

Jamaica national heroes' day

Celebrating Jamaica's National Heroes, following in their footsteps

Claudia Cecile Barnes
AMBASSADOR OF JAMAICA

"In all my life I have always felt the greatest thing that one could do is sacrifice one's self for others and one's country." — The Right Excellent Sir Alexander Bustamante.



On Oct. 18, National Heroes' Day, we honor the memory and celebrate the achievements of Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Nanny of the Maroons, Samuel "Sam" Sharpe, Paul Bogle, George William Gordon, Sir Alexander Bustamante and Norman Washington Manley, the founders of our nation. On this auspicious occasion, I am honored to extend on behalf of the government and people of Jamaica warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and to the government and people of Japan.

I am also using this opportunity to send a very special greeting to all Jamaican nationals residing in Japan and to recall the theme of National Heritage Week celebrations, Oct. 10-18: "I believe in Jamaica, . . . our people, our land, our heritage."

The founders of our nation, through their selfless struggles and sacrifices, have bequeathed to us a country that has transitioned from slavery through to emancipation and independence. As a people, these hard-won victories have galvanized our determination to safeguard this freedom. It is this fervent belief in our country and people that ignites in us the resolve to ensure that our heritage is protected for future generations.

Order of National Hero

The Order of National Hero is an honor awarded by the government of Jamaica as part of the Jamaican honors system that has been in place since 1969. The Order of National Hero is the highest honor that can be accorded and is given only to Jamaican citizens for "services of the most distinguished nature to the nation." Jamaica has six National Heroes and one National Heroine.

In Jamaica, the awards are publicly announced each year on Independence Day, Aug. 6, and the actual awards ceremo-

ny is held on National Heroes' Day, which is celebrated on the third Monday in October.

Our National Heroes were ordinary people who did extraordinary things to improve the quality of life for others. They did so against all odds. Some were killed. Some were imprisoned. Others alienated and misunderstood. They all showed courage and determination, and most of all, a burning desire to achieve real freedom for the Jamaican people.

Profile of heroes

Marcus Mosiah Garvey, proclaimed Jamaica's first National Hero, was the most widely known of all the agitators for the rights of the black man in the early 1900s. Born in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica, Marcus Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Jamaica in 1914, to unite "all the Negro peoples of the world into one great body to establish a country and a government exclusively their own." The UNIA grew into an enormous mass movement having millions of supporters in North America, the Caribbean and Latin America, countries where many emigrant British West Indian workers lived, as well as in Africa. Garvey's plan included the establishment of black-owned business enterprises in order to secure black independence. He created an international awareness of the right of the black race to coexist with other people of the world as equals. Recognition of Garvey's visionary qualities and his role in the liberation of black people came only after his death. He is now regarded as the father of the concept of "black power" and his philosophy continues to inspire Jamaican creative artists and many reggae singers.

Nanny of the Maroons, Jamaica's only National Heroine, was an outstanding military leader, known for her wit, bravery and superb organizational skills in leading the free slaves in their efforts to resist British domination. It was Nanny's indomitable spirit that led the maroons, during the First Maroon War with the British from 1720 to 1739, to successfully repel the British troops who attempted to penetrate the mountains to overpower them. Nanny of the Maroons led her people with courage and inspired them to struggle to maintain that spirit of freedom,

humbling the British Army and making the first significant dent in the abominable practice of human exploitation called slavery.

Samuel Sharpe was credited with being the main instigator of the 1831 Slave Rebellion, also known in Jamaica's history as the Christmas Rebellion, which played a critical role in bringing about the abolition of slavery in 1834. A Baptist minister, Sam Sharpe, as he is commonly known, used religious meetings, the only permissible form of organized activity, to inspire the slaves to reject the belief that enslavement was their inescapable destiny. A plan of passive resistance to refuse to work on Christmas Day turned violent, resulting in the death of 500 slaves and 14 whites. Sharpe was subsequently executed for his role in the rebellion. This event, however, marked the beginning of the end of slavery in the Caribbean.

Paul Bogle and George William Gordon were both instrumental in raising awareness among the newly freed slaves, urging them to protest against and to resist the oppressive and unjust conditions under which they were forced to live. It was

the sacrifice of both men that redefined the struggle of the people, highlighting the fact that the removal of the physical chains, without political and economic rights and freedoms, was not and could not be the end of the matter. A protest march to the Morant Bay Court House in October 1865 resulted in a violent confrontation in which over 500 people were killed. Paul Bogle and George William Gordon were executed for their roles in what came to be called the Morant Bay Rebellion. The rebellion, however, paved the way for significant social and economic changes that improved the people's living conditions.

It was under the leadership of **Alexander Bustamante** and **Norman Manley** that Jamaica was able to cross that final frontier to secure political autonomy and assume control of our own destiny.

Bustamante realized that the social and economic ills under the British colonial government had to be countered with mobilization of the working class. Among widespread discontent and social unrest in the late 1930s, Bustamante championed the cause of the working classes. In 1943 he formed the

Jamaica Labour Party, one of Jamaica's two political parties, which won 22 of 32 seats in the first general election under Universal Adult Suffrage in 1944. He became Jamaica's first Prime Minister in 1962.

Manley (1893-1969), like Bustamante, identified himself with the cause of the workers during the period of social disturbances in the 1930s. A lawyer by profession, Manley was one of the founders of Jamaica's first mass-based party, the People's National Party, in 1938. Both men supported the trade union movement, leading the way for Universal Adult Suffrage. Manley played a major role in the events leading toward independence in 1962, based on a new constitution.

The indomitable spirit

In saluting Jamaica's National Heroes and reflecting on their accomplishments, we remember our teachers, nurses, laborers, world-class athletes and reggae artists and entertainers who, through discipline and dedication, make a sterling contribution to national development.

The indomitable spirit of our distinguished heroes and

their achievements continue to inspire hope for the future of our nation. We cherish the vision and commitment that inspired their extraordinary deeds.

The fight for freedom has long been won, we recognize, however, that the journey has not ended. We continue to strive toward fulfilling the dream of our heroes to make our country one in which love, tolerance and respect define our relationship with each other, securing the economic freedoms for the advancement of all. It is this unity, this firm commitment and this willingness to sacrifice that brought us this far. It is the same spirit that will enable us to advance and complete our journey.

Expectations of economic growth this year, have been seriously jeopardized by Tropical Storm Nicole, which hit Jamaica earlier in October, leaving behind large-scale damage to infrastructure across the island. Nicole has resulted in a preliminary estimate of \$10.6 billion in damage. The agriculture sector was one of the most harshly affected. Over \$500 million worth of crops was lost during

Ties with Japan remain strong

Tatsushi Ueshima
HONORARY CONSUL OF JAMAICA AT
KOBE, CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION
OF JAPANESE IMPORTERS OF JAMAICAN
COFFEE

On the occasion of the celebration of Jamaica's National Heroes' Day, I would like to use this opportunity to convey to the government and people of Jamaica our best wishes on behalf of the Association of Japanese Importers of Jamaican Coffee (AJIJC) and as Honorary Consul of Jamaica in Kobe.

The ties between Jamaica and Japan are strong and enduring, and your country's famous Blue Mountain coffee is the



most highly esteemed coffee in our country. All the AJIJC members have been proud to witness and be a part of the glory of this prestigious coffee. Although a number of countries are still struggling to recover from the financial crisis, and Jamaica and Japan are no exception, I am confident that your country is on the path to a prosperous future under the strong leadership of the Hon. Bruce Golding, prime minister of Jamaica.

As you honor the achievements of Jamaica's forefathers, I wish all Jamaican citizens a day of both reflection and introspection on the journeys past and those ahead. I hope that the cultural and social bonds between our two nations will be further strengthened in the years to come.

the heavy rains and strong winds. Several persons were also displaced owing to severe damage to their homes.

Undeterred, Jamaicans will yet again rise to the challenge posed by this setback and resume the critical journey of nation building, in-

spired by the priceless legacy bequeathed by our National Heroes.

"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots." — Marcus Mosiah Garvey
Jamaica, land we love.

**Congratulations
to the Government and
People of Jamaica
on the Celebration
of National Heroes' Day**

**Association of Japanese Importers
of Jamaican Coffee**

**Ataka Trading Co., Ltd.
Kanematsu Corporation
MC FOODS LIMITED
UCC Ueshima Coffee Co., Ltd.
Wataru & Co., Ltd.
Yutaka Trading Co., Ltd.**

**Congratulations
to the Government and
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on the Celebration
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Tatsushi Ueshima

**Honorary Consul of Jamaica in Kobe
and
Representative Director-Chairman
Group Representative
UCC Holdings Co., Ltd.**

**Congratulations
to the People of Jamaica
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of National Heroes' Day**

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