

B/N Manley, Michael

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PROFILE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Michael Norman Manley, Prime Minister of Jamaica, is a towering Caribbean personality physically as well as otherwise. He stands 6' 3" and his athletic figure weighs 190 lbs. "Joshua" is what the masses of his followers and admirers call him. His father is recognised as the "Moses" who led the people of Jamaica out of the "Egypt" of colonialism and took them to the brink of the "Promised Land" of independence. Joshua is expected to lead the people of Jamaica into an era of social justice and prosperity.

Michael Manley was born December 10, 1924, the son of Norman Washington and Edna. His father died in 1969. He was a brilliant barrister and great politician who was subsequently named one of Jamaica's five national heroes. His mother is a sculptress of international fame and a leading Jamaican social worker. His brother Douglas who is a member of his cabinet, Michael credits with influencing him away from a study of law and into politics.

From 1935 - 43 Michael attended Jamaica College. From 1943 - 45 he was a pilot officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force. From 1946 - 1950 he attended the London School of Economics. For the year 1951 he freelanced as a journalist with the BBC. In 1952 he returned home and became Associate Editor of the weekly newspaper, Public Opinion. In 1953 he joined the National Workers Union as their special sugar representative and later for bauxite and other industries. He became outstanding as a negotiator and will be long remembered for the two million dollar award to sugar workers arising out of the Goldenberg Commission of Enquiry and the two million settlement for bauxite workers, in 1962. He rose to become Island Supervisor and First Vice-President of the NWU. He also became President of the Caribbean Bauxite

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and Mine Workers Federation and an Executive Member of the Caribbean Congress of Labour, among the several union positions that he held.

From his early years Michael recognised that he was, 'a son of privilege' and that he had certain natural endowments for leadership. He felt, therefore, that he owed society a debt and this in measure explains his dedication as a leader. He has always had a keen sense of social justice. For example, when he became a senior prefect at Jamaica College he made 'bullying' go out of style as he used his physical strength and personal influence to put an end to what he considered "injustice". That is the opinion of his boyhood friend and schoolmate John Hearne, noted author and lecturer.

Mr. Hearne, in commenting on Michael as a politician said: "He is a rare leader, he leads naturally and he enjoys leading. His need for people to love him is stronger than his need for their votes. He has charm and charisma. You will find, if you get to really know him, that you can't help liking him — you either have to love him strongly or you have to hate him wickedly".

His marriage to Beverly Anderson in June 1972 was his fourth. He is twice divorced and one wife died. With each wife he has had a child.

His political career begun officially with his appointment to the Senate April 1962. In 1967 he won the Central Kingston seat in the General Election, even though his party lost, the People's National Party which his father had founded in 1938

After his father's retirement from active politics in 1966, Michael made a bid for leadership of the PNP and on February 10, 1967 became President of the party by defeating his opponent 376 votes to 155. In reporting the result of that election the Daily Gleaner of February 10, 1967 said "Over and over again he repeated the concepts of equality and social justice. He called upon all men of goodwill to come forward and make these concepts into living realities".

On February 20, 1972, his years of hard toil as a trade unionist and politician were rewarded handsomely when his party won 37 of the 53 seats in the Jamaican House of Parliament. During the election campaign he used an ornately carved cane, described as "Joshua's rod" to punctuate his fiery oratory, the theme of which was "better must come". He wielded the cane and words with such skill that he befuddled opponents, bewitched bystanders and charmed supporters who cheered until they were hoarse, "Joshua" "Joshua".