

Embrace the Vision of our Heroes

This year we celebrate National Heritage Week at a time when Jamaicans and indeed the world face tremendous challenges. As we celebrate, let us draw strength and determination from our national heroes who rose to the occasion of their time and demonstrated the capacity of Jamaicans to be resilient.

Each year, Heritage Week and National Heroes Day afford us the opportunity to contemplate the journey that we have taken since the earliest times of our history. Unsung heroes In addition to the seven Jamaicans immortalised by our gratitude, there are hundreds of Jamaicans who each day quietly demonstrate heroism beyond compare. These are our unsung heroes, whose achievements we should also celebrate. Norman Manley described them as "the little people, the poor, the humble and the seeming weak who first began to blow on the still living but small and hidden flame of freedom and blew, till it soared like a torch and the land began to light up around us". They too are our heroes. As we celebrate Heritage Week, let us not forget the many Jamaicans today who are also heroes. The achievements of our educators who, despite less than optimal resources, remain committed to the academic and scholastic development of our nation's children. The achievements of the fisherfolk, the farmers, traders and vendors in our markets who contribute to the well-being of our people. We should celebrate the achievements of our health-care professionals who on a daily basis set aside their personal concerns to ensure that the best possible care is given to our elderly, our young, our injured and the weak. Heroic best describes the service of the men and women of the fire services and the security forces, who are on the front line protecting the national family from the growing wave of crime and violence which seeks to reverse our progress and hold hostage our dreams. Heroes you are when, despite the challenges that seek to paralyse our society, you are able to set aside your own concerns and help those in need. Our cultural icons who, through the various cultural expressions, symbolise our heritage and reflect who we are as a people. The sportsmen and women of Jamaica who have kept the flag of Jamaica flying high. My fellow Jamaicans, we must embrace the vision of our heroes which is manifested in the life and work of many today. Let us not surrender to despair when the companionship of hope and unity chart the pathway for a brighter future. Let us recapture that courage, determination and resilience of our heroes. My fellow Jamaicans, belief in our people provides the source of my own commitment to continue to stand up for justice, peace and love. Portia Simpson Miller Opposition Leader