

**Remarks by Douglas Orane, Chairman and CEO of GraceKennedy Ltd.
At The Launch Of
“The Jamaican Diaspora: Building an Operational Framework”
Friday, July 30, 2010
at the Mona Visitors Lodge, UWI, Mona**

It is my very great pleasure to participate in the launch of Delano Franklyn's book "The Jamaican Diaspora: Building an Operational Framework". I congratulate him for this admirable effort to chronicle an important part of our history – an examination of Jamaican migration patterns. In so doing, he has highlighted the fact that our people are scattered across the globe, resulting in pockets of Jamaican communities in just about any country you can name.

The book is very timely in that, as we celebrate the anniversary of Emancipation and our Independence, we remember that – notwithstanding geographical divides - there is one Jamaica. I say this, ladies and gentlemen, because I am of the view that Jamaica is more than a place – it is a state of mind. No matter where a Jamaican goes, in the mind of that person, Jamaica is with him or her.

We see this manifested in the way we cling to our culture wherever we are in the world – the food, the music, the way, we talk....even the way we walk.

I was quite intrigued to listen to one of the morning television programmes a few weeks ago, where a Jamaican woman who had lived in the United States since she was ten years old was being interviewed. She sounded as if she had never left the shores of this island...and the interviewer was also taken with this because he teased her about her absence of an American accent. Her response was: "I am a Jamaican and I will always sound like a Jamaican."

No matter where we are, we are Jamaicans first and foremost. We may criticize many of the steps that we take as a young nation, learning as we go along, but there is much to be proud of, as Delano has so admirably captured in his book. What is more, we reserve the right to be critical of ourselves. Let any other country try to criticise us and we immediately forget our differences.

As I read Delano's introduction to the book, I reflected on the contributions of many of those pioneering Jamaican migrants to the countries in which they settled. How many of us appreciate that the spark that ignited the flame which would create independent Haiti in 1791 was a man from Jamaica – a slave named Boukman

Dutty? We are not told how and when he left Jamaica for Haiti but, while he might not have been a willing migrant, he was certainly an influential one.

Leading the rebellion which expelled France from Haiti, Boukman inspired the slaves of Haiti to fight against their oppressors. His army destroyed many prime properties before he was finally taken by the authorities. Through this man's inspired leadership, Haiti became the first free and independent Black nation in the Western hemisphere, and an inspiration to other enslaved peoples of the world.

Delano - in his book – traces the contributions of such giants as Marcus Garvey. He takes us through the travels and return to Jamaica of O.T. Fairclough, Sir Alexander Bustamante.... and many others who left their mark on the trails they traveled.

But while some of the names mentioned in the book might be well known to us, it recognizes that there are many unheralded Jamaicans living outside the country who continue to make Jamaica proud, by their outstanding work in their chosen fields, and by the unstinting support for the country of their birth.

They may not always be luminaries – that is, people whose names appear regularly in media reports of Jamaicans overseas who support the country. But what our author has done is to recognize the important contributions which Jamaicans in the Diaspora make in a variety of ways.

What comes immediately to mind is remittances. We know how very important those funds are – as they figure prominently in our national accounts. Last year, for example, remittances amounted to US\$1.79 billion even though the global economic downturn affected the ability of many to send money back to their families.

The role of alumni associations cannot be overstated, as so many of our schools receive strong support for capital development and educational supplies and funds to meet operational expenses.

We see our nationals in the medical services coming back to run clinics and perform operations in several of our hospitals.

Let us not forget those who lived overseas and have come back here to live. Returned residents have contributed significantly to the economy in several ways. They have brought back skills honed in developed countries. Many who are retired are contributing in the social services as volunteers. And, of course, we can appreciate the considerable impact which they have made in construction and real estate development.

Though scattered, the efforts of Jamaicans living overseas have made their mark, to the extent that it became increasingly apparent that the structuring and coordination of these activities would be most beneficial to

Jamaica. Delano's book refers to various strategies that have been adopted by post-Independence governments to strengthen the links with Jamaican nationals living in other countries.

Some of these efforts have included the establishment of consular offices in areas which have a concentration of Jamaicans. The year 1998 was a watershed year for this drive to engage our nationals in the Diaspora, as the Government dedicated to establish the Jamaican Overseas Department. The objective was to encourage continued assistance from our overseas communities. At the same time – in the spirit of “One Jamaica – wherever we are” – the Department was also charged with protecting and advancing the interest of our overseas nationals.

I must commend the Government for taking this concept even further – with the assignment of a Minister of Government to oversee the nurturing of relationships between Jamaica and her Diaspora communities across the globe. By chronicling the progress of the movement to embrace our overseas nationals, this book ensures that the importance of their contribution is not lost on readers.

Delano's book is a singular achievement, for a number of reasons:

First, it is an important record of the growth and development of the Jamaican Diaspora since the beginning of the Twentieth Century, leading up to the most recent efforts to craft a strategic direction for cooperation.

Throughout, the theme resonates on the benefits of a united Jamaica, a Jamaica that embraces those of us who live on the island as well as our brothers and sisters abroad, who feel the pain of negatives that affect us, as well as celebrating our triumphs. Just as we grieve when our country bleeds, so do we all share equally in the pride and joy when our people shine on the world stage – as more and more of us are doing daily.

Mary Ann Chambers, former Ontario Minister of Children and Youth Services spoke of her pride in being a Jamaican when she attended the graduation of her daughter in law at York University in Toronto. As she, along with other invited dignitaries left the platform in a formal procession led by two bagpipers, it was to the tune of the BBC-acclaimed Song of the Millennium – Bob Marley's “One Love”.

As she said afterwards: “A Jamaican success, a Jamaican achievement gives us all an incredible lift, an enormous feeling of pride and an unshakeable sense of belonging.” She could say this with deep conviction – after living outside of Jamaica for far more years than she has lived here.

Belonging though, suggests involvement, and there is much work to do to help build Jamaica – to ensure that we can always speak of our country with pride.

In his comments at the beginning of the book, Earl Jarrett describes a blueprint for charting the way forward, and explores a number of avenues through which Jamaicans overseas can involve themselves in nation building. It is a very good entrée into a recipe for structuring and strengthening a Diaspora movement and, again, I offer my commendations to Delano Franklyn for his vision in seeing the need for such a blueprint. This book brings home forcefully the benefits to be gained from structured and organized cooperation between Jamaicans - at home and abroad.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Delano for the painstaking effort that he has put into recording, researching and editing the information presented in his book. Congratulations, sir, on a job well done. You have made those of us who participated in this project very proud indeed.