

## **THE LIFE AND WORK OF NORMAN WASHINGTON MANLEY, NATIONAL HERO OF JAMAICA**

The Right Excellent Norman Washington Manley M.M., Q.C., B.C.L., LL.D (Hon.), National Hero of Jamaica, was born on July 4, 1893 in Roxborough, Manchester. He was the son of Thomas, (a produce dealer), and his wife, Margaret. His father died when he was six years old and the family moved to Belmont, in Guanaboa Vale.

Manley lived at Belmont during his teens and attended Beckford and Smith High School, now St. Jago High School. He also attended Wolmer's School for a short while, then to Jamaica College where he excelled in athletics. After leaving Jamaica College, he taught at Titchfield Elementary School for about two years. He was then awarded the 1914 Rhodes scholarship to Oxford University. However, prior to this, he enlisted in the British Army and fought during World War 1. He fought gallantly and was awarded the Military Medal. After the war, he studied Law at Jesus College, Oxford, and was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn in 1921.



Norman Washington Manley

While in England in 1921, he married his cousin and noted visual artist, Edna (nee Swithenbank). He returned to Jamaica in 1922 and was admitted to the Jamaican Bar in August of that year. The couple had two sons - Douglas and Michael.



Edna Manley

## **Outstanding Achievements**

Manley had an illustrious legal career and won acclaim internationally in some notable cases. He was one of the most brilliant of Jamaica's advocates and lawyers and became a King's Counsel in 1932. He also played a significant role in the nation's banana industry. He drafted the laws for the establishment of a local banana shipping company and the Jamaica Banana Producers' Association was formed with his advocacy.

Additionally, he was instrumental in the formation of the Jamaica Welfare Limited in 1937, born out of his skilful negotiations with the United Fruit Company and the Standard Fruit Company, then the two largest multinationals in the world. Through the formation of the Jamaica Welfare Limited, he laid the foundation for social welfare development among the poor.

He was also an outstanding sportsman. He was President and Life patron of the Jamaica Boxing Board of Control and President of the Jamaica Olympic Association, in addition to being an extraordinary walker, boater, marksman, horseman, and tennis player.

## **Political Life**

The 1938 riots in Frome, Westmoreland, saw Manley's entry into political life. During that year, Jamaica's first mass-based party, the People's National Party (PNP) was formed with him as its first leader. He strove for self-government and, as leader of the party, played a major role in the events leading toward political autonomy for the island. He helped to acquire full Adult Suffrage from Britain. However, in the first election held under Universal Adult Suffrage in 1944, the PNP won only four seats and Manley failed to gain a seat.

Later, in 1955, the PNP won the General Election and Manley became Chief Minister. In the House of Representatives he led the fight to do away with the British-made 1944 Constitution which left the real executive power in the hands of the Colonial Governor. He pressed for increased constitutional advances, including a cabinet to replace the executive council and a reduction in the power of the colonial secretary.

Manley won the General Election again in 1959 and advocated for the Federation of British Caribbean countries. However, the opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) announced a change of policy regarding support for the West Indies Federation and Manley held a referendum on the issue. In 1961, the public voted against Federation and Jamaica sought independence on its own. Manley's second term was cut short as the PNP lost the next election in 1962 and the JLP went on to form the first government of independent Jamaica.

Due to failing health, Manley retired from active politics in 1969 and was succeeded as party leader by his son, Michael. He died on September 2, 1969 at the age of 76. Manley was regarded as the 'father' of the nationalist movement in Jamaica and the Order of National Hero was conferred on him in 1969, shortly after his death.

Manley's birthplace at Roxborough is a national monument, and a life-sized statue of him stands at North Parade, downtown Kingston. The Norman Manley International Airport was named in his honour as well as the Norman Manley Highway leading to it, the Norman Manley Boulevard in Negril, and the Norman Manley High School. Other tributes to Manley include the Norman Manley Foundation (which presents an annual award for excellence), and a memorial erected on the site of his grave at National Heroes' Park.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Jamaica Information Service. (1982). *Norman Washington Manley*.

Olive Senior, *Encyclopaedia of Jamaican heritage* (St Andrew, Jamaica: Twin Guinep Publishers, 2003), 303-04.

## ACTIVITY

### FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS COMPREHENSION TEST

Read the passage above and the sentences below, then unscramble the words and fill in the blanks with the correct answers.

bghxooru Norman Manley was born in \_\_\_\_\_, Manchester.

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Correct answers: Roxborough, athletics, Rhodes, Bar, Edna, Counsel, first, Michael, Hero.

## **The Words of the Rt. Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey**

“Men who are in earnest are not afraid of consequences.”

Source: The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey. Compiled by Amy Jacques Garvey. Published by Frank Cass and Company Limited (1983), London, England.