

Dominica's 40th Anniversary of Independence is a call for reflection. The invaluable lessons learnt over this forty years period should be used as a guiding map for plotting the future of our country.



Student: Jernella Lewis

School: Portsmouth Secondary School

Date: October 19, 2018

The Invaluable Lessons Learnt Over This Forty Year Period Should Be Used As A Guiding Map For Plotting The Future Of Our Country.

As Dominica celebrates 40 years of independence, under the theme, “My Love, My Home, My Dominica; Building A Resilient Nation” it is essential to reflect on the invaluable lessons learnt, as a people and as a country. For the past year, we chose to ponder on the natural disaster that our country had faced but in fact it goes beyond the natural disasters. It touches on the way we act as a country and the way we handle the problems that we face together along with the excellent solutions that we have thought of to resolve such issues. Over the years we have learnt to appreciate our nature island and its culture; strengthen our foreign relations for further development, we have also learnt the importance of preparation and building of a climate resilient country and the significance of keeping our younger generation from migrating. As we reflect, the invaluable lessons learnt over this 40 year period should be used as a guiding map for plotting the future.

Our lessons learnt did not only come from the challenges that Dominica has encountered but we have also learnt many lessons in our achievements. With the Honorable Doctor Roosevelt Skerit led administration, our foreign relations both regionally and internationally have strengthened tremendously over the past years. For instance, China, Venezuela and Cuba have lent a hand to our country on numerous occasions. The government of China has aided in the funding of infrastructure, namely roads, buildings, bridges, and our very own Windsor Park Sports Stadium. The governments of Venezuela and Cuba have contributed greatly to the improvement of the educational status of our youth by offering scholarships to help further studies abroad. An article posted on Dominica News Online on October 15th, 2018, clearly expressed the president of China’s commitment to strengthen the relations and cooperation with Dominica as he realizes the benefits to both countries. Most recently, 14 Dominican students received Cuban scholarships to pursue their studies at Cuban Universities. With those relations strengthened, Dominica will not only receive assistance but will also be able to assist other islands in the future and improve the status and standards for its citizens.

Over the years, we have learnt to appreciate our nature island and its culture. In previous years, many foreigners looked at Dominica as just a ‘small island.’ Some citizens were timid to

state where they from. However, in recent times, Dominica made its way to the international stage as the 'Nature Isle Of The Caribbean', with a unique and attractive culture. We now proudly embrace the motto, "Après Bondie C'est La Ter" [After God, Is The Earth]. Dominicans are engaged in using nature to create products and services. For instance, river tubing, whale watching and cocoa powder production are just a few ways in which citizens utilize the nature and culture. Such exhibition to the world has instilled a pride for our island and culture and has been one of the main reasons for the boost in the tourism industry. Certainly, the combination of our nature and culture can further the development of our country.

Another important lesson that we have learnt is that we should be prepared and practice the act of climate resiliency. Climate resilience can be defined as the ability for the socio-ecological system to handle stresses of climate change, maintain function and adapt even after the impact of climate change. Nowadays, when we talk about resiliency, there is proof that the citizens of this land have a better understanding of how to be prepared when we are faced with the seasonal problem of natural disasters and to be more specific, hurricanes. On Monday, September 18th, 2017, Dominica experienced one of the most devastating hurricanes. Our country was hit by Hurricane Maria, a deadly category 5 hurricane which left many people without homes, destroyed our vegetation sector and tourism industry which further led to costly and valuable damage to our infrastructure such as roads and bridges. This hurricane taught us a life changing lesson in terms of building better and being proactive. In light of this, Dominica has invested greatly in the trenching of our rivers in order to give them enough room to flow through and building more secure homes. Also, this unforgettable natural disaster taught many Dominicans to adhere to warnings about the weather systems which affect Dominica seasonally. This lesson taught us to be more resilient as a country and as a people and to prepare more fervently in times of natural disasters considering that we are already in the climatic zone where natural disasters will tend to occur. If we aim at becoming more climate resilient we will be more equipped to preserve our infrastructure, save lives, maintain function in our country, conserve our nature and save money.

One of the lessons learnt as a country is that more should be done to keep our young people as productive citizens in Dominica. We face the issue of migration. Many people have left their beautiful island, Dominica for various reasons. In Dominica, the youth is seen as the

hope and light of our country's future. We need to think of ways to keep idle hands off the streets. Providing sufficient amount of employment in Dominica can lead to our young people being time consumed in an activity or recreation which can not only develop and mold their young minds, but produce useful means of bettering our lovely nature isle for future generations. Although there is the National Employment Programme, [N.E.P], I believe more can be done for our younger people to remain in the country.

It is evident that our theme for this year's 40 anniversary of independence, "My Love, My Home, My Dominica; Building A Resilient Nation" surrounds our most invaluable lessons learnt as a country. Appreciation for our nature island and culture, an increase in foreign relations, learning the importance of preparation and building of a climate resilient country along with keeping our younger generation from migrating plays an integral role in building a map of guidance for the future of our dearly beloved Dominica.