of our society with peace and love in the home , the community, at the work-place and the school . It cannot be accepted that between January 1 and March 7, 2015 two hundred and seven (207) Jamaicans were killed by Jamaicans, thirty add more than in the same period of 2014. In St. Catherine North alone thirty two (32) murders were committed during this period in 2015 almost 80% more than the same period last year. It has to stop and this ten thousand man and their families gathering has in the past and shall in the present

and future advance the cause of peace and love and help cut down this unacceptable spate of killings. **We have to “Unite for Change” and I commend the Minister for this initiative. I also commend the police for the significant reduction in fatal shootings and call on them to intensify their investigations and the gathering of evidence against the wrong doers. I call on the prosecutors and the Courts to make sure that criminals do not get away but locked away for a long time as punishment for their crimes.**

Again allow me to commend Bishop Edwards and his team for this extraordinary event and for inviting me to be a part of this occasion. More and more Jamaicans are indicating their willingness to get involved in building integrity and fighting corruption. This gathering is one response. Another is National Integrity Action opening its doors to membership from all walks of life, to all those who stand for integrity.

The massive 1860 Revival begun in St. Elizabeth. One hundred and forty five years later, Let the 2015 Revival begin in St. Catherine.