



ST. LUCIA NATIONAL TRUST

TEL: (758) 452-5005/31495 P.O. BOX 595 CASTRIES, ST. LUCIA WEST INDIES
FAX NO: (758) 453-2791 Email: natrust@candw.lc Website: www.slunatrust.org

**Patron: Her Excellency Dame Pearlette Louisy
Governor General of St. Lucia**

November 23, 2009

Saint Lucia National Trust Clean Up Review: Youngsters Making a Difference

Driving around Saint Lucia is one of the most beautiful visual experiences imaginable; a photographer's dream. Lush green mountains shooting up against the bright blue sky complimented by the sparkling seas; one of Mother Nature's most magnificent works of art. Yet, as the people who claim to "Love the land that gave us birth", I have not seen Saint Lucians portray the kind of pride that comes along with such a bold statement which is sung loudly throughout schools around the island everyday.

The Saint Lucia Solid Waste Management Authority has undertaken the hosting of the annual "Saint Lucia Cleanup Campaign". This event is geared at helping to raise awareness of the litter problem we have here in our island, and to help keep it clean. The Saint Lucia National Trust Youth Group, with the help of some members of the St. Mary's College Environmental Club took part in this year's event. We set out on the morning of Saturday, 7th November, with the goal of cleaning from the Rodney Heights Aquatic Centre to the Pigeon Point gap.



"Good job" was a phrase which was echoed throughout our 4 hour task. We got a lot of support and encouragement from some of the passers-by. I was also assured of how good of a job we did by persons who commented on how clean the area looked afterwards. With our garbage arranged neatly on the side of the road waiting to be collected by the trucks, there was a sense of completion and accomplishment which could readily be seen on the faces of all members of the group. Although extremely proud that our goal was realized, I was severely disheartened by the attitude of some of my fellow countrymen.

Jumping over gutters, crawling under barbed wire, and hanging on branches all sound like training routines designed by the US Army, but those were just a few of the things we did in the name of completing our set goal. In all honesty, it was a fun and fulfilling activity personally, in spite of the amount of manual labour involved and the hot sun blazing down on our backs. It was shocking to see the kinds of items that are tossed out of vehicles or even purposely dumped along our highways. The filth we compiled ranged from old shoes and jeans, to computer wires and even a whole car door! Adding insult to injury, one person actually threw a plastic bottle out of a moving minibus, shouting “Clean that” as they sped off. Tin cans, plastic and polystyrene cups were extremely common throughout the route. It is all these little items that collect in our gutters which cause floods, dirty our beaches and kill our marine life...common knowledge, right? So why are we still doing it? Why are Saint Lucians not learning that simple acts like tossing the icicle wrapper to the side will result in widespread damage? Is filthiness embedded in our culture and tradition more than the madras itself? One Saint Lucian national, who currently resides in the United Kingdom, expressed explicitly her disgust with the attitude of the people in our country, with regards to the litter situation. Her words were as sharp as knives as she claimed that we are the nastiest set of people in the world. Do we really want to live up to such a reputation?

We, yes I say we, as a people need to be more aware and appreciative of our environment. We are all quick to get offended when foreigners come here and buy land and use our resources, but on the other hand, we don't care enough to take care of our island. We are seemingly content living in the crud around us as we make no attempt to rectify the situation. We have to get rid of the “someone will do it for us” mentality and start acting like responsible people. We live on the most beautiful island in the world yet we litter like spoilt children. We fail to realize that the more we do for ourselves, the less we have other people to blame when the country looks bad. Or is this what we really want? To be able to pin the blame on other people to avoid making ourselves look bad. This is a glorious choice when the rats are everywhere spreading disease; when the garbage is left on our streets and we walk right over it because as far as we are concerned, that's what people are paid for. This is a ridiculous approach and I believe it is time to step up and take control of our country, not only on an environmental basis, but all round. In my opinion, the first step to achieving the goal of a clean country is not by cleaning up the lands, but by addressing our mentality as a people and cleaning that up first.

I would like to applaud the Saint Lucia Solid Waste Management Authority for their efforts and congratulate them on such a successful Cleanup Campaign. I suppose, in the end, what we would be most encouraged by is the absence of the need to undertake such clean ups at all! I long for the day when we may truly demonstrate our “love for our island home” by keeping it clean and conserving its natural assets.

***Contributor:
SLNT Youth Group Member***