

June 12th 2020

Global Leadership in Solidarity with Black Lives Matter

Introduction

As this country prepares to hold elections constitutionally due this year, there will invariably be a heavy focus on leadership, and specifically, the capabilities necessary to lead this developing nation in this time of serious challenges! Over the last month this column focused on the exceptional leadership the ULP provided our country and by extension the region and the world over the last 19 plus years. Tackling Covid-19 and its continuing fallouts is the most current demonstration of the competence of Prime Minister Gonsalves as a knowledgeable, caring and wise leader, able to literally transform every challenge into an opportunity, even in the case of a pandemic.

As if part of a tag team, the worst drought in 70 years join the pandemic, forcing the Central Water and Sewage Authority to resort to water rationing with attending inconvenience for many communities. Then tragedy! An inferno erupted at a gas station on Union Island leaving three dead, two being school students.

Facing all this, Prime Minister Gonsalves never succumbed to paralysis or even panic. He went about addressing each with the urgency and efficaciousness that are born of great experience, genuine patriotism, wisdom and the firm belief that “Our faith will see us through!”.

Black Lives Matter

The death of George Floyd, an African-American at the hands of police in the USA, sparking global protests, sees this country’s Prime Minister standing on the right side of history, showing solidarity with the cause of justice. With the responsibility entrusted us as an elected member on the United Nations Security Council, this country’s is a voice of reason, care and deep concern on this matter of international human rights. In an open letter to the USA, Dr. Gonsalves again showed the kind of leadership that this country is now renown, leading the way

in CARICOM, as we rally with those seeking justice and peace. Below is the full text of PM Gonsalves statement:

“The government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines rejoice, in solidarity, with the people of the United States of America in their popular, broad-based and peaceful resistance currently underway in their defence and advancement of liberty and justice consequent upon the killing of an African-American, George Floyd, in Minnesota, at the hands, and knees, of the Police.

At the same time, we join with all right-thinking persons, the world over, in expressing sympathy and heart-felt condolences to the immediate family and friends of George Floyd at his sudden and unnatural death. We regret, too, the incidents of violence which have given rise to damage to property and injury to some during the upsurge of popular resistance. We call on all concerned to be peaceful and exercise sensible restraint so as to avoid ignoble pursuits.

The frequency with which African-American males meet their deaths through Police violence in the USA and the veritable legal immunity accorded to the Police in a disproportionately high number of cases, have combined to push this twin occurrence beyond the boundaries of a domestic or internal matter, onto the agenda of international human rights. Friends and allies of the USA across the globe have been urging the American authorities to address efficaciously this metaphoric cancer in their society and body politic.

It is hereby reaffirmed that “Black Lives Matter”. Without this mantra being a lived reality in contemporary America, the true greatness of that remarkable country and its people stands unrealized. As a friend of America, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, with its particular history, is available to render assistance and advice to our American brothers and sisters in their attempts at resolving and healing this troubling area of their civilisation’s praxis.

The government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines know, for sure, that no bombs, guns, bullets, bullying, coercion, political manipulation or such levers of state power can resolve the challenges arising from racial injustice and inequality, nor can those instruments of state facilitate the achievement of long-lasting liberty, justice, peace, and social harmony. Another, better path is possible.

So, we urge at this time of monumental challenges in our hemisphere, and globally, that all our leaders, governmental and non-governmental, embrace both the apt question posed, and the clear answer given, by the Hebrew Prophet Micah: “And

what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.”

Conclusion

It should come as no surprise to anyone that Dr. Gonsalves added our voice to this call for respect for human worth and dignity. Under his very able leadership SVG has stood on the side of justice be this as regards the illegal blockade against the Cuban people, the defence of the rights of the Palestinian people, upholding the sovereignty of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, advocating that Taiwan is allowed its space in international community and many others. This struggle for racial equality by African-Americans, is a just one! PM Gonsalves being a champion defender of the Poor and Powerless wherever they may be as shown in his defence of people of Haitian decent made stateless by the Government of the Dominican Republic; cannot and will not remain silent in this battle for the freedom, rights and liberties of black people the world over. His is leadership that cares and knows #Blacklivesmatter.