



Rt. Honourable Michael Norman Manley, O.M., P.C.

Mr Chancellor:

We need not share the messianic proclivities of the Jamaican electorate in order to know that we have now, standing in our midst, a man of spirit. We need not mythologise him yet, nor ascribe to him the trumpet of Joshua and the rod of Moses, nor the attributes of his namesake the archangel, in order to know that he has been an outstanding and memorable leader. His life has been an enactment of the message of another great Jamaican, to "get up, stand up and fight for your rights," even when standing up meant lying down across the street outside the offices of the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr Chancellor, I present the Right Honourable Michael Manley, member of the Order of Merit, Privy Councillor, lately Prime Minister of Jamaica, party leader, Third World spokesman, trade unionist, orator, writer - to list only the most outstanding and more public of his spheres of achievement.

He had the good fortune to be blessed with parents who were themselves ground-breakers and architects in the building of the modern Jamaica. Their love and attention accounted, he believes, for his inward self-confidence, under what he regards as his shy exterior, a self-confidence which has made him feel at his calmest and best in situations of crisis.

That inner strength no doubt saved him when, as a schoolboy at Jamaica College, he was subjected to some of the most cruel bullying that dubiously distinguished such institutions in those days. He was even more of a target for the reason that he was Norman Manley's son and therefore, in the view of the bullies, needed to be taught a thing or two. In surviving, he began his career as a fighter and a leader. For two years he quietly toughened himself in the gym, so that when he became a prefect, he could summon all the bullies in the school and issue an ultimatum that the bullying must stop, and if they thought he was joking they should try him. Mr Chancellor, as one versed in the traditions of academia, if not in the traditions of Jamaican politics, you will appreciate the submission that there have been dons and dons. Today Michael Manley can boast, with justification, "The best thing I ever did at Jamaica College was to break bullying." The champion of the underdog had begun to emerge.

The circumstances and the occasion of his leaving Jamaica College are also instructive in the making of a political leader of heroic mould. The story has become legendary, but the facts are even more impressive than some of the apocryphal versions. No one can relate them better than he can, and no doubt, Mr Chancellor, he will oblige you later this evening. Enough to record now, that when the headmaster told him that he was expelling him for insubordination – a devious and questionable charge – Manley retorted that that would not be possible since *he* was resigning – the first and only known instance of resignation in schoolboy history. It was a matter of principle, even in defiance of authority, and another case of resisting bullies.

The young rebel was shattered momentarily by having to leave school in such circumstances, but, having composed himself and packed his bags, he emerged at the top of the stairs to find the whole school assembled to cheer him. Shouting what can only be described in its context as a revolutionary chant, they lifted him shoulder high to the tramcar stop. The rebel with a cause had emerged. He has been borne aloft on countless shoulders since.

So it was off to join the Canadian Air Force, and then to the London School of Economics. Even then he was not sure of his career, and for a time he seriously contemplated going into art history – a consideration which reflects the cultural and aesthetic dimension of his political vision. However, if *he* was wavering, destiny was calling, and he completed his degree at LSE, where he had come under the shaping influence of Harold Laski, whom he regards as “the greatest theorist of democratic socialism.”

Manley returned home to write for the newspaper *Public Opinion*, but again destiny was awaiting him. Just then the People’s National Party was experiencing what has been perhaps its most serious internal crisis. Party members were eager to hear a fresh, young voice, newly tuned with metropolitan wisdom, which could help them understand what was happening. He found himself “literally hurled on to the lecture circuit,” speaking to party groups as well as to groups of National Workers Union members. Believe it or not, he was still shy of public speaking; but circumstances were conspiring to draw out the masterly, persuasive word-spinner, the debater, the spokesman.

Circumstances were also conspiring to produce a great trade union leader. In those early sessions with NWU groups he began to realise how he warmed to the workers and their concerns. The rest, as they say, is history. “Unionism,” he tells, “of all my efforts at public service, is the one I found the most deeply satisfying. It [was] the most uncomplicated part of my life.” There can be no question but that he has left his own indelible mark on the trade union movement. He considers, with justifiable pride, that he has been “one of the authors of democratic process in Jamaican trade unionism.”

Given such credentials, such concern, given the context of our time, it was inevitable that he should soon have been drawn into the more complicated life of mainstream political activity, to rise soon enough to the highest political office. The spate of assessments, now

adulatory, now recriminatory, of his life in Jamaican party politics and in the captaincy of the ship of state has only just begun. We leave them and him to history. If honorary degrees were awarded solely for one's capacity to be a catalyst and subject of controversy, and to hold oneself with composure and civility in the midst of the winds and under pressure, we should have no need, Mr Chancellor, to find anything more to praise in Michael Manley.

But we do, and must pass to the unquestionable stature and respect which he has earned as a Third World leader and spokesman. As Professor Rex Nettleford has written:

Mr Manley will be remembered in history . . . for his sterling contribution to the fight against Apartheid, the liberation of Zimbabwe, the sharpening of the Non-Aligned Movement as an instrument directed towards the world economic struggle, the revitalisation of Caribbean regionalism . . . and other initiatives [such] as the linking of bauxite workers in Guyana, Suriname, Haiti and Jamaica, and the giving to ordinary human beings (many of them the sons and daughters of ex-slaves) a sense of place and purpose

In all of this, Chancellor, our community of teachers and scholars must take especial note that he has been pre-eminently a teacher, always seeking to explain to the people the historical bases of any given political situation. Even his detractors agree that he raised dramatically the level of political consciousness around him. He himself is unceasingly inquiring into causes and connections. His many books on political theory, political history and Third World affairs are a monument to this endeavour. Even his book on cricket is in the long run a contribution to the making of the West Indian people.

Recently he was presented with the keys to the city of Kingston. There came a point in the citation when it was said that, of all Jamaican Prime Ministers, he had made the greatest international impact, whereupon, it is reported, lightning flashed and thunder rolled. Mr Chancellor, we may not have the power to inspire such divine intervention and authority, but it needs no effort to call upon you to exercise the authority vested in you by the Council and Senate of this university and confer upon Michael Norman Manley the degree of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa*.

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Mona Campus