

**ADDRESS**

**HON. OLIVIA GRANGE M.P.**  
**MINISTER OF YOUTH, SPORTS AND CULTURE**

*On the Occasion of the*

*4<sup>th</sup> World Summit of Arts and Culture*  
*Johannesburg, September 22-25, 2009*

***Summit Theme: “Meeting of Cultures: Creating Meaning  
through the Arts”***

***Session Theme: “Instrumentalization of the Arts for the Public  
Good: Is intercultural dialogue worth conscripting the arts?”***

**Topic of Speech: Culture and the Arts: The Power to create,  
unite, enrich.**

**Salutations.....**

Mr. Moderator, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen..... Good morning.

Or as we say in Jamaica: HOWDY! IRIE!

You all know the song-writer. It is the Hon. Robert Nesta Bob Marley.

Ladies and gentlemen, today is a very special day for me. Today I feel happy to be here in this beautiful and special land, South Africa.

Allow me to thank the International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies and the National Arts Council of South Africa for their invitation to me and the way in which they extended themselves in facilitating my being here.

Ladies and gentlemen, I come to this panel as a Minister of government and a cultural activist representing the culture agenda of Jamaica and the wider Caribbean here today. As such, the overall theme of the conference resonated within me from the very beginning because we in the Caribbean are the living manifestation of the theme, since historically we have been a space created by the meeting of cultures: mainly, Africa, Europe, China, India.

In this regard, we understand very well the notion of creating meaning through the arts and cultural expressions. This is what we have had to do over the period of our history. You see, the meeting of the cultures in our experience was not crafted in willingness or desire. Rather it was the imposition of “super-ordinate” cultures whose ultimate mission was detrimental to those who they saw as “sub-ordinate”.

In our situation, the cultural discourse that followed was one in which we used the arts and our cultural expressions as a source of liberation and laid the foundation upon which our people were able to restore their dignity and integrity in the face of the brutality unleashed on them by a cruel plantation system.

It is on this platform that I provide some guidance on our approach to the use of the arts, culture and our artists in the promotion of public good.

“Public good”.... What does it mean? There are those for whom public good is a narrow agenda based on personal or self-serving motivations, whether they are policy makers, artists or funding agencies. But then,

everyone has an agenda. But is it for the public good?! Our experience, described earlier, presents a good example of what is public good. It has to do with a larger social order that has implications for people's lives and self-worth and the need for policy makers and the creative sector to cooperate in the advancement of that cause.

In our situation the arts and cultural expressions were used to give new meaning to a people's identity and assisted in fashioning a "new civilization", in which we presented ourselves to the world on our own terms. The arts and cultural expression served the larger public good that became the very lifeblood of the people.

Through the arts, we echoed the voices of our ancestors and shouted with the poet, our own Claude McKay:

*If we must die let it not be like hogs....*

*If we must die Oh let us nobly die....*

*Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back.*

In this struggle, our policy makers and our creative people experimented with several forms of expression as we, together, engaged the reality of the

struggle. We became Anansi, that legendary West African hero who traveled with our ancestors in shackles, cunning and crafty as we united in the purpose of self-discovery. We became Marcus Garvey, as fierce and as militant as Marley's "Buffalo Soldier" in reclaiming our lost identity.

As Marley said:

***"Buffalo Soldier, Dreadlocks Rasta  
Taken from Africa, Brought to America  
Fighting on arrival, Fighting for survival".***

We became authors like Derek Walcott (St. Lucia), Roger Mais (Jamaica), and Paul Keane Douglas (Trinidad), and in creating our own poet Louise Bennett gave us pride in expressing our colourful Jamaican language.

We are Mento, Ska, Calypso, Soca, and Dancehall music and we gave the world a new religion in Rastafari and a music that has penetrated all corners of the world in uniting nations: This is Reggae music. Finally we have become **Usain Bolt**, the fastest man on earth; followed by **Asafa Powell**; followed by some of the fastest women **Shelly-Ann Fraser, Melaine Walker, Veronica Campbell Brown**, scaling hurdles like Gold medalist

**Brigitte Foster-Hylton.** We beat our chests and dance the *Gully Creeper* when we run 9.58 and awe the world. Policy makers and creative people working together all for the public good.

As Marley says:

*In this great future  
we can't forget the past*

The task of policy makers, funding agencies and creative people is to create a balance in which the arts will serve as a medium for the free expression of the people even as they reflect on the past and recognize their collective responsibility in the present to promote public good. In this situation, the artist must recognize his or her mission to promote messages on which the society can build positive images for our youth even as they search for and express the truth.

It is my view that both can co-exist. The policy maker needs the artist to be on the frontline of communal engagement in a society, as role models, or in championing social causes as part of their membership of the society. This

must not require that the artist negate or limit his or her artistic freedom in the name of public good.

The arts will always be the mirror and the projection of society's fulfillment. It is for policy makers to find ways to ensure that such a relationship, that is as strong as it is fragile – a thin line between love and hate, but a relationship that provides that bridge that will allow creative people to cross successfully from the proper defense of artistic liberty and the fulfillment of their collective responsibility to advance the welfare of the society.

For this reason, the buffalo soldier must be what he or she is: a militant being, determined to promote free expression, and a citizen, willing to interact with policy makers in a common cause: the power to create, unite, and enrich.

*Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery*

*None but ourselves can free our minds*

*Have no fear for atomic energy*

*None a dem can stop the time.*