

Independence Day Address 2009

By Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. John Briceño

21 September 2009

We come together on this day to culminate a celebration which started 21 days ago on St. George's Caye.

It is fitting that the climax of this year's celebration end here at the steps of the National Assembly, where our desire to create a society of free men and women is reaffirmed through our practice of democratic governance.

On such an occasion it is tempting for those of us who are not a part of the Government, to highlight all the wrongs that have been taking place in our nation. But not on this day; today we pay tribute to our diverse origins, to our common aspirations and together we celebrate our Independence as Belizeans.

During the ceremonies on St. George's Caye, we were reminded that we are a resilient people, whose ancestors chose to face insurmountable odds, yet they stayed and were ready to fight for what they believed was rightfully theirs. From this small band of patriots we were given the desire to forge a nation which became Belize.

This is what defines us as a people. This is what make us proud Belizeans and this is what inspired George Price, and those brave men and women who in the 50's believed that we were able to chart our own course and so determined that Belize would be an independent nation.

It is this spirit of determination which leads us today: it leads the farmer, who in the midst of some of the most challenging circumstances gets up in the morning and puts his back to the plough. It is what leads our doctors, nurses, teachers, police officers, our BDF, our builders, designers, our artists, our entrepreneurs and all those who today continue the work of creating a society fit for all Belizeans.

And it is from this indomitable strength, which is the legacy of our ancestors, that we must now draw the courage not to cower in the face of adversity, or to wilt in fear of the unknown, but to rise and to stand up for Belize and for the idea of a nation of free men and women who desire

to develop a nation that respects the rule of law; develop the human capacity and protect and preserve this beautiful land.

In these days of uncertainty all of us must call on the spirit of those who stood up for Belize and whose service helped to develop this nation so that we can fight to survive in a time of economic uncertainty – so that we can overcome the fear that has taken over so many of our streets due to the unprecedented levels of crime and violence; so that we can work to make health care and education relevant and accessible to all our people. And we must always fight to protect and defend the constitution and the law.

Los beliceños podemos hacer esto ya que somos un pueblo que sabe hacer sacrificio. Somos un pueblo que sabe enfrentar lo incierto y sabemos que cuando llega la convocatoria para hacer cosas fuera de lo común, pero necesarias, los beliceños sabemos responder. Jamás le hemos temido al futuro, al contrario, siempre hemos marchado con valor por el camino que nos lleva hacia adelante.

We can do these things because we are a people who understand sacrifice. We are a people who know how to face our fears and we know that when called upon to do extraordinary things Belizeans rise to the occasion.

We have never feared the future, but always stepped boldly on to the path that leads us forward.

And with the grace of God we will do so once more, for like our ancestors, we too are called to live the moment, to continue the new and progressive revolution and to write our own chapter in this Nation's history.

So let us join together as one nation, heart and hands, to create a Belize where everyone is given the opportunity to live a dignified life and let us build a society which every Belizean so rightly deserve.

Long Live Belize

Que Viva Belice

Happy Independence Day Belize!