

GOVERNOR CAPES' SPEECH TO PRINCE ANDREW SCHOOL STUDENTS

COMMONWEALTH DAY 2014

I hope that you will find a moment later to read Her Majesty's message. There is one point in the message that prompts me to raise with you now an important issue that I want you to consider. In the message the Queen notes:

People of all ages from different cultures are weaving an ever-growing network of links which connect us in our diversity and our common purpose.

The Commonwealth family encompasses 70 countries and territories, that's many millions of people of different cultures, religion and colour - that is the diversity mentioned by the Queen.

In most countries today diversity is celebrated for the positive contribution it makes to enrich our lives.

You will understand how it follows that racism or prejudice at any level has no place in societies that value diversity. Indeed, in most developed countries, including the UK, there are strong penalties for those who think it's OK to make racist remarks about their fellow citizens - such behaviour is a criminal offence and often referred to as a 'hate crime'.

So why am I raising this with you this morning? Why, because I want all of you to know that to make remarks about someone because of their colour, language, religion or culture, remarks which are hurtful or offensive to that person, or to anyone else, is totally unacceptable. It is not clever or funny. If there any among you who think it is clever or funny, I urge you to wise up, and quickly; before you land yourself in trouble.

To any one of you who is hurting because of abuse based on your colour, race or religion, or indeed for any other reason such as a disability, or if you are being bullied, please don't suffer in silence, report it to your teacher and your parents, or to someone else that you can trust to take action on your behalf.

Part of the Commonwealth family, St Helena has a wonderfully rich and colourful history. It is something of a melting pot of races, made up of people from many ethnic backgrounds. With air access coming ever closer, just two years away now, so too is the world coming closer, bringing new opportunities and new challenges.

Let's make sure that our society is strong and confident, but also caring and respectful of others, ready to embrace change in the increasingly multicultural world.

So today my message to all of you is this; from today, 'Team Commonwealth Day', make this the day on which you start to play your part in helping to end any abuses in our community.

Play your part in promoting respect for others. Because the only way you will truly earn respect for yourself is by showing it to others in the first place.

Thank you for listening. Enjoy your 'Team Commonwealth' day and be sure to help ensure that everyone can enjoy the day.

Governor Mark Capes
10 March 2014