

# "Rebuilding from within"

Keynote address at the National Alliance Congress

Sunday April 13th 2014

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## \*Opening\*

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Where I come from, age is considered as a special privilege worthy of our respect and lasting appreciation so before I begin, I would like to ask the most senior male and female in the audience for their permission to speak. Distinguished invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, candidates, members, supporters and visitors a good afternoon and blessed Sunday to each and everyone. First off I wish to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to the organizing committee and by extension the National Alliance Faction for inviting to me to deliver the key note address entitled **"REBUILDING FROM WITHIN"** at the Congress. Before I go on, I wish to acknowledge the presence of my Prime Minister: Her noble Majesty Ms Rita "Malkia" Pantophlet and my father, mentor His Excellency Prophet James Edwin Arrindell. Of course I also want to acknowledge the presence of my son Prince Rasheed Imhotep Arrindell. Last but not least, two very important ladies in my life that has contributed significantly to my personal development and continuously broaden my mental horizons namely My loving and supportive aunt, Ms. Patricia Pantophlet and my former 5th grade teacher Ms. Harriett Green. Ladies and gentlemen, I owe each of them a debt a gratitude for their continued patience, support, timeless insight and supervision is why I am able to stand here before you today.

During those dark, and turbulent moments when I was overcome by anxiety, uncertainty, depression, de-motivation and being lost they were/ still are my parachute, life jacket and anchor. I needed to share that with you all because **"Any river that forgets its source will dry up"**. Therefore I dare not be ungrateful to all they have done and continue help me to become a better human being & father, and most of all a productive citizen of this great nation. (Let the people say: AMEN!!) **Ladies & Gentlemen**, my intention this afternoon is to share just a few thoughts with you about the importance of "Rebuilding from within". Rebuilding from within can occur on different levels however for the sake of time we will confine our interest to two complimentary and critical priorities namely: 1) Rebuilding within the Party and 2) Rebuilding with the Party's Grass roots support. Before I get into the "meat and potatoes" of the topic, it is necessary to share a few passing observations and a very brief appraisal of our socio-economic conditions and experience since the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles almost 4 years ago. Generally speaking, if you were to take an **opinion poll** today it might reveal that a large group might strongly agree that the current situation on St. Maarten leaves much to be desired and raises more questions than answers. Some would assert that, in essence, the gap between what was promised and actually delivered is steadily widening. From unjustifiable inequality particularly in wealth distribution of material and social resources, the continued abuse of the 6 month contract, high

cost of living, staggering unemployment, brutal austerity measures, democratic deficits, overemphasis on attracting foreign investments instead of **treating tax payers as investors**. At times it almost seems as though justice and equality is reserved and enjoyed by a privileged few, and by the stroke of a pen, one group or class, intent on securing political and economic power, makes long term decisions at times to the detriment of countless unborn generations. That the fundamental needs of our society, natural environment and cultural heritage is subordinated to the elusive quest for economic growth and modernity. Where there seems to be a "calculated system of prejudice" against, among others, mature & young professionals vs. expats from developed countries on the labor market, policies that discourage persons/families from purchasing their first home, small turn key businesses. Regrettably, today the common perception is that individuals enter into public office merely to enrich themselves, go on many trips, earn a handsome salary and become above the law. Others will tell you, rather bluntly, that they'll give their support to a particular candidate or party with the expectation to share in the spoils if they win. More importantly, in my view there is no future for any society where its electorate is passive, fearful, distracted, in denial or apolitical and allows representatives to rule with impunity. For to remain on this slippery path is to flirt with and orchestrate our own demise. Apart from that, a to significant extent public trust in the political process, confidence in

Parliament and the Executive branch is gradually deteriorating to the point where some persons have become apolitical, unreachable and disenfranchised. Quite frankly some persons feel betrayed by the policy decisions and action of their party. More importantly, a growing section of the residents of St. Maarten are not feeling any better off than they did a few years ago. Others strongly believe that many political parties are out of touch with the people and only "come around once every 4 years". Remarkably, that's when we see "them" literally falling over themselves to whisper sweet nothings in your ear with the hope of occupying a prominent position within your mental space. Now please don't get upset with for saying this, but I think we need to have this discussion. Sometimes the bitter is a healing. Naturally, I would be remiss if I failed to mention that on the other side of the coin progress is being made within Government from sound investments in education, sports, foreign relations, closer ties with our northern counter parts and who can ignore the laudable proposals for consumer protection agency, the small claims court and hard work of the countless volunteers & NGOs that are making salient contributions within their respective community. Now, the intention of illuminating the aforementioned observations was to identify a few areas where the Party must concentrate its energy and generate people centered approaches and solutions to these experiences and alarming concerns. In better words, there is no time like now to REBUILD FROM WITHIN! **(tell the person next**

**to you: we are "REBUILDING FROM WITHIN")** The act of rebuilding is a natural physiological process. The wonders of the human body testifies to this fact. According to research, the human body immediately goes to work on its own within seconds to heal fractures, injuries and illnesses. Equally mind blowing to me at-least is the fact that a once fractured bone is known to either return to its previous strength or become way stronger. Besides that, persons that have been married longer than I am alive will tell you that ever so often they must go on a couples retreat to REBUILD and strengthen their relationship, rekindle their passions, get through conflicts or simply develop new objectives and priorities for the coming year. Failure to do such, brings with it unhealthy stress, misunderstanding and drama. Who can ever forget the devastating effects of **hurricane Louis back in 1995? You will recall that** the international community held a moment of silence for this nation because they said that we are dead. Nations sent aircrafts to evacuate their citizens. But what did we do? Simple, WE began to REBUILD THIS NATION FROM WITHIN with vision, our hard work, discipline and determination the people lifted themselves and nation out of chaos. So I dare say that if you want to see the sterling worth of St. Maarten people simply watch what happens when their back is against the wall. As a matter of fact, most of us here will bear witness to the fact that finding the strength and courage to activate our divine powers, particularly after our faith has been tested by a traumatic episode, is not only a form of

rebuilding our soul but also a spiritual act. You know why? Because deep down inside, each of us wants to restore that which is ruined, replenish that which is depleted strengthen that which is weakened and set straight any perception of wrong doing in our lives, community and in our relationship to the Creator. Distinguished invited guests I feel the need to pause and state here that if my remarks hint at being "sermon-like" yet grounded in **Nationalism, Activism and Empowerment its because** father is a Prophet and my mother's family consists of staunch trade unionists and revolutionaries such as Patricia Pantophlet, Papa Godette of Curacao and Mr. Selwyn Humphrey, a rank and file soldier under the Honorable Maurice Bishop in Grenada. So the rest is history is suppose! In sum, rebuilding from within does not necessarily mean that something is wrong or broken. It simply means that you and I are not satisfied and simply want more out of life, and are driven by a higher purpose and higher expectations of yourself and others and continuously maximizing your potential even if it means coming out of your comfort zone. You know why? Simple, we must develop a culture that detests ignorance and smallness of imagination. How else are we to advance as a people? Now, it is absolutely critical that we understand that in any democracy the fundamental roles and functions of political parties includes, but is not limited to, developing policy proposals, to monitor the actions of Government, to promote the genuine and sustainable progress of this nation, mobilize and energize its members,

foster democratic development and most importantly to govern in the best interest of the entire nation along the cherished principles of Social equality, Solidarity and Freedom for ALL citizens regardless of race, creed, religion, gender or political affiliation. Ultimately, a stronger democracy where the people will decide, not just every 4 years, on major social, economic, and political decisions, depends on a stronger and the perseverance of the National Alliance Party. Ladies and gentlemen, as a nation-state the political landscape, culture and developments on St. Martin is dynamic and continuously changing. Therefore it is imperative that this Party, if it is to survive, expand and remain relevant must constantly re-assess its strategies and if necessary challenge its most cherished beliefs, re-examine unconscious attitudes, core values and modus operandi. Now let me pause here and point out that this does not suggest that the party is weak or sinking as some political pundits love to assume. Sometimes "rebuilding" warrants that we step back, shut off ourselves from everyone, close our eyes and look within and perform an internal analysis. Such an internal analysis is always critical as it sharpens our focus, identify opportunities and strengthens our resolve. If not, we might find ourselves constantly in motion but not making progress, orchestrating our own demise or worse yet furthering the objectives of others. **(Tell your neighbor we are "Rebuilding from within")** As an organization, it means that higher priority must be placed on continuously engaging and raising

the political intelligence of the community especially its supporters, those at home and abroad, be it in or out of an election year. This in itself may also serve as an effective method to boost grass roots participation, ensure growth targets and establish deeper roots in our society. Undoubtedly, the outcomes of such action will crystallize into a shared purpose, vision and culture of trust which are vital ingredients for cooperation and collaboration. Additionally, Rebuilding from within comes with a mandate and must rest on the conviction that we must **“breed what we need”** in order to reduce our dependency on external aid, expertise or the good will of others and instead rely on our own strengths, competencies and material resources in order to advance the program of the party and consciously influence situations to produce desired outcomes. So in better words, if we need visionary leadership with integrity capable of navigating this country through the uncharted waters of the next decade or century, then we must produce them NOW. **NO MORE EXCUSES!!** So what does this mean? it is always good to follow the press briefings and public debates and read the various reports in the daily newspapers but at some point we must be cognizant of the urgent need to develop, maintain and expand Party based communications to ensure that the Party's message is articulated and image jealously protected from the assaults from insincere corners in our society. Most of all it is to ensure that the general public does not forget about the Party's past achievements, position on various policy issues and

initiatives. Brothers and sisters, we must as a people understand the urgency of now! Nature does not reward consumers, only producers and so self reliance and taking initiative has its own rewards. The question that begs to be asked is: what type of membership and party is needed today? From a grass roots perspective rebuilding from within demands the focused application of our material and mental resources and energies. It also means that sooner rather than later any and all behaviors that weakens the Party's resolve must be eliminated. This includes fending off base desires such as envy, jealousy, individualism, subtle intrigues, opportunism and greed! It is unnatural and counterintuitive to proclaim that we love this island yet engage in such odious and destructive behaviors. More importantly, it must be forcefully understood that such tendencies have been the constant enemies of our progress as a collective. It follows logically that there is an urgent need to continually develop behaviors, a subculture, values, institutions to advance the collective interest of the group and so of the nation. I doubt anyone in the audience can or would deny that. In order to be effective, supporters must be dedicated, passionate, energetic and informed and ready to submerge ones personal interests to that of the Party's' Principles and Program. Please do not underestimate the importance of your role since it is your input, commitment and experience on the front lines that assists the Party with invaluable facts and at times viable alternatives regarding important policy

decisions. You will agree that, to place all the responsibility squarely on the broad shoulders of the board is unrealistic. The life and future success of the party cannot hinge upon the board or leadership. As supporters and potential members you will have the awesome task and responsibility to contribute towards the decision making, governance and development and execution of sustainable programs tailored to the needs of your respective community! It is up to each and every one to make a salient contribution toward this end. This means that more will be expected, and everyone might be called upon to double their efforts very soon. In my view, if the party is to expand members and supporters must religiously contribute towards the financing of party initiatives. As my aunt would often tell me that "MANNA DONT DROP FROM THE SKY ANY MORE". Such funding must not only contribute towards political campaigns but must be earmarked for regular community based activities and investing in upgrading the technical skills of supporters and volunteers thereby allowing them to make a more meaningful contribution to the Party and ultimately the nation. **Just know that "One day is a donation to eternity, one hour is a contribution to the future".I am appealing to the candidates when I say that** Rebuilding from within calls for discipline and devotion to study and obedience to duty, party principles and the demands of the people. You have set out to make a lasting and positive impact on your society and must prove yourself worthy of our hopes and represent the aspirations, desires and ambitions of

the masses. Yes this includes even those that did not vote for you, even those that have made a career to slander the party or your person and even those that pray for your demise. You are charged with the task of protecting and elevating the standard of living and the quality of life for generations to come. Therefore you must be vigilant always and constantly watch your behavior. My advice to you is to always seek the counsel of your most trusted elders. As the saying goes "an elder sees further than a person on a hill". This might sound peculiar but I want to impress upon the candidates in particular to not only measure your victory in terms of votes casts in your favor and seats acquired in this election but also by the tangible results that you render to the next **two** generations. This is the call of the NEW St. Maarten Statesmen and Stateswomen! Will you answer? By now I hope that all your doubts and fears have melted away and you have become resolved in your heart and spirit. Because as someone told me "God and fear cannot occupy the same space". Each of you must contribute to the advancement of good governance and a social agenda that is innovative, inclusive and sustainable. Most of all it must be anchored in our culture, heritage, experiences and aspirations of the people and not a particular class or family. On behalf of my family I wish you all much spiritual strength from the Almighty Creator and may you jump over and walk around every obstacle but most of all may you get the strength to break every invisible chains for there are many and there will be many

more. In closing, I do hope that these words has served its purpose to rekindle your purpose and recharge your courage and fortify your spirit in preparation for the coming weeks and months. **If we aim to rebuild this great nation and return it to its past glory for future generations then, to some extent rebuilding the party from within is imperative!** We must UNDERSTAND, OVERSTAND and INNERSTAND and constantly keep this in the upper most corner in our minds. Long live the people of St. Maarten, Forward Ever, Backward Never!! One God, One Aim One Destiny. I have the honor to be your most humble and obedient servant! Thank you!!!