



***“OURS IS A STORY WORTH SHARING”***

**ADDRESS**

**BY**

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**ON**

THE OCCASION OF

**SAINT LUCIA’S**

**37<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE**

**NATIONAL CELEBRATORY RALLY**

MINDOO PHILLIP PARK, CASTRIES.

MONDAY FEBRUARY 22, 2016.

## **THE INDEPENDENT SAINT LUCIAN**

Today, we celebrate that we are Saint Lucians, 100% Saint Lucians. We celebrate that we are independent and free.

We are the independent Saint Lucians!

There was a time when our ancestors hid from the sound of cannon or from the volleys of invading armies.

Today, we can freely celebrate as we wish: with bamboo bursting and fireworks echoing and illuminating cove and valley.

Today, the independent Saint Lucian is not forced to dance the cocoa pods, or cut cane with the rhythm of songs in the field, or cower from the whip of the slave master.

Rather, we can shake and sway to our own drums, we can chant our own melodies of merriment; we can dance to kutumba, the polka or the la comet; we can run our own races on our own tracks.

Today, the independent Saint Lucian need not perceive her story merely through the histories of others. We are the makers of our own history.

Today, she can make and express her own story in drama and dance, in poetry and prose, in musical note, in colourful paint, in film, fashion and artefact.

## **UNCONTROLLABLE PATRIOTISM**

There was a time when it appeared that independence was an event about the pomp and ceremony of the state. It was “a Government thing.”

We have journeyed past that. This is clearly no more.

Today, we see an unparalleled rise in patriotism, unhinged from and independent of the efforts of the state to instil pride, dignity and honour.

At long last our people have laid claim to what is theirs.

We have become 100% Saint Lucians!

## **INDEPENDENCE BELONGS TO EVERY CITIZEN**

Independence belongs to every citizen, to every proud Saint Lucian, to every patriot. And we see this in song and dance, through fashion, through displays in the windows of shops and stores, through festivals, food and fanfare, through flags on homes and cars and hills, through competitions of sport, beauty and talent.

We have an event now that is not limited or barred by rainfall or sunshine or by place or location. It is not segregated and celebrated by one race or religion, or some

communities but not others. It is not divided by red or yellow. It is for Saint Lucians, here and abroad, wherever they may roam.

## **100 PERCENT SAINT LUCIAN**

Today, all of us must proclaim that we are 100 percent Saint Lucian! We are 100 percent free! We are 100 percent united! We are 100 percent proud to be from this beautiful island, this majestic island, this fair Helen of the West Indies!

## **SEEMINGLY TANGENTIAL REALITIES**

At 37, our country is still young in many respects. Consider for a moment, if we selected a single index that summarises the age distribution of our population.

At independence, the median age of a Saint Lucian was 18. Today, the median age of independence is 32.

We can deduce two seemingly tangential realities.

## **WE CAN ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE**

First, our population is on average older. Our birth rate has fallen. Our schools are operating below capacity. And the demands on our healthcare are more acute as our population ages.

It means that we must look closely at how we are going to finance these sectors, and especially how we can achieve universal healthcare. This Government is committed to

realising a healthcare revolution that secures healthier, longer lives for the vast majority of our people.

The second reality from this observation of median ages between then and now is that, despite the aging population, the majority of our population was born in post-independence Saint Lucia.

## **NO RECOLLECTION OF THEIR OWN**

Our youth have no recollection of their own, of the Saint Lucian flag being hoisted for the first time. They have no memory of the struggles leading up to independence. They may not comprehend the difficulties of life in the



Saint Lucia of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, and the struggles of their parents, grandparents and great grandparents.

The soul of any country – the pride a people has for itself – is formed and moulded, buttressed and affixed upon what is created and achieved and passed down from one generation to the next. We are inheritors charged by our history to bequeath to the next generation.

It is passed down through stories. And these stories and beliefs are sometimes anchored in fact, but are more often than not, passed down informally through the oral discourse of myth, of lore, of tales and legends.

Our story is essential to who we are. Whether we see ourselves as lions, or as sheep; whether we imagine ourselves as giants, or as hobbits; whether we liken ourselves to heroes, or we lower our gaze like cowards.

## **WE MUST OWN OUR STORY**

We must define our story. We must own our story. We must tell our story. And we must believe in our story. We must say who we are.

It is our story that shapes our society, our economy, and our culture.

And we are now free to do just that now.

We must feign no more from speaking our own language,  
from writing our own history, from acting our own plays.

When we sing our national anthem in both of our  
languages, in kweyol and in English, then we announce  
that we are not ashamed of our history; we simply laying  
claim to our image and our identity.

## **IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS**

Our flag maker, the late Sir Dunstan St Omer gave us not  
only our flag, but through his murals and works, a deep  
sense that if we are made in the image and likeness of  
God, then God must look like us. We must be able to tell  
the story of Sir Dunstan.

## **SHARE AND CELEBRATE OUR STORY**

Likewise, we must share and celebrate our story. We are beginning to tell the story of Derek and Roderick Walcott with a museum in their childhood home.

We are beginning to tell the story by commencing the dialogue on establishing a National Museum. And that dialogue will commence through the National Trust in the next few months.

And we need investment in public education so that all our people can learn about ourselves.

## **NEW NATIONAL CULTURAL COMPLEX**

And we must tell our story by having a national home for the creative industries. And we have begun the dialogue on the designs for a new National Cultural Complex. And this will create a home for the performing and visual arts, for theatre and dance, for modern and traditional forms of creative expression.

## **A STORY WORTH TELLING**

Ours is a story worth sharing. It is a story worth celebrating.

We need to tell the story of how this little island produced for Nigeria its first Chief Justice, Sir Darnley Alexander, after its independence. We need to tell the story of how

this little island was able to produce two geniuses in our Nobel Laureates in Sir Derek Walcott and Sir Arthur Lewis.

And we also need to tell the recent story how this little island through its diplomatic efforts was able to influence the outcome of the Climate Talks in Paris to help protect our planet for the future of mankind.

It is a story worth speaking in our own tongue; a story worth producing; a story worth defending!

So today, I take comfort; I take pride and I take honour, not just as Prime Minister or as a leader but in being simply, a Saint Lucian.

It's so amazing to see all of you children here, your parents, those in the stands, those at home or at venues around our island or even in the diaspora abroad, knowing that right now, in this moment, we are all Saint Lucians, 100% Saint Lucians. It's a wonderful feeling!

Show the world it's our time, our day and our independence.

Raise your hand if you are a proud Saint Lucian!

Let us sit and feast on our lives.

Let us write our own story, shape our own future, and tell the world that we are Saint Lucians first and foremost, one hundred percent (100%) Saint Lucians!

This is my Independence wish for Saint Lucia!

God bless each and every one of you; God bless Saint Luciaas we all say, “thank God that I am a Saint Lucian.”

**CLOSE: SAINT LUCIA WE LOVE**

Long Live our people!

Viv Sent Lisi!

Viv Sent Lisi!

Viv!

Say with me:

“Saint Lucia we love!

Saint Lucia we love!

Saint Lucia, we love you!”

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