Celebrating Our Heroes

BY **Coleen Douglas** Posted **October 07, 2021**

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Recall them, recall them
- Burning Spear

Every year in October we pause to honour the six men and one woman who were conferred with the nation's highest honours – National Hero. The term "hero" comes from the Greek word "heros" which literally means protector or defender. Most of our words we use in Jamaica has its roots in latin and my research revealed that the latin equivalent of the word hero is 'seruare' which means to safeguard. Jamaica's seven national heroes in their individual ways fought for the rights of the people.

Let's recall Jamaica's National Heroes
• Sir Alexander Bustamante
• Marcus Garvey
• George William Gordon
• Norman Manley
• Nanny of the Maroons
• Samuel Sharpe
• Paul Bogle

From fighting for freedom, equal rights, justice, workers rights to black economic empowerment and pride, our national heroes were extraordinary and are testament of what we can accomplish as human beings. Through their works and sacrifice, we can live more comfortably as human beings. To truly honour them, we must live our lives in ways that embody what they fought for. What they stood for. Our heroes are symbols of perfection – they represent some of the highest qualities we strive to emulate – courage, strength, selflessness, and love.

Let's recall some international heroes
• Nelson Mandela
• Kwame Nkrumah
• Emperor Haile Selassie
• Malcolm X
• Martin Luther King
• Harriet Tubman
• Sojourner Truth
• Bob Marley

The names may not be formally recognised as heroes in their respective home country but are recognised across the world for their work in the fight for peace, equality, justice, and freedom. What they have in common with Jamaica's National Heroes are the virtues of courage, honour, and service to mankind. It is unfortunate that our heroes may not be known to our younger generations as new media presents for them numerous offerings of hero-type figures. It is no surprise that young people, and even some adults, will liken successful individuals like celebrities to our traditional hero figures. Celebrities could very well be heroes as several of them are committed to helping to make the world a better place, but it is important that responsible societies/nations help in shaping these choices by allowing young people to develop the right values. Vybz Kartel is considered a hero by someone who has never heard about Marcus Garvey. What are the ideals Kartel uphold that the youth will emulate versus the ideals of Marcus Garvey? The issue then becomes a moral one as it is a knowledge-systems one. What information are we sharing about heroes and those who have made significant difference in the world impacting lives through personal sacrifice.

Heroes Month allows us the opportunity to recall our heroes. Let us, this October dedicate some time to sharing with each other insights into some great men and women in Jamaica and across the world who dedicated their lives to humanity and left the world way better than they received it. Heroes represent our highest ideals, and we can honour their memories by living with integrity, being courageous and by serving others.