

Ja celebrates independence with a look at its past and an eye toward future

This year's commemoration of Jamaica's 50th anniversary of independence can be compared to the motions of a slingshot — pulling back, gaining strength and power, and then propelling outward, forward!

For Jamaicans, the slingshot's backward motion could be a reflective look at the people and happenings, which helped the nation break free from British rule in 1962. On the island nation and in the diaspora, many are giving thought to the innumerable nameless individuals who helped overcome colonial rule and paying homage to Jamaica National Heroes. Among those who played a key role in the long struggle for independence include: Nanny of the Maroons, Paul Bogle, Sam Sharp, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Norman Washington Manley, Alexander Bustamante and William Gordon. This great past, and the many achievements over the first 50 years, are supplying power necessary to propel the nation forward past any and all challenges. The golden anniversary kicks into high gear in the New York area starting today, with the Annual Service of Thanksgiving, being held in Manhattan at Riverside Church, 490 Riverside Drive, at 4 p.m. Featured participants includes the Rev. Stephen Phelps, Riverside Church's senior minister; Bishop Howard Gregory, Anglican bishop of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands; and the Rev. Canon Calvin McIntyre of the Church of the Good Shepherd in the Bronx. Jamaica Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller will be guest of honor at the Independence Gala on Aug. 18 in Manhattan at the New York Hilton and Towers. A highlight of the New York area's celebration, the event features cocktails, dinner, dancing to the music of the Fab 5 reggae band. Tickets, are \$200 per person, and available at the Jamaican Consulate in Manhattan and neighborhood outlets. For tickets and information, call the consulate at (212) 935-9000, extension 32. Jamaica Consulate in Manhattan, under the leadership of Consul General Herman LaMont, is a clearinghouse of information on anniversary events in the tri-state area — posting activities on its website and fielding inquiries from the public. For information on these and other 50th anniversary events, call (212) 935-9000, extension 121 or 123. Queens event postponed Jamaica 50th Anniversary of Independence Celebration at the Rosedale Soccer Field, scheduled for Aug. 5, has been postponed. Veteran music promoter Earle Atterbury, was organizing the event of reggae, and gospel music performances, which will be held at a later date. For event information or sponsorship opportunities, call (203) 360- 5681.