



**THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S "I BELIEVE" YOUTH CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE  
"YOUTH TALK DI TRUTH: FUTURE COME FIRST – WORLD IN YOUR HANDS"**

***"YOUTH RIGHTING THE WRONG IN JAMAICA"***

**GRAND PALLADIUM JAMAICA RESORT AND SPA LUCEA, HANOVER  
OCTOBER 8, 2015**

**PRESENTATION BY PROFESSOR TREVOR MUNROE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL INTEGRITY  
ACTION;**

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Your Excellency Sir Patrick Allen and Lady Allen, Custos David Stair, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, most of all, young people from the county of Cornwall, may I begin by congratulating His Excellency on this initiative, now in its fourth year and may I thank you for offering National Integrity Action (NIA) the opportunity to share in these occasions. As it is the first time that we are meeting in this context permit me to begin my presentation by sharing with you a five minute infomercial introducing NIA and its work.

**[Infomercial shown]**

As you just saw NIA, myself and the young people associated with NIA are committed to work for a Jamaica of integrity and prosperity, with all Jamaica regardless of politics, regardless of religion, from all walks of life. And that is why we are happy to carry this mission into this conference with you.

More particularly, I wish to share my thoughts with you on the subject: *Youth Righting the Wrong in Jamaica*, because I believe, as Sir Patrick has put it so well, that "there is nothing wrong in Jamaica that cannot be fixed by what is right in Jamaica". Youth, and you young people, have a special role to play in making what is wrong right.

However, there are many young people, in NIA and, no doubt, amongst youth who are here who doubt that the voice of youth is being heard or can be heard. Many young people believe that their voice can't make a difference. It is not only you who have that doubt but many youth, in generations gone and in other parts of the world today, also had that belief and had to overcome that doubt. Each of you also has to overcome that doubt, the doubt that one or two young voices can make a difference in the same way that so many young people who achieved greatness or who made significant contributions had to overcome doubt in their youth.

- Right here in the West Sam Sharpe, aged 30 had to overcome the doubt in the midst of the darkest night of slavery that his raising the torch of freedom could make a difference. Had he not overcome that doubt, the Christmas Rebellion which dealt a death blow to the slave system would not have taken place.
- Seventy five (75) years later, the young Marcus Garvey, age 20, had to overcome the doubt that he could make a difference in taking up the cause of black people in the printers' strike of 1907 and later, in the midst of discrimination and prejudice against black people in Jamaica and in every single country in the world, he had to overcome the doubt that starting an organisation called the UNIA could make a difference. And having overcome that doubt he brought within the UNIA two million black people from across the world, up until now the largest organisation embracing people of African descent in all of history, an organisation which lay at the core of building self-esteem amongst blacks and facilitating movements for Independence all over Africa
- Again from the West, a young teacher, by the name of Howard Cooke, aged 23 in 1938, had to overcome the doubt that his voice in a newly formed organisation, in 1938 the People's National

Party could make a difference. And later as you know that young teacher became the predecessor of Sir Patrick as Governor General of Jamaica, initiating the programme of Governor General's Awards from which this initiative is a most significant outgrowth.

- And still later on, a young man age 29 had to overcome the doubt that his voice could make a difference when he became a member of the Legislative Council, the precursor of the Senate in 1959 and, subsequently, Jamaica's 5<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister Edward Seaga who formed the HEART Trust and started the Jamaica Festival Movement.
- Then there was another young man, age 28, who had to overcome his doubt that his voice could make a difference. His name was Michael Manley, who in 1952 formed the National Workers Union and who as Jamaica's fourth Prime Minister responded to the people's call for social reform, passing the maternity leave law, placing young people on the Boards of educational institutions etc.
- Fast forward to the end of the beginning of the 21st century, a young man by the name of Usain Bolt failed to medal at his first outing at Champs and, in the World Youth Championships held in Hungary in 2001, failed to qualify for any of the sprint finals. He had to overcome doubt that he could make a difference. Had he not done so Jamaica and the world would not have seen the extraordinary records now standing in the 100M, the 200M and the 4 X 100.

And so I would like each and every one of you young people in this county conference, in NIA and elsewhere to know that doubt is natural but overcoming doubt is necessary, if each of you is to make the difference that your talents allow you.

And this is not just a 'young people – in – Jamaican doubt'.

- Take South Africa. Can you imagine in apartheid South Africa the young Mandela, in the midst of absolute white minority dictatorship not doubting initially that he could make a difference before going on to form, at age 28, the Youth League of the African National Congress. Had he not overcome that doubt, the anti- Apartheid movement would hardly have grown as rapidly as it did and that injustice may well very have survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- And today as we speak, outside of Jamaica, there is a young woman; one might even say a young girl, by the name of Malala Yousafzai who, at age 17 in 2014, became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner ever. She is from Pakistan and she had to overcome doubt that her voice could make a difference in a part of her country where the rule of the Taliban banned young girls from going to school. She raised her voice against this injustice; as a result, she was shot three times; Malala survived and ultimately won the hearts of the Pakistani people and people around the world. Two million persons signed a petition demanding a law to allow girls the right to education in Pakistan and that law has now been passed.

**The power of one voice, of one youth can become many, can make a difference but you first have to overcome the doubt that one voice can make a difference.**

And so each you have to overcome your doubt, because in whatever way you choose to make what is wrong right you can make a difference.

In fact many of you actually say this every other day, so to speak when you recite Jamaica's National Pledge. Do you not pledge "before God and all mankind...to stand up for justice, Brotherhood and Peace"? And if that is not just words it must mean that you stand up for justice, brotherhood and peace

at school, in your own house and family, in your own community; righting wrong in these places wherever you find it.

And that is what we in NIA and the young people in our organisation stand for as well, we call it “integrity”. And for us, and hopefully for you, integrity begins with honesty, being honest and truthful with others and with ourselves. ‘Talk di truth’ as our theme today urges!

Integrity also means being fair and not behaving unfairly to one another. Integrity means being trustworthy and reliable. Integrity means being true to your word and keeping your promises when you make them. How can you criticize politicians or anyone else for that matter, for not keeping their promises to you if you don’t keep them to one another?

Most of all in today’s world, where so many around us behave without integrity, it takes courage to stand up for what is right. Look again at Malala and the courage she displayed as a teenager! Look again at Usain Bolt – with athletes left, right and centre taking performance-enhancing drugs, not least of all Justin Gatlin; with the world of football starting at the very head of the stream engulfed in corruption, it must take courage to behave with integrity, to stand up against corruption and say to the drugs man or the ‘lotto scammer’, despite the temptation--- “get thee behind me Satan”.

To practice integrity and to be successful, for the future to come first, that also requires hard, hard work. Take a look when you have time at Usain Bolt’s book – **Usain Bolt: My Story** and you will see how

hard this young hero has had to work to get where he is today. In the book Usain recognised “being six foot five tall with size 13 feet is not good for a sprinter” (p.241). Because of the height it takes time to get going and starting is a problem. He tells us how much work it took to ensure that the first four strides are powerful, that you rise gradually so that you become upright at 50metres, not before, and that you convert the long strides into an advantage by matching the stride frequency of the shorter sprinters. Similarly, the key in the 200M, Usain tells us, is concentrating on negotiating the corner correctly; “you can be the fastest man in the field and loose if you take the bend wrongly”. How did Bolt overcome the tendency to take the bend wrongly despite his natural talent? **“I had to practice, practice, practice, practice and did so much work on it”**.

Dear young people writing the wrongs in Jamaica, and elsewhere in the world\_ globally 600 million of 1.2 billion young people are unemployed-- we can and shall do but it requires of you hard work and courage. I am confident that we are capable of the hard work once we put our minds to it. In fact in 2014, last year, the **National Youth Values and Attitudes Survey** tells us that 99% of our youth valued hard work; and if you doubt that , you watch our youth work when they are shown respect, when the have the right skill and get decent pay.

Yet the same survey tells us that 49.3% of young adults, despite 88% being extremely and very proud of being Jamaican, would give up their citizenship to get better opportunity. The authors of the survey tell us that the young people “do not believe that the current economy can provide effectively for their development... [they].. Believe that greater investment is needed to create jobs...” And this is one of the greatest wrongs that we have to make right, that is, getting more investment to create more jobs.

And what is one of the greatest barriers to getting more investment? It is the crime and violence and it is the corruption. You and I know this and if we wanted any further proof, **the Global Competitiveness Report 2015/2016** confirms it when they rate Jamaica at number eighty six (86) of one hundred and forty (140) and put corruption and crime in the top 5 of the sixteen factors making us less competitive. In other words, if you have money to invest, there are eighty five (85) countries that you would consider before you would come to Jamaica. This is not where we Jamaicans belong\_ at number eighty five (85)! We are in the top rank in the world in so many other areas, not just in track and field and culture, but as well in the integrity of our judges, in the amount of freedom we have here to talk our mind. So we in NIA consider it to be one of our main priorities to right the wrongs which discourages investment from coming as much as it should, blocks more young people from getting decent opportunities and which tempts so many to turn to crime, to lotto scamming and to so many other negatives that ultimately lead to murder and mayhem. That is why we have our billboards in different parts of the country: **“Less Corruption = more Investment = More Jobs.**

That is why we need to right the wrong of inadequate transparency (91/140); not enough accountability; too much wastefulness in government expenditure (122/140) and too much favouritism in decisions by public officials (102/140)

And that is why we are asking you and Jamaicans from all walks of life not just to join NIA and the young people in our organisation but wherever you are, to form your own integrity group, in your school, in your community, in your church to stand up for truth; in the words of our National Pledge “to stand up for justice, brotherhood and peace, to work diligently and creatively, to think generously and honestly,

so that, Jamaica may, under God increase in beauty, fellowship and prosperity and play her part in advancing the welfare of the whole human race”.

Remember, each of you, your voice can make a difference!