

From the Desk of James Moss-Solomon

Executive in Residence, MSBM

September 14, 2016

Whose responsibility is it? # 11.

For those who thought that I was off the scene, think again. I have been observing the unfolding of international events that seem to be heading in a “CatasTrumpic” direction. Before the summer it was impossible to take any conversation in a direction that would even speculate on a Trump victory in the USA’s November elections.

Following the BREXIT vote, the possibilities are opening up for Trump, as his opponent Hillary Clinton remains unpopular with certain segments of the voters, and seems to be flagging in her attempts to go toe to toe with Donald Trump. Some voters seem to feel that they have been presented with a negative vote, and candidates that they must choose the least problematic one.

In their own popularity both candidates seem to have good but small pockets of goodwill, but not enough to predict a walk in the park. On the other hand both seem to have deeply entrenched negative feelings in larger segments of the voting public.

We will know in about eight weeks, but we should be analyzing and strategizing from now. After all, The USA is our largest and closest trading partner, and still boasts the largest economy in the world. We have access to that market and we receive assistance in the form of donor funding, and the largest Jamaican diaspora population resides there.

If Donald Trump wins (as seems more likely at this time), then we can expect a new set of measures on immigration, residency, trade, and international

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diplomacy that may not be predictable on the basis of previously accepted norms. We can expect a change in relationships between the USA, Britain, the EU, and China that will all impact us in Jamaica, and leave Canada and CARICOM as our most stable trading partners.

In Jamaica we have so many local crises that we are too overloaded to notice a cycle that is rising again after over fifty years of slumber, and it is called social consciousness.

I define it as a time when people may bring specific opinions and actions in support of group welfare rather than solely individual benefit. In many ways I see this as a return to the focus of equality and “justice for all” sentiments of the 1960’s. In Jamaica we were in the vanguard of the Black Power Movement; the anti-Apartheid stance; free Mandela; freedom for Rhodesia (liberate Zimbabwe), Angola, Namibia, Sierra Leone, just to mention a few.

We refused to import goods from South Africa; we led the fight to exclude them from Cricket; and we disciplined our players on the “Rebel Tour” most harshly. We stood up for Cuba in the face of US sanctions and threats, and we had positions on right and wrong, even as our own Government expelled Walter Rodney, and banned books written by Eldridge Cleaver, Frantz Fanon, Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X, and many others. Books banned, in Jamaica, a very hard reality for our young people to swallow in 2016.

High schools allowed critical thinking, protest, and general questioning; the UWI students and some lecturers blockaded gates, and marched. Michael Manley lay



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down in the middle of North Street in front of the Gleaner, and yes the country was divided between capitalism, democratic socialism, and communism.

These events of the 1960's were under the then JLP Government, and the opportunity now arises for the current JLP Government to lead the liberalization of ideas, to remove the silent resistance, and to reform the processes of good governance. The "rebels" and "conscious citizens" of the 1960-70's wrested government from the JLP to the PNP through the ballot box. They then reversed their decision in 1980. The seeds of justice and right are again on an agenda that matters to an unconvinced and uncommitted electorate of the new young idealists.

The incidents of Coral Gardens; the renaming of the Morant Bay "rebellion" to a "war"; deportees, refugees, "corruptees" and "wannabees", all are emerging in an open discourse centered on citizens' legitimate concerns. Even in our universities, students are re-awakening to challenge the false reality that Jamaica has allowed to delude a population that has failed to retain genuine reasoning skills.

Conscious lyrics emerge from our current artistes as they did in the past from Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, Bob Andy, Pablo Moses, and many others. They are now taking a life of their own in the conscious dancehalls, gospel, and on the traditional radio and television, all accessible by cellphone and free from control or censorship.

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However, after 50+ years of a selfish approach, our young people are re-discovering certain values, and recognize the danger of remaining absent from the dialogue. The Revolution is being revived, and those of us that lived it as young people must find a way to encourage their resolve to have a better Jamaica. As they say “the revolution will not be televised”!

However it is being “socially debated” on Facebook, Twitter, and other personalized media. It cannot be stopped by brute force or intimidation, and has developed a life of its own. Donald Trump, BREXIT, nuclear bomb tests in North Korea, and terrorist threats stimulate feelings of impending danger. The ugly heads of racism, religious discrimination, sexual orientation and many other negative positions serve to re-ignite the fires of the 1960’s. (Regrettably, AIDS has put an end to the “make love not war” Hippie Movement), and California seems more enthralled by a “Mexican invasion” (according to Trump).

The concept of “building walls” to restrict movement of persons can only be a bastion of the uneducated or the lumpen proletariat. The Great Wall of China; Hadrian’s Wall; and the Berlin Wall, were all symbols of exclusion. We have forgotten that walls have two sides, and keep out and keep in. They fuel resentment on both sides that grows until the actions are physical confrontation, not virtual reality contemplation by video.

In an economic sense, it is a restraint of trade, and we need to understand this within a concept of global/international trade in goods and services. A study of past World Wars indicated an increase in world production, but a severe fall in international trade.

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In another example, the Cuban embargo born from their Revolution and the spinoff of the Cold War robbed Jamaica of a workspace for skilled labour, a migration destination, and functional cooperation in agriculture, manufacturing, and joint tourism ventures.

But the critical issue that we face after over fifty years is a repeat of conditions that are not only economic. These are social and moral issues that do not fall within the measurement of the IMF. The growing forces are pushing for change in areas such as integrity, transparency, social organization, peaceful communities, freedom of movement within Jamaica for residence and work, and access to good education and healthcare.

These wishes may sound trivial to those whose only focus has been fiscal and monetary measures, and who may have forgotten the previous outbreaks of dissatisfaction expressed by civil disobedience. The challenge is that the solution resides in change, and in the implementation process both the supporters and detractors of this difficult concept may not be fully ready to adapt their individual lifestyles.

I therefore ask; whose responsibility is it to take leadership overall, and also whose responsibility is it to lead the various segments before anarchy and chaos take root?

