

IN THE PRESS



Let's move on from debate to action

It's the same story – a different year, different characters, but the story remains the same.

It's sometimes called the Jamaican Patois versus English debate. Other times, it's called the patois debate. And here we go again: This time, the characters are the Opposition spokesperson on creative industries, culture, and information Nekeisha Burchell and House Speaker Juliet Holness.

On Wednesday, Burchell rose in the House to make her contribution to the sectoral debate. She began by saying, "Madam Speaker, mi git up dis afta noon fi mek mi fuss sectoral speech pon mi porfolia..." Shortly thereafter she was interrupted by the House Speaker, who reminded her about the Standing Orders. The Standing Orders of the House of Representatives (1964) state that, "The proceedings and debates of the House shall be in the English Language," and "Every petition shall be in the English Language."

Some linguists may point out that Burchell used the basilectal variety of the Jamaican language. This variety is what some Jamaicans may say is spoken by some St Elizabeth residents.

I support Burchell in starting her presentation in Jamaican Patois, but my first reaction was that it seemed performed or staged. I pointed this out to Hubert Devonish, professor emeritus of linguistics, who said, "Jamaican doesn't have a parliamentary style since it has never been used in Parliament in this way before. The parliamentarian is creating a parliamentary style for the language. You might not like it, and others might not either, and she will try something else until a norm is developed."

The professor was also right in pointing out the need to start somewhere. By the way, did you know that the English language was first spoken in the Parliament of England in 1362? Before then, Anglo-Norman French was spoken in that Parliament. In fact, the word Parliament is derived from the French word "parler", which means "to speak" or "to talk". In the same way, some time ago, English was considered the language of the educated in Jamaica; French was also the language of the Norman French aristocracy who conquered England in 1066 and ruled it thereafter for centuries.

In Jamaica, this was not the first time Jamaican Patois was used in parliamentary proceedings. Remember when Opposition Leader Mark Golding was chided for his use of “respek due”. Burchell’s use of the Jamaican language in Parliament is also in line with her political party’s stance on its officialisation, and is a reflection of the modern-day perception of the language.

From the 1930s to early 1970s, the perception of the Jamaican language was mainly that it was bad English and people who spoke patois were uneducated. With Independence, national pride, and so forth, the perception of the Jamaican language has become more positive, but not everyone is accepting of it as a language in its own right. Some people still believe that it’s not a language, and the people advocating for its officialisation should just stop talking.

Whatever your belief, moments like the one created by Burchell in Parliament are a step towards officialisation. The Jamaican language is spoken by the majority of Jamaicans in Jamaica and the Diaspora. It’s an identity marker. On the streets of Rome, an artist told me that he knew the Jamaican language. I was intrigued and stopped to hear what he had to say, only to hear him blurt out a popular Jamaican profanity and laugh at my expression. My response was that of shock and disappointment. He was satisfied because he knew the effect such an outburst would have on me.

We spoke a bit after and he told me how much he liked hearing the Jamaican Patois. It’s moments like these that remind me how some foreigners view our language. Many Jamaicans will agree that when travelling overseas people want to hear them speak.

Jamaicans are considered by some to be bilingual, yet Jamaica continues to deny the widespread use of the language in official proceedings in formal domains like Parliament. And yes, the Jamaican language is used on the campaign trail during elections. It is also used to hurl insults across the aisle during House sittings, but it is not considered an option for formal presentations. How dare Burchell!

Burchell’s presentation is perhaps another sign that it’s time for Jamaica to take the conversation to the next level. The officialisation of Jamaican Patois alongside English is inevitable. After all, it’s the mother tongue of the majority of Jamaicans and should be recognised in an official capacity.

Let’s now move on from questioning whether we should officialise the language to determining how we will do it and the steps we should take to make Jamaican Patois stand alongside English in Jamaica.

“Fly di gate!” This time, it is not the pirate you will be letting in, but the language of the majority.

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[OPINION & COMMENTARY]

Use radio to develop the J'can language and vice versa



Nadine McLeod
GUEST COLUMNIST

PATTERNER OFF the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), traditionally, the programme structure and content of Jamaican radio were mainly British. So, too, were the voices of the presenters.

Retired and currently adjunct University of the West Indies (UWI) senior lecturer, Dr Kathryn Shields Brodber noted that on-air media personnel in the early days of Jamaican radio were mostly British or British-trained. Likewise, veteran broadcaster and former UWI lecturer Alma Mock-Yen pointed out that the "tone" of ZQJ, Jamaica's first radio station, was BBC. This would continue even after ZQJ was acquired by the Government and later became RRI.

However, the Jamaican language, also known as Patwa/Patois and Jamaican Creole, entered this once sacred domain of broadcasting from as early as 1940, a mere two years after John Grinan introduced radio broadcasting to the island. It is not clear whether it was an on-air presenter or a caller who stirred a writer of a letter to *The Gleaner's* editor to complain about someone on the Jamaica Broadcasting Station. The writer described the speaker's talk as an attempt "to destroy and corrupt the King's English in such a crude manner" with "Patois sounding quite so bad" (*The Gleaner*, 1940).

Such was the sentiment of many Jamaicans at that time. Speaking the Jamaican language was frowned upon, and any parent who wanted upward mobility for his/her child would ensure that that child spoke "properly": speaking properly was tantamount to speaking English; speaking badly was synonymous with speaking the Jamaican language. The perception of the language arose from

'Despite linguists explaining what a language is and why the Jamaican language would fit the criteria, some Jamaicans refuse to accept the Jamaican language as a language in its own right.'

our colonial experience and continues until today.

Despite linguists explaining what a language is and why the Jamaican language would fit the criteria, some Jamaicans refuse to accept the Jamaican language as a language in its own right. They point out that many of the words used in the Jamaican language come from English and that therefore, Jamaican is not a language. These Jamaicans perhaps ignore the fact that English has borrowed heavily from Latin, French, and many other languages. But languages generally borrow from other languages. It is the nature of languages.

COMMONPLACE ON JAMAICAN RADIO

So much has happened on the Jamaican media landscape over the past 81 years. Media liberalisation has resulted in a vast increase in radio stations. Jamaicans have become more culturally aware, and many of them are accepting of their language. The Jamaican language is now commonplace on Jamaican radio. However, the formal formats of radio, such as news and current-affairs programmes have maintained English as their primary medium of communication.

One exception is seen with a newscast in Jamaican and English called 'braadkyas 'Jamekan', on NewsTalk 93 FM. This is not



So much has happened on the Jamaican media landscape over the past 81 years. Media liberalisation has resulted in a vast increase in radio stations. FILE

new, IRIE FM experimented with presenting the news in the Jamaican language, as well as its predecessor, Radio Central, in 1983. However, those attempts were short-lived for various reasons.

To say the Jamaican language is not used at all in formal radio formats on more popular stations would be far from the truth as the language plays a subordinate role in these styles of programming. It is usually placed in the mouths of speakers such as the wailing mother whose son was shot dead by police or the rural resident who has not had water for two decades. It is also placed in the mouths of speakers whose English competence is unquestionable but for the specific reason to connect with the common man.

It is yet to be placed in the mouths of the news presenters of the more popular news packages. That would cause quite a stir among many Jamaicans, some of whom are themselves speakers of the language. I believe that what should cause an even bigger commotion among Jamaicans is

the fact that there are monolingual and near monolingual Creole speakers among us who are possibly not quite understanding the news or parts thereof. The 2007 Language Competence Survey of Jamaica found that 36.5 per cent of those surveyed were monolingual speakers of the Jamaican language.

This may be a surprise to some people, but not me. In my life as a former television news reporter, I have interviewed people who could not understand English words that bilingual speakers took for granted.

I recall an interview between a videographer and a farmer after flooding in Clarendon. The farmer called for the authorities to fix the drain close to her farm. The videographer asked her what had contributed to the flooding. The farmer paused then said, "A doan andastan yu." The videographer rephrased the question, and only then did he get an answer from the farmer. Albeit a small example of the misunderstanding of one word, it shows that words that may be taken for

granted by many people are not understood by others. This is just a microcosm of the situation.

This could mean that valuable public information delivered in English could be lost on some people. On this basis, I support the Jamaican Language Unit. In its thrust to make the Jamaican language official alongside English, this would make Jamaica a bilingual country, meaning that both languages would be used to present all public information, including the news.

ELEVATE THE CONVERSATION

While we consider granting the Jamaican language official status alongside English, let us elevate the conversation. I believe that this move would present an opportunity for the media to be used to develop the language and vice versa. Take a look at the Somali experience of 1943, for example, when the first frequent broadcast of world news in the Somali language started. Since the Somali language was never spoken on air in this format before then, it created some problems or opportunities, depending on which lens you are using. Among them was how to explain terms such as 'hydroelectric dams', 'short wave', and 'aesthetics', which were not in the Somali language.

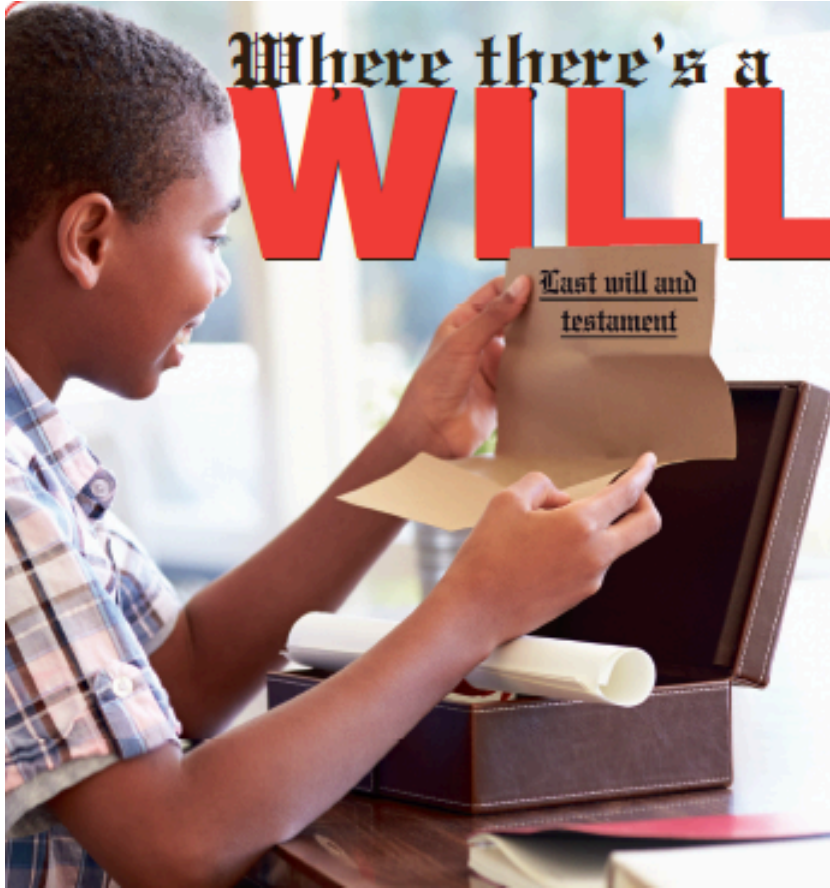
Poets, storytellers, folklorists, and other culturally minded people were asked to assist with these words. Many of them were illiterate and monolingual Somali language speakers. It was not uncommon for broadcasters to explain the meaning of an English or Italian word so that a Somali equivalent could be found. This not only assisted with the development of the language but also with improving the status of the language.

We do not have to go as far as Somalia for solutions. In Curaçao, Papiamentu, a Creole language spoken by the majority of the population in that country, is used extensively in the media. Papiamentu was made official in 2007.

It is time for Jamaicans to remove the shame and discrimination from the Jamaican language. Let us make Jamaica an officially bilingual country. #makejamaicanofficial #jodwit

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Where there's a WILL ...



Scores of children being denied share in estate because deceased parents failed to make provisions

Nadine Wilson-Harris
Staff Reporter

A FEAR of death is believed to be the main reason scores of Jamaicans do not make a will, but the hassle faced by those they leave behind to share their estate should give everyone reason to take stock.

"There is a culture in Jamaica where people do not want to make a will because they believe that if they make a will today, they are going to die tomorrow," noted Nadine McLeod, public education manager at the Administrator General's Department (AGD), during a Gleason Editors' Forum last week.

A will is the only sure way to ensure that the assets of the deceased are distributed as they desire, but officials of the AGD revealed that several Jamaicans fail to write a will, leaving their estates in limbo for years.

The AGD is tasked with managing the estates of Jamaicans who die without making a will, while leaving minors behind.

With the law recognizing the widow and children of the deceased, those who are outside of these categories often have to prove why they deserve a share of the assets. This can sometimes take months or years.

"When you die without a will, let's say you have six children with different birth orders and you didn't put your name on their birth certificates, then you are going to have a problem. Those children are going to have a problem to inherit," said senior legal



PHOTOS BY FREDOLPH DECONFRACOTIGNARIE
Patrick Wright, finance and planning executive at the AGD.



"There is a culture in Jamaica where people do not want to make a will because they believe that if they make a will today, they are going to die tomorrow."

— NADINE McLEOD

executive at the AGD Kodie Delahaye.

She noted that a will allows a man to declare what portion of his estate his wife should get and what should be allocated to his sweetheart — if he has one — or his mother, who might have contributed to his success while he was alive.

"When you die without a will, the sweetheart gets nothing. Unless she can show that she had contributed to you building up your assets, she gets nothing," said Delahaye.

"If you are not going to make the will, then keep your family life simple," advised Delahaye.

LONG PROCESS

When Jamaicans die intestate (without leaving a will), it is left to the Government to manage and divide their estates among established beneficiaries.

The AGD is currently managing assets and cash valued at approximately \$12 billion for persons who died without leaving wills and who left children behind.

"Estate administration is not a one-two-three process. It is very complicated,

and a lot of the requirements are based on law, and as such, we have to follow the law.

"Once a person dies, in order to even deal with the assets, you first have to get administration — either what we call letters of administration or a grant of probate — before we can even touch these estates, and those applications take probably a year or two in the courts," explained Delahaye.

"The court is overwhelmed, and remember, we are just one entity making applications. If we can make over 400 applications to the court per year, and we are just one entity, then you can imagine the flood of applications that they get over the year," added Delahaye.

Patrick Wright, finance and planning executive at the AGD, said Jamaicans can help to simplify the work of the agency by simply writing a will.

Wright also encouraged those who have already made wills to ensure that they are updated periodically.



Kodie Delahaye, senior legal executive at the AGD.

"When you die without a will, the sweetheart gets nothing. Unless she can show that she had contributed to you building up your assets, she gets nothing."

— DELAHAYE



Nadine McLeod, public education manager at the AGD.

MAKING A WILL

■ A will must be in writing, whether handwritten, typewritten, or computer-generated. Great care must be exercised by the testator that in the person who is making the will to express his/her wishes in plain, clear language.

■ The law requires that persons have the mental capacity to make a will. This means that the person must be over the age of 18 years, be of sound mind, and must make his will free from fraud, force, or duress.

■ Once you own something that has monetary value, you need to write a will. The asset must be fully identified. Instead of saying 'my car', for instance, you can describe it as 'my 1980 white Toyota motor car Licence No. 1234 AA'.

■ A testator must sign his name at the foot and end of the will in the presence of at least two witnesses, both being present at the same time while the testator is signing. Therefore, the witnesses must sign the will in the presence of the testator, though not necessarily in each other's presence. Failure to follow this procedure makes the will invalid.

■ If a testator is illiterate or blind and only capable of placing an 'X', the will must state that the will was read over to the testator and that he/she understood the contents of the will and then placed his/her 'X' in the presence of both witnesses.

■ An executor is the person named in a will who will be responsible for administering your estate. Anyone can be appointed an executor provided that there is at least one person so appointed and no more than four.

■ A will is revoked by the subsequent marriage of the testator. If you get married after writing your will, then it is crucial that you prepare and execute a new will.

■ You are free to change your will at any time, but you must ensure that after the new will is properly executed, the old one is destroyed.

■ You must ensure that a 'copy' of your will, often called a 'testamentary clause', is included in the last paragraph to ensure that somebody benefits from this clause. This clause usually commences with the words, 'I do and make of my estate I give and devise to...'

There are just some guidelines to aid you in making your will. Consult an attorney-at-law if you have any queries or need further assistance.



#Jamaica Together

COVID-19 has forced media players to become more creative. Let's continue to foster that sense of creativity. Also, let's not wait until there is another pandemic to deepen relationships with our loved ones.

— Nadine McLeod
Lecturer in Media and Communication Studies, UTech

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Creative

LET US NOT FORGET THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN LABOURING FOR US.

ON BEHALF OF TEAM CREATIVE & JAMAICA,
We Appreciate you!

EVEN APART WE STAND TOGETHER.

GET TOGETHER GET CREATIVE!

UWI FEE HIKE ALARM

JUTC job spree

Phillips warns bus company on collision course if it doesn't switch lanes



OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN on transport portfolio Mikael Phillips is demanding that the Ministry of Finance and Public Service take charge of the operations of the troubled Jamaica Urban Transit Company (JUTC) amid damning findings in an audit.

"JUTC will be dead by next year this time if we continue to operate it like this," the opposition spokesman warned.

His comments come as the JUTC board of directors has summoned

Russell Hadeed, chairman of the JUTC board. FILE

suggested a reliance on overtime by these employees," the auditor

Students may have to skip year as tuition costs jump more than \$100,000



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WOMEN TO WATCH IN 2012

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Nadine McLeod 2011 Journalist of the year

Journalist Nadine McLeod moved from the verge of leaving the profession she loved to vowing to **Flair** that now she would never leave it. She moved from the humiliation she encountered at every turn, being told she didn't have the voice for radio to her speech trainer telling her she could not help her, to being the 2011 journalist of the year.

Where do you see yourself in the next 12 months?

The Journalist of the Year award is an important achievement. Not only has it bolstered my confidence, but it marks what I hope will be a new chapter in my career.

There are so many new horizons to conquer, some of which I hope to begin doing this year. I have a passion for stories that require in-depth research and analysis, and hope to work on some of those stories this year.

I recently completed my Master of Arts degree in English language, and most of my research was focused on media, language and reporting. I hope to pursue more research in language and media. One thing I'm absolutely clear about is that I have no intention of leaving journalism now.

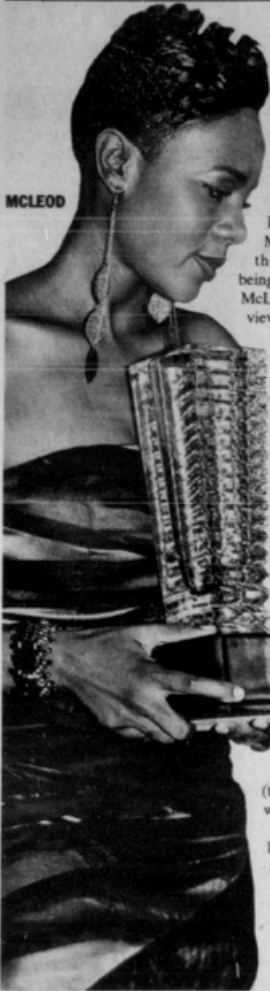
I realise that many persons have also faced struggles like I did in trying to get into media, with people telling them that they aren't cut out to be a journalist. All those criticisms only provide fodder for character building. I was thinking, if I was taken off air three times, and years later became a news presenter, then clearly God was preparing me for something. So in my opinion, I'm at a stage where God has given me an opportunity to tell my story.

What steps are you taking to get there?

I've started preliminary research for stories which I hope will touch lives.

What could help or hinder your achieving this goal?

Time constraints and the demands of the job may hinder or, at best, slow down the process.



MCLEOD

I almost left media - *McLeod*

FIVE YEARS ago Nadine McLeod was ready to give up the pursuit of her dream of being a journalist.

McLeod admitted, during an interview with *The Gleaner*, that she was at her wits' end in dealing with the criticisms and the humiliation she encountered at almost every turn.

She recalled instances when she was told quite bluntly she would not make it in broadcasting because she did not have "the voice for radio".

"Not only that, my voice and speech trainer at the time said she could not help me," she said.

A past student of Alpha Academy in Kingston, McLeod also recalled being told at least three times that she would not be allowed back on air. "After hearing that, I decided I was going to leave (the media) because this isn't working out for me," she said.

"For me that was just the lowest time ever in my career and I prayed for God to remove the passion for journalism from me," she added.

Fast-forward to 2011 when McLeod's outstanding work

with Television Jamaica (TVJ) led to her being named journalist of the year at the Press Association of Jamaica's annual banquet last Friday night.

With no plans to leave the media, McLeod described the award as humbling and said it would now serve as motivation for her to take her career to the next level.

She was also philosophical about her early struggles and said she wanted to tell her story so it could serve as an inspiration to others.

CHARACTER BUILDING

"All those things I have been through, I call them character building because I feel that God wanted me to go through them to appreciate my job now," she said.

Born and raised on Wildman Street, in central Kingston, McLeod said she loved to write and always wanted to know what was happening in her community, even though she had a sheltered childhood.

But the seed of journalism was not planted until she was hired as a production assistant on the popular morning programme, *The Breakfast Club*.

McLeod's big break came in 2006 when she was hired by TVJ as a one-year replacement for a reporter, Archibald Gordon (now news editor), who was going on study leave.

Since then she has not looked back, and credits veteran journalists Fae Ellington, Gillian Haughton and Arthur Hall for her success.



PHOTO BY MARTIN BAXTER

Gavin Watkis (left) and Douglas Orane conduct a class with first-form students at Wolmer's Boys' School in Kingston.

Wolmer's old boys 'Adopt A Class'

Martin Baxter
Gleaner Writer

TWO MEN stood in front of a classroom of 38 boys. In their hands was a lesson plan they had jointly formulated over the course of two weeks.

Teaching is not their primary profession, but for one day every fortnight they leave their corporate offices and travel to Wolmer's Boys' School in Kingston, the institution they had both graduated from 30 years apart.

The class they adopt biweekly is form 1W, and the lesson they teach is not a conventional one offered in any schools across Jamaica. Using stories from their own knowledge and experiences, they mentor the boys, ranging in age from 11 to 13, in the lesson of life.

Today's story was about being a man.

may be in other circumstances. I believe the values that carried Gavin and me forward in our lives and made us successful, if carried on to these youngsters, are going to make Jamaica a better place and them better people."

Watkis said: "Young boys are being dragged in a direction that isn't in the best interest of the society. I think it is very important that past students who have benefited from the guidance from the institutions, I think it's important that we give back and share our experiences to help Wolmerians and the society at large."

One of the boys, eager to share his experiences with *The Gleaner*, said his mentors teach him lessons he cannot learn elsewhere.

"We've learned how to be a gentleman and how to treat women differently and about aspects of procrastination," said 12-year-old G'OVani McCalla.



Press Association of Jamaica Journalist of the Year (2011), TVJ's Nadine McLeod.

Country not ready for media endorsement of political parties

JOURNALIST of the Year 2011, Nadine McLeod, has suggested that Jamaicans are not yet ready to handle the endorsement of political parties by the local media.

McLeod said there were allegations from the public that media houses were partial to political parties and asked "...if there's any truth to allegations that some media houses or journalists are partisan, then why don't media houses outrightly endorse a political party or a candidate? After all, there's free speech and it is accepted in other parts of the world".

The *Television Jamaica (TVJ)* journalist was speaking on the State of the Media, a feature of the annual National Journalism Awards last Friday night at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel in New Kingston. She topped her colleagues for the award of Journalist of the Year based on an outstanding body of work over the past year.

McLeod noted that in the 2004 US presidential election campaign, both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* had endorsed Democratic Party nominee Senator John Kerry in their editorials. Just last week Sunday, New Hampshire's largest newspaper openly endorsed

former House speaker Newt Gingrich who is running for the 2012 GOP presidential nomination.

"It's quite common in some places in Africa. In Sierra Leone, journalists say it's the norm. Back home here in Jamaica, we have to ask a question — is our population politically mature enough to deal with this practice? And will the practice compromise objectivity?"

"For some, the question about why media houses and journalists do not endorse candidates or political parties may seem outrageous. Tonight, I ask the question, not only to highlight the outrage in endorsing only one viewpoint — and let me qualify, outrage at this time in history — but also to suggest that if media houses or journalists are secretly engaging in this kind of practice, it does not benefit the profession.

"If whatever you do secretly, as it relates to your job, cannot be done openly, then a red flag should immediately go up in your mind," she insisted.

— Desmond Allen