

Earth Day

Call to Action; What will you do to make Saint Lucia Green?

Speaker after speaker made a united call for Saint Lucians to play their part in “Greening Fair Helen” at Sòlèy Kouche on the Saddle at Pigeon Island National Landmark on Wednesday, April 22nd, 2009. The event, staged in observance of International Earth Day was organized by the Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT) in collaboration with its Southern and Western Branches and was also held at the Moule-a-Chique Lighthouse in View Fort and at the Soufriere Town Square.

The ceremony began shortly after 5 p.m. with a procession from the Gatehouse to the Saddle. Celebrants didn’t seem to mind the afternoon sun as they made the 15 minute trek to the musical accompaniment of the Mamay Kweyol Folk Band. Once on the Saddle, they got a breathtaking view of Pigeon Point, Gros Islet and Rodney Bay on one side and on the other, miles of blue sea as far as the eyes can see. In addition to simply basking in the glow of the afternoon sun, the Master of Ceremony- Mr. Laurent Jn Pierre of the SLNT encouraged those present to inhale the clean, fresh untainted air, and prepare for musical and poetic treats. However, little did they know that they were going to be challenged to preserve what is left of Fair Helen’s natural beauty.



Following the arrival of the Trust's patron, Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy, Governor General of Saint Lucia, the National Anthem was delivered by Trevon St. Omer, a Trumpeter of the Saint Lucia School of Music, after which Pastor Anderson Queto offered a riveting prayer urging all present to appreciate God's gift of Mother Earth and Saint Lucia in particular.

In his welcome address and remarks, SLNT's Director, Mr. Bishnu Tulsie expressed his concern that "...one day we might just wake up and realize that everything is gone" if we continue to give up our natural resources, specifically our coastline in the name of development. He pointed out that the Trust is in favour of development but emphasized that it must be pursued in a "green" way that is people centered and not infrastructure centered. Mr. Tulsie also used the opportunity to disclose that the Trust alongside various youth agencies is planning to stage a **Youth Environment Forum** this July. This Forum, he says will be planned for and by the youth and is geared toward giving youngsters the privilege and right to become advocates for the preservation of Saint Lucia's environment.

Dr. Vasantha Chase, a member of the SLNT, encouraged other members, the Council and Staff of the Saint Lucia National Trust to initiate the Greening of Fair Helen. Dr. Chase said the "Greening Fair Helen" initiative must be a Solution Campaign aimed at motivating "people across the length and breadth of Fair Helen to reverse environmental decline through a renewed focus on grassroots actions". She went on to urge celebrants to "practice Earth Day Every Day" because making simple changes in our lifestyle can have a significant impact on Fair Helen, for example, refusing a plastic bag at the supermarket or planting trees in our gardens. In closing, Dr. Chase told participants that "It is when we each begin to live our environmental lives to the fullest that we will begin to change the state of this planet for the good".

The call to action continued with these words, "It's not only up to the Trust or the Forestry Department but it's everyone's responsibility to be pro-active and take care of the environment". Deputy Forestry Officer, Mr. Michael Bobb like the other speakers charged the gathering to make Earth Day an everyday affair instead of once a year. He described Fair Helen as "a web that's being

dismantled” in the name of development. He too like the SLNT Director, said development is important and is a natural part of growth, however, Saint Lucians need to “slow down and ask where are we going and what do we want for Saint Lucia?” He left the Earth Day celebrants to consider that “Whatever negative things we do to the environment now, will have a negative impact on us later”.

Other features of what can be described as an eclectic and exciting programme were the Governor General’s planting of the Latanier Tree - which is endemic to Saint Lucia; a musical rendition by Jason Sifflet; a message from Former Miss Earth- Hannah Fitz; poetry by the staff of Rainforest Sky Rides as well as the Saint Lucia National Trust Youth Club and an environmentally provocative song by History Teacher, Nkrumah Lucian, entitled “Sea, Sand and Soul we Selling” left most of the celebrants roaring and apparently pleased with the message.



The Saint Lucia National Trust would like to express its heartfelt thanks to its Patron- Dame Pearlette Louisy, its Members, Councilors, Staff and Youth Group, the Forestiere Junior Rangers; who came out in large numbers, wards from the Boys Training Centre, fellow Saint Lucians and visitors for participating in Earth Day 2009. We also hope that the presentations and messages reinvigorated those present to fulfill the Earth Day Pledge to **“...act in the best of my ability and to make the earth a secure and hospitable home for present and future generations”**.



Saint Lucia National Trust

April 24th, 2009