

J'cans Overseas invited to Come Home for 50th Anniversary

Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, Hon Olivia Grange, has extended an invitation to Jamaicans living overseas to start planning to be in Jamaica for the country's 50th anniversary of independence in 2012.

Miss Grange was addressing more than 800 Jamaicans and friends of Jamaica from the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan who attended Saturday night's (August 14) grand ball, to mark the country's 48th year of Independence, at the New York Hilton and Towers Hotel, in Manhattan. The event brought the curtains down on a two-week series of activities and celebrations across the United States. Miss Grange, who was patron of this year's gala, told the large gathering that recommendations to the National Planning Committee, that has been established to plan events for Jamaica's 50th anniversary of Independence, would be taken to Cabinet for approval. She said the recommendations would include a wide range of activities for the Diaspora in the USA, Canada, London and other parts of the world where many Jamaicans reside. The Minister noted that a special committee within the 50th Anniversary Secretariat has been established to focus on working with the Diaspora to plan a grand home coming for Jamaicans from all over the world.

"As we celebrate the 48th year of our Independence, I want to encourage all Jamaicans to reaffirm their confidence in our country and rekindle the old flame of resilience, courage and assertiveness for which we have been known over the years. We must recall the pride and triumph of our ancestors over the challenges of slavery and oppression as they sacrificed even their lives to ensure that we experience freedom that we now enjoy," she said. "We must recommit ourselves to the mission of national development and again pledge to play our part in the advancement of the welfare of the whole human race," the Minister added. Miss Grange lauded members of the Jamaica Independence Celebration Foundation (JICF) for their dedication over the years to stage the ball in new York. In her address, journalist and talk show host, Hon. Dr. Barbara Gloudon, O.J., said that, "as we celebrate Jamaica's 48th year of Independence, Jamaicans living in the Diaspora have a responsibility to educate the next generation by teaching them the various Jamaican stories, nursery rhymes and the enormous amount of great things about Jamaica." "We need to pass on our great history to the next generation of young Jamaicans, or else this great history will be lost and forgotten," she added. Chairman of the JICF, Paulette Willoughby, disclosed that funds from this year's ball would benefit the Jamaica Early Childhood Foundation and the American Foundation for the University of the West Indies. Messages from the Governor of New York, David Patterson and the Mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, lauded Jamaica for achieving 48 years of independence, and cited the enormous contribution that Jamaicans continue to make to the state and city of New York.