



Columns

Bev Manley and her seers

Jean Lowrie-Chin

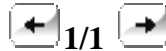


Monday, April 12, 2010

The news of the day is the stuff of suspense and high drama, and our media houses have been doing a pretty good job of capturing it. We should remember, however, that getting and carrying the news is the business of the media. Repeating it ad nauseam will destroy our productivity.

Check out what is happening during those newsbreaks: there are multitudes of advertisements for phones, banks, food, health, education and entertainment. It simply means that while some of us are tearing our hair out over the news, many are getting on with their lives.





Consider what would have happened to our promising young athletes who shone so brightly at the recent Carifta Games, if their coaches were distracted by the media noise. Consider what our overseas visitors would be telling their friends if the hotel staff had phone to ear while they were serving their guests. We need to apply more discipline to the way we spend these 24 hours that each one of us, rich or poor, is given every day.

As the saying goes, the proof of character is not what happens to you, but how you deal with it. Refusing to be victims, employees who have been made redundant have used this watershed moment in their lives as a stepping stone, combining their hard-earned expertise and settlement to start their own businesses. Research, planning and prudent management will give them positive results. Brand Jamaica is very strong and a walk through a store like Carby's will show you the creativity of Jamaican people, whether from large or cottage industries.

We have to learn to adapt to the circumstances because, make no bones about it, the circumstances will not be adapting to us! This is why I believe that Beverley Manley has given us a wonderful legacy, even as she leaves The Today Show which she created three years ago.

Last Friday she gathered some wonderful seers to help us see how we could make our way out of this "chronic" in which we find ourselves ("chronic" was baptised a noun by Ezroy Millwood some years ago when he referred thusly to a critical situation).

First, for the reality check from international adviser Michael Fairbanks who, while acknowledging our resources and strong brand name, reminded us that we should "get over the mythology -- Jamaica is a small country". In fact, he says, we are at 138th in the world pecking

order and shrinking! He compared us to the once agonised Rwanda which is now enjoying 10 per cent growth in their economy and 30 per cent increase in salaries because they are serious about development. "Rwandans are coachable, modest and punctual," said Fairbanks, pointing out that punctuality was one of the most important factors for national development.

"Jamaicans may love to compete in sports," he says. "But they hate to compete in business!" He suggests a serious re-evaluation of how we go forward in the country. Fairbanks said he saw PM Golding as a visionary, "but great leaders need great followers".

Psychiatrist Wendell Abel called for truth-telling and reconciliation. He said the country had been traumatised so people are "stuck in their pain and stuck in the drain". He said if we are to heal, "people must have the opportunity to give narrative to their pain". He called for honest, consistent and decisive leadership, citing the resolute manner in which President Barack Obama worked to introduce health reform in the US.

Donna Duncan-Scott, who has carried on the work of her visionary mother Joan Duncan, in making JMMB an organisation with heart, reminded that "we are children of God, made to manifest the glory of God". She wants us to take more responsibility as our behaviour becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for the next generation.

Leachim Semaj said he wanted Jamaicans to understand that "YOU are responsible for YOU!" He said we all have a conscience and should stop making so many excuses for our poor performance. He wants us to make a single-minded commitment to our goals, working assiduously towards them, "no matter what".

This is just a sampler of the many discussions that Beverley Manley has piloted on her programme to help jolt us out of our comfort zone and realise that each and every one of us has the power to make a difference, however small. Strong on mentorship, she saved the last segment of the show to introduce her successor, attorney-at-law Clyde Williams.

When we consider the thousands of dollars being demanded by motivational speakers on the circuit, we see that Manley's programme was a treasure trove. She used her incredible access to some of the finest minds in the world to lift us to a higher plane of thinking. We look forward to hearing the future plans of this remarkable Jamaican author and media icon. Thank you, Miss Beverley!

Godspeed, Pat Attkisson

The Jamaica-America Friendship Association feted a wonderful friend of Jamaica, the US Embassy's Public Affairs Officer Pat Attkisson, who will end her three-year stint in Jamaica shortly and journey to Oman for her next posting. Morin Seymour, president of JAJFA, and Angella Harvey remarked on the quiet way in which Pat used her contacts to bring significant assistance to various charitable and educational projects in Jamaica.

The understated Pat said she came to Jamaica knowing no one and found it easy to make friends here. She said that Jamaica had "so much promise". In Dawn Azan's beautiful garden, the

gathering enjoyed impromptu performances by Carole Reid and Jean Small. Ah, when we're good we are absolutely captivating! Walk good, Pat!

lowriechin@aim.com

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