

A WEST INDIAN PRAYER

by

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Introduction

The original Negro Prayer has been a source of much cynical laughter and amusement. However, it does raise the serious issue of what a Prayer for West Indian economic growth should be. In that light I penned the following, also in the form of a parable. In contrast to the dominance of economic theory as the main pillar of development, the intent here is to refocus our attention on the psychological and attitudinal parameters of development, essential for successful economic growth.

A West Indian Prayer

Back in the days of steam ships, only rich folk sailed the seas. But since they wanted the luxuries that their servants provided, they also took their maids and butlers with them. Among these was a talented West Indian cook, smart, resourceful and observant.

Traveling the world with his master, he saw the great cities and the wonderful artistic and scientific achievements of the various peoples of the world. He saw London and its Parliament, Rome and the Vatican, India and its Taj Mahal, Paris and its Eiffel Tower, Tokyo and its gardens, New York and its Statue of Liberty, Venice and its canals, the Pyramids of Egypt, and several other wonders. And he would question these peoples to find out how they achieved such greatness.

When he compared his notes on the Christians of the West, the Confucians of the East, and the Muslims of Africa and Asia, a great light came upon him. He saw that all these peoples, wherever they were, shared the same fundamental values of success, achievement and happiness. Then he fell to his knees in prayer.

"Oh Lord, he prayed;

"Give my people the **wisdom** to see the way to greatness as all these other people have; help my people, all of them, not just the bourgeois, to **value learning and the pursuit of knowledge**, wherein we find the truths and verities, like civility, honesty and nobility, that guide us to greatness and happiness.

"Help us **value hard work** and give our best effort in whatever we do, for its capacity to lift us above the ordinary, give us personal satisfaction, and build wealth for

ourselves and our communities; and help us to understand that hard work is not the same as slavery.

"Help all of us in our work **find a calling or specialization**, so that we may use our God-given talents to their fullest in whatever we do, for ourselves and our communities, to be happy in our calling, and to honor God in so doing.

"Make us **value saving and investment**, whether it be saving time or money, and whether it be investing in productive effort or in financial ventures; give us the will-power to consistently save and invest, even if a little, from whatever we produce.

"Help us **give back to our communities** some of the richness of life that we have achieved, whatever our station -- in charity, volunteered time, community action and leadership.

"And, above all, Oh Lord, **make our conscience our guide**, so we don't have to be told like children or slaves how and why to do the right thing; and give us the strength to follow our conscience.

"Oh Lord, these are the traits I saw in all the successful people I visited. It is not aid or trade I seek for our people; these will come if we acquire these traits. So Lord, it is these traits I pray be taught to all our people also, not just the bourgeois, so we can all rise from our poverty of the material, of the spirit, and of nobility.

"In Your name I pray.

"Amen".
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