

**STATE BY WINSTON DOOKERAN  
POLITICAL LEADER, CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE  
AT A PUBLIC MEETING IN SAN JUAN  
11 OCTOBER 2007**

Thank you my friends.

When the election was called, my comment to the national media was 'we in the Congress of the People are ready to rumble'. And rumbling you have been here tonight.

And we shall rumble as we did in Woodford Square, in Skinner Park and as we did last night in Siparia and as we shall be doing throughout this country in the next few weeks, we shall rumble until we form the next Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

My friends, when I saw the platform here tonight the thoughts came back to me to the date of birth of this nation some 44 years ago. Many of you here would not know of it, but some of you who are my age would understand the great sense of hope and expectation that we then as young people had for creating a model society in Trinidad and Tobago.

Many have come and played their part. Many have done their duty in the field of politics and governance. Some have gone beyond, some are still around, but most of us have realised that a new generation of politicians are with us in Trinidad and Tobago.

Last week in St James, I had the privilege of introducing a young man whose name was Daniel Solomon, our candidate for Port of Spain North/St Ann's West. As it turned out, he was the grandson of a PNM foundation member and one time Deputy Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago – Mr Patrick Solomon.

Later this week, I shall have the opportunity of introducing another young man, Dr Navi Muradali. He is the son of a very distinguished DLP Parliamentarian during the period of independence – Nazim Muradali.

You heard the vivacious, you heard the strong, you heard woman power at its best in Gillian Lucky. Versatile, but most of all puts Trinidad and Tobago first as her sole motto in public life.

She is the granddaughter of another very distinguished politician of the 1960s, who made her mark in the Senate of our country – Senator Margaret Lucky Samaroo.

Then, you had two other candidates whose own credentials may not go back to their parents, but who have already established themselves as the new

beginning for Trinidad and Tobago and who have structured our crime plan – Gary Griffith. I say congratulations to him.

And LaToya Callender, a young woman, a new generation from Laventille who has come to join with me to make it known to all Trinidad and Tobago that it is only when Laventille rises that Trinidad and Tobago shall rise.

But then you heard right here in San Juan a man who has captured this nation's imagination by his sense of purpose, by his commitment to public life. He has turned out to be a child, both of a PNM Acting Prime Minister and a UNC Member of Parliament - the nephew and son of Kamal and Sham Mohammed, Jamal Mohammed.

I went through this list and there is more, as we unfold the candidates that are before you, you will see that the people are coming forth are those who have had a long history and family tradition in public service and it is only in the Congress of the People that you will find the new generation of politicians to serve our nation.

That is why I went back to those days when I was young man in school. And I felt here today in San Juan that this nation is once again being born in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to take us into a glorious future.

And we shall ensure two fundamental principles. One of which is that we shall bring our peoples together so that we shall be one united country.

Second, we shall conduct our public affairs and particularly, the management of our economy, in such a way that those who are in the lower income groups are brought into the forefront and give them a rightful place in Trinidad and Tobago.

That is why say that our priorities will not be to build high buildings but to deal with the aspirations and expectations of the small man in Trinidad and Tobago.

But is this going to be possible? If we do not take stock as a nation and stand up as a people and make a definitive stand today, because in less than one month from today, you shall have your opportunity here and everywhere else to establish once and for all that this country will remain free for all times.

That is why I have called November 5<sup>th</sup> freedom day in Trinidad and Tobago. That is being threatened and I want to raise one aspect of that threat.

I have before me a document that is called 'the Draft Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago 2007', dated June 2007.

Mr Patrick Manning has established for himself a constitution that will do the following and I just want to read to you two clauses in this constitution.

The first clause is the establishment of the Office and the election of the President. And this is what it says:

*" There shall be a President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago who shall be the head of State and commander in chief of the armed forces. The President shall be elected at a general election. The executive authority of Trinidad and Tobago shall be vested in the President and subject to the constitution may be exercised by him directly or through officers subordinate to him ."*

Then it goes on to say how this President shall be elected. And this is important:

*"Election of a President – Each political party shall nominate candidates for the Office of President and that candidate, if the party that nominated him secures a majority of seats in the House of Representatives after a general election and if he is elected to serve as a Member of the House of Representatives shall be declared by the Chairman of the Elections and Boundaries Commission to be the President elected ."*

**You know what is happening here? Abolishing the post of President as we know it, consolidating power in one hand, making the Prime Minister and President one person, establishing that the party in power would elect, calling it an election of a President, but not an election of a President by the people of Trinidad and Tobago .**

**My friends, imagine the authority that shall declare who is President shall be the Elections and Boundaries Commission. In other words, Mr Manning wants to become President of this country, the sole power and authority for exercising executive power and he wants to do that not even by going to the people to get a direct vote, but by using the general elections to appoint him through the Elections and Boundaries Commission .**

My friends, this is a backdoor approach. The Prime Minister is very serious; he has already designed a constitution that will give him absolute power in which he shall no longer have to account to the people of this country directly. Whenever there are Presidents elected like in the United States, they are elected by the people. And I am telling you that there is a lot at stake here because he has already built a presidential palace, he refused to rebuild the house of the present President that has been left to fall apart.

He is creating a constitution that will give him absolute power and not have him account directly to the people. And if there is my friends any better evidence of the validity of the point made by Ken Valley, that we are seeing

the making of a Dictator in Trinidad and Tobago, I want to ask you here today – are we the people going to sit back and allow Mr Manning to become the Executive President ?

Are we going to cede our power to one man, by virtue of a constitution that he himself is writing, calling it consultation, but definitely his own views supported by the presidential palace he has already built and then he decided to remove anyone who can speak up in the PNM and put a lot of novices in their place.

He did this so that in his Cabinet, he can overrule them whenever he wants because they will be young people who by the time they learn the tricks of the trade, he would have consolidated his power for all times.

That is why we must take the words of his Minister, echoed privately by many others, that the real issue in this election is that **we must stop the dictator** and the only way to do that is to vote for the Congress of the People.

We take public life very seriously and we take elections seriously. That is why today I can tell you that by virtue of what we have done over the last year in attracting people to our fold, we have been able to put together one of the most impeccable teams in Justice.

You heard Gary Griffith speak with you about the crime team, but I want to announce to you the people who have come on our platform and who shall belong to this issue of the Justice team.

The Justice team has already begun functioning, it is under the chairmanship now of Gillian Lucky. And it includes, Rekha Ramjit who is now a candidate for Naparima, Kevin Ratiram who is a lawyer and candidate for Oropouche West, Timothy Hamel Smith who is a senior lawyer, Clyde Weatherhead who is our candidate in Tunapuna and one time president of the Public Services Association and another very bright, young distinguished attorney, Prakash Ramadhar who I will ask to join this team.

On our platform in San Fernando, this very senior jurist who has served this country and at one time was a PNM MP but came to me and said 'we've got to stop what is taking place'. He has now publicly identified with the Congress of the People – Desmond Allum.

Then you heard tonight from our distinguished Queen's Counsel here speaking to you about how we can get it right – Vernon de Lima.

And also in San Fernando a very distinguished lawyer who came on the platform to pledge his support for the COP, himself not interested in getting involved in electoral politics, but felt compelled to come forward – Suren Capildeo.

My friends, there is no party that can assemble such a team to put justice right in Trinidad and Tobago.

In light of the threat to our democratic rights and freedoms, we need now to be prepared to defend our freedom at all costs, to protect our democratic rights, to prevent Mr Manning from running away. He talks about Vision 2020 as if it's a cricket game and does not even know when the 20 overs are up.

He is shortsighted! He is now in love with power itself. Six years of \$200 billion at his disposal and complete control over the country's institutions he played havoc with the office of Prime Minister, the Attorney General, the DPP and the Commissioner of Police.

When the matter arose, I said they should have a full inquiry into the conduct of all these senior officers. The facts have unfolded and continue to unfold that they are all unfit in their performance to take responsibility for the next level .

And by the next level I mean the next generation of people in Trinidad and Tobago.

I shall be asking the Justice Team to immediately get to work on doing the following. They shall first have to take and make recommendations for the immediate steps to ensure that we create an efficient criminal justice system.

This team shall restore the constitutional independence and total integrity of the Justice system in Trinidad and Tobago .

This team shall also ensure that they promote the highest ethical standards in the court system and in the legal profession.

Finally, in terms of the limited terms of reference, they shall advise your new Government of the Congress of the People on the process acceptable to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, on the development of a new constitution .

We shall scrap this draft Manning constitution and put into place a people's constitution to govern us in the years ahead.

Today on the platform of the Congress of the People, there is more skill, more knowledge, more commitment and your job now is to put them inside the Government.

Once you do that and with the caliber of persons I have spoken about, you shall have no doubt that we shall get the job done.

So I want to leave you here knowing that your party is one that is ready and prepared to take on the job of governance and on November 6<sup>th</sup>, we shall

call our first meeting of the new Government to start the work for a new society.

But let me warn you that this will not happen if we do not use this opportunity that is before us. In less than 30 days, we shall have the opportunity to write a new page in the history of our country.

And as I have been saying on the platform, you cannot create something that is right if you refuse to destroy what is wrong.

So the time has come for us collectively as a nation, whether we supported the UNC in the past, or the PNM in the past, the time has come for us to stand up and do not refuse to condemn what is wrong, and embrace what we can do to create what is right.

And I say to all the young people of our country, you have an enormous power in your hands to shape the society in which you shall live your entire life. You have the enormous energy within you to be able to shape that future.

Remember young people, you have 60, 70 or 80 years to live; what we do now will determine the quality of your life for the next 60, 70 or 80 years.

So I want to make a special appeal to the young people of our nation.

We heard Anil Roberts talk to you about sports and we can talk more about that, but not tonight.

I want to say to the young people – reflect, think, and don't allow the imprisonment of the past to hold you from embracing the future. It is a large responsibility that rests in your hands.

Some of our older folks will find it difficult to break old loyalties, but you must create your own loyalty for a new Trinidad and Tobago .

The power is yours. It belongs to each one of us here and throughout this country. If you want our independence of 44 years to work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century then this is not our moment, this is your moment!

Whether you are from African, Indian, Chinese, Syrian or European heritage, you are of the heritage of Trinidad and Tobago .

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The UNC is creating ultimatums and doing all sorts of things including the dirty tricks. If Kamla Persad Bissessar was the true leader of the UNC Alliance, we would have already found the formula to have a one to one fight against the PNM.

But that will not be allowed to happen by those in control. While the Prime Minister is in love with power, the leaders of the UNC Alliance are addicted to power .

I have never walked away from a challenge for Trinidad and Tobago. But today, everyone knows my role in the events of 1990, and your Prime Minister of today has charged me with being an agent of the Jamaat al Muslimeen.

And I was told earlier today that the Leader of the Opposition is singing the same song now. Look at the level! They can't attack me for my strength, my courage, my bravery, the COP's policies, the COP's candidates...so they are now saying that Winston Dookeran is an agent of treason !

Let me warn you that in the next weeks, you will hear more and see the attacks. You will see the rise of falsehoods.

But we will not lose focus. We have to remove the dictator and put the Congress of the People into Government.

So let me end by saying to all of Trinidad and Tobago – COME FORWARD!

Let us start a new page in the history of our country, let us write a new chapter. Let us put back Government to what it should be. Let us now be servants of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you.