

Garvey For Jamaican Youth

Development of self, family and community – teachings of Marcus Garvey, were introduced to a number of inner city Jamaican children through the Liberty Hall Summer Art Programme.

Garvey, Jamaica's first national hero will be remembered on his 146th birthday on August 17. He died 68 years ago but his legacy and impact are still felt locally and internationally. The Summer Art Programme is one avenue through which Liberty Hall introduces Garveyism to the students, strengthening the mosaic on the theme of Garvey - Family and Community.

The six-week programme exposed 67 children, aged 7 to 17 years, to Art and Craft, a history of Garvey and Africa, as well as constructive social behaviours. Through films and books on Garvey and his philosophy, visits to the National Gallery and presentations on Garveyism, the participants came to a greater understanding of the importance of Jamaica's first national hero. The programme also provided counseling done by the Jamaica Theological College and included presentations by the Disputes Resolution Foundation on how to settle disputes without fighting.

According to Executive Director and Curator at Liberty Hall, Donna McFarlane, "The response of the children has been wonderful. You can ask any child about Marcus Garvey and he or she will be able to tell you something about his life, or repeat a Garvey quotation. With many negative stereotypes of black people and Africa as well as the persistence of the bleaching phenomenon in Jamaica, Mrs. McFarlane stressed that it is important to communicate Garvey's message of self esteem as well as a positive image of Africa to our young people.

She highlighted that "It is extremely important for them to learn about Garvey and his message of self reliance, self confidence and positive self identity in these times, when so many people continue to bleach their skin. It is also important for them to learn about the history of Africa, because when I asked them what they thought of Africa they said jungle, disease, poverty and misery". She added that many had no idea that Africa has cities and nations, that Africa was well developed even before Europe was developed. This gives a sense of self esteem when they hear this and know that black people's history didn't begin with slavery.

She further explained that when the children were shown films, books and pictures on Africa, the older children became enamoured with African masks and consequently did a whole set of masks in their sketch books. Liberty Hall, which is located at 76 King Street, was built by Marcus Garvey in 1923 and refurbished in 2003. Its main purpose is to "inform the public about the work of Jamaica's first National Hero and to use his philosophy and opinions to inspire, excite, and positively affect the self-identity of Jamaican people, while creating social and economic wealth.

Source: www.jis.gov.jm Libert Hall photo courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica