

## THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends, my name is David R Tuitt, a member of the Political party MCAP. I have been given the opportunity to speak on a topic that I feel passionately about. That is “The Right to Vote”. As I make my travels through this beautiful island and I meet people, the resounding things I hear are “Me nah vote”, ayuh can’t make any difference”. These statements bother me deeply, as I realize that in our empathy we are allowing ourselves to be disenfranchised. My people, I feel the pain for an 80 something year old



woman who is turned away from social service because her passport is invalid. I feel the pain for the married couple who can’t pay their mortgage. I feel the pain for the single parent who can’t send their children to school because they are unemployed. I feel the pain for our children who are malnourished and undereducated. The ones who cant pay their ever rising electricity bills and I will not speak to the ever increasing gas prices. Having said all of this, let me now tell you why you should vote.

*“The will of the people shall be the basis of authority of Government, this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedures.”* The universal declaration of Human Rights. Article 1

Fellow citizens, these few words are like music to the soul, “the will of the people shall be the basis of authority of Government”. What they are saying to me, is very simple. That collectively, we the people can chart the course of our lives. We can make sure that we have proper education, and affordable healthcare, better roads and sympathetic politicians to name a few. Not by abstaining but by voting. By voting, we the people have a voice in government. We can decide who represents us. We can vote them in and we can vote them out. In times like these when Montserrat is in Crisis, when every Montserratian is suffering, when the incumbent government say to us “be patient, there is light at the end of the tunnel” and we know that it’s a train coming the other way. When politicians insult us by calling us learners, when they insult us (we the people) by saying to us that their hands are tied. From Salem to St Johns to say you are not voting is an atrocity. Let me

further state that for Mas Joe and Aunt Mae one of the few times that they are going to be equal with Mr. big shot is when you vote. If he has one vote, you one vote. If he has nine, you too have nine. Voting brings equality to all of us.

The process of voting gives every man the right, the responsibility and the privilege to vote. The right, ladies and gentlemen, because we live in a Democratic society that gives us that constitutional right. The responsibility because with our freedom from that right, we must become responsible citizens and do what is right. The privilege, because only so few has it. Ask the millions of people who are in prison that have lost that privilege. Ask the millions of people who were never given that right to vote. In 1872 a very strong willed woman by the name of Susan B Anthony in the USA got arrested because she made an "illegal" ballot. Women were never given that right to vote until some time after that incident. More closely at home, women were never given the right to vote in the United Kingdom until 1928. (God bless women have over come, we have arrived in Montserrat and our next Chief Minister will be a woman). Yours mine and our neighbors vote count. All votes count regardless of choice. That's clearly the freedom of voting as opposed to freedom from voting. Voting is one of the highest of privileges. Our Political process is a partnership of government and the people. Elected officials and citizens are each mutually dependant on each other and the issues that affect our communities and nation. In effect it is a marriage. I believe that all of us know the difference between a good marriage and a bad one. When one party becomes disinterested and simply quits trying, the consequences affect the entire family and community. When they say to us that we have made an "investment" in them and we know that the marriage has gone bad, we know that these marriages end in divorce.

In conclusion my friends, if any of us here don't understand after this how important it is to vote, consider these few statements.

Adolf Hitler who all of us know became the German chancellor just by one vote. History most likely would have been decidedly different for a number of people, especially the Jews.

Even here locally Roy "slim" Daley lost by a just a few votes to Noel "dada" Tuitt. I am sure that the day after the election a few of Roy's friends regretted that they didn't vote.

But more so, we who follow the Christian teachings understand it even more. We the people have a simple mandate from the scripture. The imperative to get involved in the Government process is written in the New Testament: “Submit yourselves for the Lords sake to every Human Institution, whether to a King as the one in Authority, or o Governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond slaves of God. Honor all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor the king”. (1 Peter 2: 13-17)

My people, there is a famous saying of which all of us are aware...” You fool me once..... Shame on you. You fool me twice... Shame on me”. We the people have an opportunity to make it right. Make it right by voting MCAP.

Thank you.