

(Good afternoon, Hon. Glen Beach, Consulate general Mr. Thomas, ministers, honorees and invited guest).

It is with much honor and pride that I address you all this afternoon. Before I proceed, I think it is only fitting that we acknowledge our ancestors and first settlers - the Caribs and Awark Indians, followed by the collage of individuals hailing from India, Africa and Europe that now make up the diverse population of SVG.

It has been 31 years ago since SVG became an independent country from England. After the British left, the Country has been lead by 4 prime Ministers: Mr.ET Joshua, Mr. Milton Cato,

Mr. James Mitchell, Mr. Arnim Eustase and presently Dr. Ralph Gonsalves. When SVG gained independence, it meant we gained the independence and responsibility to keep our fellow citizens educated, safe, healthy and prosperous. As an independent country, we have developed and improved our school system, housing, roads, and businesses and are now working on building our own international airport. This is vital to our advancement. Two critical areas of focus as we work towards progress - are the reduction of crimes in our country and the advancement of our healthcare system.

In 2005 and 2006, 23 members of the Caribbean Medical Mission including myself provided medical and dental services to the areas of Georgetown, Owia, Layou, Barouille, Tromouca, chaterbalir and Bequia. Upon review of our missionary work, we realized that the people living in these locations were not taking advantage of the health clinics and other health services available. The Caribbean Medical Mission found that 10% of the people we saw had diabetes and 40% had high blood pressure. During this time, we strived to educate the people on how to take better care of themselves and how to prevent illness and complications. In addition, we saw a surprising amount of people with eye problems: estimated at about 80%of the people we saw. The ophthalmologists diagnose their conditions and filled their prescription. We even went the extra mile by giving them new glasses so they could see clearly. In the dental department, 90% of our patients had tooth pain and/or gum disease. They wanted extractions and were so serve, In 2011, we would like to educate the SVG people about the importance of their teeth and gums and show them ways to preserve it. Remember your health starts with your mouth because this is the entrance for nourishment to the body.

Furthermore, as a health professional, I would like to discuss HIV/AIDS, which is a global pandemic that is of growing concern in the Caribbean. In fact, according to the WHO, of the 33-million people infected with the HIV/AIDS virus worldwide, approximately 240,000 live the Caribbean with 20,000 newly diagnosed and 12,000 deaths annually. Of great concern is the gender breakdown of HIV. HIV is higher in males, but overall, females under the age of 19 and between the ages of 65-69 are the group with vast amount of newly diagnosed cases. As a result of this high prevalence rate, the Caribbean has been and still is ranked the second MOST infected region in the world, second to sub-Sahara Africa.

To help combat this problem, education about HIV/AIDS is the key and therefore should to be taught across the board. It is important that our citizens fully understand the consequences of this disease. Note, there has been a steady decrease in deaths because of testing, early diagnosis and treatment. In SVG in 2009, 46% of infected patient died of HIV/AIDS as compared to 68% death in 2007

The only way we will be able to tackle these issues as well as crime in our country is by working together as a group to accomplish these goals. We cannot destroy our fellowmen, neighbors, families and friends or watch them destroy themselves. One way to begin this rehabilitation process is by first learning to recognize and say positive things about each other. As an example, if you are building a house, it is imperative that everyone communicate with each other and work toward a common goal. The architect, the contractor, the mason and the painter all have to know what role each other plays or the construction will be in complete chaos. Like this house, the people of SVG have to work together understanding their roles in order for our beloved country to progress; we need be begin right here - right now in 2010 and going forward.

On behalf of the Caribbean medical mission we would like to say thank you to Donald Thomas for the co-ordinator of the Caribbean Medical Mission in SVG

Thank you very much! For your time

Dr. Jacqueline Gaymes-Jones