



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

**MESSAGE TO THE NATION BY
DR THE HONOURABLE KEITH ROWLEY, MP
PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
ON THE OCCASION OF
SPIRITUAL SHOUTER BAPTIST LIBERATION DAY 2016**

The oppressed don't stay oppressed forever. Somewhere deep within, the instinct for justice, for equality and freedom overrides the fear of consequences and reprisals, driving mass movements for change until the goal is accomplished.

Our Spiritual Shouter Baptist community is one such group whose history is dominated by discrimination, suppression, brutality and injustice. For thirty-four years –from 1917 to 1951- the Shouter Baptists were harshly prevented from practising their faith. The passing of the Bill to repeal the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance on March 30, 1951 restored to the Shouter Baptist community their long denied right of freedom of worship, ending another dark period of legally supported victimization and marginalization of citizens of this country.

In commemorating your long, arduous walk to freedom, on behalf of the people and Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I wish the Spiritual Shouter Baptist Community a joyous Spiritual Shouter Baptist Liberation Day.

Similar to many countries worldwide, Trinidad and Tobago's evolution to Nationhood has witnessed several periods of pervasive inhumanity, characterized by institutionalized aggression against a specific sector of the society.

What I regard as remarkable for our small country is that, over time, once the injustice has been made right, we as a people have sought to recognize and integrate formerly marginalized groups into the national community.

So today we stand in solidarity and share in the celebrations of the Spiritual Baptist Community. Later in the year we will continue to observe several milestones and traditions which highlight our country's enviable, rich diversity.

The determination and perseverance of the Shouter Baptist community- often you had to worship in secret, while the Ordinance was in force- remain as a reminder to all of us to stand firm for what we believe.

It took courage to continue to practise your faith. It took a strong will to fight the Government of the day and it took wisdom and vision to see a positive outcome, no matter how hard the struggle you endured.

You have given to us a unique religion, one of the few religions indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago. The rhythms of your songs of praise have infused our music. Your struggle will not be forgotten.

Once again, on behalf of the Government and citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, I extend to all practitioners of the Spiritual Shouter Baptist faith a blessed Spiritual Shouter Baptist Liberation Day. Your struggle and triumph enrich all of us as a Nation.