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## LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND HOMELESSNESS

“A nation is judged by the way it treats its most vulnerable citizens”.

The Government of Jamaica ought to be aware of the strategic value of caring for its most vulnerable to the transformation of the Jamaican society and the critical role that local governance must play in reshaping the social and economic landscape of the country.

Homelessness and issues such as the health services, housing solutions, Education and the environment should figure prominently in reversing the cycle of poverty and access to basic services for the most vulnerable in our society.

In November of 2016 Jamaica will once again have the opportunity to deal with local governance issues as we prepare to invest 228 individuals with the responsibility to address and manage the resources and intellect that should assist in improving the quality of life for ALL citizens within the communities that they will represent.

Across Jamaica today, we can justly be ashamed of the rising numbers of disenfranchised Jamaicans particularly as it relates to the now over 2000 persons residing in abject poverty on the streets across all parishes in the country especially in prominent urban centres. The reality is that homelessness has had the patronage of numerous operatives over many decades, with the result that the scourge only continuously become worse over time. There are “shelters” “soup kitchens” and ad hoc groups that pander to the “needs” of the homeless at their convenience and many times for the photo opportunity that the “feeding event” can provide.

There will be formal debates this local government election period. These debates by agenda will focus on everything but, the basic impacting issue of poverty and homelessness on the governance structure as it relates to meaningful sustainable solutions to this long outstanding scar on our social system.

There is little or no evidence to suggest that government supported relief systems have substantially solved or reduced the issue of homelessness over decades –to the contrary the statistics have shown that the numbers of homeless continue to increase. As an advocate for the “voiceless” homeless we contend that the time has come for a private sector driven united front to be adopted to separate and care of the mentally challenged homeless as against providing hope, dignity and occupation while introducing accountability and responsibility in a permanent sustainable housing solution to the more healthy and motivated homeless individuals .The provision of a community for homeless persons under our proposed National Empowerment Shelter Transformation (NEST) Program is being suggested as a practical solution to homelessness in Jamaica.

The proposed NEST program while subsidized by the government would be an agricultural and vocation based residential environment that would continue to attract donors and volunteers, to include former homeless persons who would themselves become useful mentors and assistants.

We all naturally feel sympathy for the plight of the homeless. The solution to homelessness, however, cannot be seen as more continuous ineffective platitude from government.

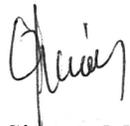
Homelessness can be prevented or significantly reduced if those who really care, assist those who are vulnerable, to develop self-discipline and become motivated to a re-socialized state of mind. The process will not necessarily be “easy”, however, there are several engaged private organizations who are already doing good work in this area that need to unite and consolidate gains as we contemplate the establishment of a holistic program for a final solution to the issue of homelessness.

We implore all prospective local representatives at this time to engage the issue of homelessness and support the NEST Program. We further say to the “caring” Government that in keeping with our promise , a very good place to demonstrate sincerity is to elevate our homeless “from Poverty to Prosperity” through the full support for a “NEST” Program.

Further details of the NEST concept can be gleaned from our website at [www.unitejamaicapeople.com](http://www.unitejamaicapeople.com).

Regards

Unite Jamaica People

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simone Myrie', written in a cursive style.

Simone Myrie

President.