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With More Than 1 Million Jamaicans Living in NY, NJ and PA, New US Ambassador to Jamaica Eyes Improved Diaspora Relations

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Deandra Goss **November 03, 2019**

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JAMAICA -- In his first official speech, recently appointed United States Ambassador to Jamaica, Donald Tapia discussed growth and development plans for the island. He also encouraged Jamaicans overseas to come home and do their part. Mr. Tapia reflected on the profound cultural and economic ties between Jamaica and the United States of America.

An official welcome reception was held in his honor at the AC Marriott Hotel in Saint Andrew on October 25. Members of the government, including the Foreign Affairs Minister, Kamina Johnson Smith as well as representatives from corporate Jamaica were

present.

Building the Country

According to Mr. Tapia, there are more than one million Jamaicans living in the States of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania and these migrant-rich eastern states could provide a source for the more rapid development of the island. He further pointed out that these Jamaicans could be using their wealth and knowledge to build the country. He implored Jamaicans living in America to return to their homeland and develop the country's intellectual and skill capital.

"We need to attract them to come back home and build their future here and to bring their wealth and knowledge here. This is something that I am really strong on," he insisted.

The Impact of Brain Drain

This phenomena of living overseas is not strange to Jamaicans nor the people of the Caribbean. "Brain drain" is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as the situation in which large numbers of educated or skilled people leave their own country to live and work in other countries where there are better economic and social conditions are significantly better.

Growth, Education and Development Plans

Mr. Tapia went on to express concerns about several key areas related to the island's development, noting that there was potential for stronger cooperation between the States.

He noted the importance of the education of young people in the mission to increase development in the country.

"This is their country, and we have to make sure they know the pride of their country. They will stay here if we instill that in them," he said.

Other Concerns

He also mentioned the issue of working to bring down the cost of electricity in an effort to help locals and also open more opportunities for the island by attracting investors. The ambassador expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome and his commitment to improved bilateral relations.

Mr. Tapia succeeds Luis Moreno as the ambassador to Jamaica.