

## ENTRY #3

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character” said the courageous Martin Luther King Jr. in Washington D.C, August 28, 1968. Though this speech was delivered in regards to the full emancipation of the Blacks living in the United States of America, King has inspired individuals globally.

Jamaica, like other Caribbean islands was colonized by the European powers who started a wave of exploration, colonization and conquest. According to the Caribbean sociologist M.G. Smith the Caribbean is considered a plural society. Being inclusive means Jamaica must facilitate a society where the individual expression of each person is respected whether in education, technology, lifestyle or social values. Out of many, one people is our motto. This is to be embraced in our everyday lives to inspire tolerance for us to accept the difference in each individual and to focus on achieving success no matter the struggles and biases.

An article entitled ‘A Legacy of Racism’, published August 2010 by the Jamaica Gleaner stated that ever since slavery there has been a strong link between race and class in Jamaica. It was illustrated that the ‘haves’ have a light complexion while the ‘have nots’ were of a darker pigmentation. After emancipation, former slave owners received immense compensations for the loss of their properties while ex-slaves received nothing but ‘freedom’. Freedom from what? In fact, four years after emancipation there was no equality; to vote, one had to own land and to be a candidate you had to own even more. As an ex-slave who had no education or

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wealth, the chances of social mobility in that era was slim to none as there was a closed system of stratification and all status had to be ascribed.

Evidently, colour is linked to wealth and inclusivity as many internalized the value that 'light' skin is better than 'dark' skin, hence emancipation is not yet completed but a goal to achieve. In Jamaica, racism is not conveyed not as White versus Black, but a mix of various ethnic groups where the lighter skinned individuals are more desirable and are of a higher social class. King believed that emancipation was not the end but rather the beginning, and for Jamaica, the biggest obstacle is to increase Black 'consciousness'. Slavery has shaped our nation and its citizens and because of this there are unequal opportunities afforded to individuals of the different social classes. Education serves as the vehicle for social mobility as it provides skill and training that is required to fill most job position. "We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one", said King. As Jamaica strives for a meritocratic educational system there is still evidence of inequality and exclusivity. If an individual pulls through to tertiary education it is believed by some Jamaicans that some jobs are only readily available to citizens of a light complexion.

According to the Jamaica Gleaner's article entitled "Browning Please" published September 2011, "A hundred and seventy-seven years after slavery was abolished in the British West Indies, Jamaica's national training agency - HEART Trust - still has to deal with colour-prejudiced employers who are requesting that trainees be brown or light-skinned as a prerequisite for employment in their firms." This

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reemphasizes King's view as he believed that even a "hundred years after emancipation, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination." As a result of discriminations such as this in the Jamaican society, there has been an increase in skin bleaching.

Jamaicans are still mentally enslaved, but like the honourable Martin Luther King Jr., I, Wendion Mitchell have a dream for Jamaica. I see Jamaica beyond the flaws of the flesh and I seek to empower my fellow citizens through critical thinking. No one is born a racist. Hate cannot be inherited especially the hate for one's self and skin colour. It is sad, the current bleaching epidemic and the values that are enforced by the capitalists of this country. The criteria subjected to be followed by citizens have led them in believing that they are beneath the system. If they are not "brown" they are not beautiful, if they are not "brown" they will not get a good job, if they are not "brown" they will not be offered equal opportunities. If they are not considered 'normal' in their sexual orientation, they are to be excluded. The Jamaica I envision has a place in the classroom, business and social realm for every citizen, not just light coloured individuals. In fact with the various industrialisations by invitation implemented by the Jamaican government, there are various ethnic groups now living in Jamaica. This is a place for everyone.

It is my dream that Jamaica rises above the status quo, is able to move forward as a country, and make racial prejudice a thing of the past. It is highly conspicuous the level of difficulty in fully diminishing the chains of racism. Jamaica was shaped through exploitation and moulded with the impacts of the plantation society and

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slavery. It is a part of our heritage that has seeped its way into our system that must be eradicated in order for us to achieve an inclusive Jamaica. Our forefathers fought for our freedom and we are to utilize it, by becoming one. This is reiterated in our motto: Out of many, one people.