



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Taj Weekes and TOCO bring the Clothesline Project to St. Lucia to Raise Awareness of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence

Taj Weekes and They Often Cry Outreach (TOCO) collaborate with the Division of Gender Relations, the Crisis Centre and HTS/Radio 100 to bring the Clothesline Project to St. Lucia to raise awareness of domestic violence

New York, NY - April 30, 2010 - The site of freshly hung "laundry" strung across clotheslines throughout Derek Walcott Square in St. Lucia's capitol city, Castries, last month had many passersby curious and confused. Those who ventured into the square soon discovered a presentation of the Clothesline Project, which aimed to raise awareness of domestic and gender-based violence on the island. St. Lucian artist Taj Weekes and his nonprofit, They Often Cry Outreach (TOCO), were responsible for initiating the project which was presented in collaboration with the Division of Gender Relations, the Crisis Centre and HTS/Radio 100.

Weekes had been moved by a presentation of the Clothesline Project in the U.S., which was started on Cape Cod, MA in 1990 to address the issue of violence against women. "In the Caribbean, domestic violence is the sort of thing that is hidden behind closed doors. So this is merely a way of starting a conversation in an effort to bring it out in the open. Hopefully, we can keep talking about it and move toward a direction where it's an open thing and people are not afraid to say they're being abused," Weekes explains.

Members of the public had the opportunity to express their emotions or anti-violence messages with paint on T-shirts, which were then hung to dry on clotheslines in the Square, bearing witness to the survivors as well as the victims of domestic violence. Walking through the lines of T-shirts waving in the breeze was an emotional experience for many and those needing a place to rest away from the crowds were directed to tents where counselors from the Crisis Centre offered their time and support.

National archivist Margot Thomas's shirt read: "It only takes one to stop the violence, let it be you!" Weekes added, "With this kind of project, we are giving people the opportunity to see that they are not alone, that there are other victims who are also suffering. Having a network of supporters is equally important to stopping this violence and educating people about what is acceptable and what is not." Weekes finished with the words he added to his T-shirt, "Let love rule your heart."

The afternoon event also offered a stirring poetry reading by Marcel Johnson entitled, "Deflowered and Still Bleeding." Messages of solidarity were delivered by Weekes, Valerie Albert-Poyotte of Education International, Charms Gaspard of the Department of Gender Relations, Anthony Avril of the St. Lucia Blind Welfare Association, the International Men's Network, FAITH, the International Women's Support Center and the Crisis Centre.

Louise Victor, general secretary of the National Youth Council, believed the activity was just one small step that can lead to eradicating a giant common problem. St. Lucia's Minister of Home Affairs and National Security, Guy Mayers, left the gathering with the message that change started with one person. "Respect the rights of each other... love your spouses and take care of the children," he said. "Be part of the solution, not the problem." Calypsonian Lady Leen closed the proceedings with a rendition of her "woman power" anthem, "Woman in a March."

They Often Cry Outreach (TOCO) is a U.S.-based not-for-profit organization founded by St. Lucian artist Taj Weekes and is dedicated to improving the lives of underprivileged, at-risk and orphaned children in the Caribbean through sport, enrichment, educational and wellness programs. For more information on TOCO, please visit www.theyoftencryoutreach.org.

MEDIA CONTACT: Sarah Scott - Jatta Records- Tel: (805) 403-5973
Email: sarahscott@jattarecords.com Website: www.theyoftencryoutreach.org, www.tajweekes.com