

Jamaica Jostles for Top Spot in World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC 2022)



L-R: Mattheu White (Missing), Jordaina Denton, Ronaldhino McLean, Jacey Henry, Marion Brown  
(VP, Registrar - UTech, Ja.), Germaine Barrett (team manager), Ronaldo Blake (coach)

The umbrella organisation for debating in Jamaica, Jamaican Association for Debating and Empowerment(JADE) Limited, facilitated the participation of five (5) students in the World Schools' Debating Championship (WSDC) 2022, during the period August 7 to August 18,2022. Team Jamaica comprised five students, namely: Mattheu White (Cornwall College), Jordaina Denton (Immaculate Conception High School), Ronaldhino McLean (Campion College), Jacey Henry (Titchfield High School), and Shavar Campbell (Port Antonio High School). These students are members of the illustrious JADE Secondary Level Gold Club which currently consists of fourteen of Jamaica's finest high school debaters, selected based on their outstanding performance in local competitions. They benefit from intense year-round training and often ply their trade in world class competitions, representing their island home.

In keeping with its commitment to support the development of critical thinking and effective communication skills among young Jamaicans, the University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech,Ja.) served as gracious host for Team Jamaica's participation in this year's online tournament. Also supporting Team Jamaica were team manager Germaine Barrett, and coaches Jevon Henry and Ronaldo Blake, all officers of JADE Limited.

This year the WSDC featured teams from sixty-four (64) countries. This competition represents the pinnacle of English-language secondary school debating across the globe. Founded in 1988, this annual two-week tournament sees teams contesting social, moral and political issues. World Schools Debate is a dynamic format combining "prepared" topics (motions) with "impromptu" topics (motions), encouraging debaters to focus on specific and current issues.

## **MATCH REVIEWS**

### **Round 3: This house would create a global carbon market**

The scientific community holds consensus that Carbon emissions catalyse one of humanity's most pressing problems- the climate crisis. Hence, in proposing this motion, Team Jamaica first highlighted the importance of reducing carbon emissions then set about detailing and validating their mechanism. Their model stipulated that firstly, countries would have a limited amount of carbon credits i.e. metric tonnes of carbon they were allowed to emit, and could freely trade these credits among themselves. Central to their case was the priority of redistributing wealth to developing countries that disproportionately suffer from climate disasters to which developed countries contribute the most. Given that developing countries would under use carbon credits due to not having industrialised economies, they could sell their credits to developed countries, hence earning revenue to defend themselves against climate change and invest in renewable energies.

Team Panama in opposition tried to convince the judges that developing countries will be disadvantaged in this market for several reasons. Firstly, they claimed the dominant developed countries would manipulate the system in order to escape the burdens of a carbon market such as hiding emissions and coercing smaller countries to give them credits. They also contextualise developing countries as facing high political and economic instability, hence proving their inability to successfully participate in this global market. In

response to this, Jamaica showed that imperfect but still mostly accountable free market mechanisms will be able to mitigate these concerns.

**Round 4: This house regrets the decline of the family as the dominant unit of organisation in society.**

In this round, Team Jamaica (opposition) went up against Team Estonia (proposition). Estonia expressed regret at the decline of the family as the dominant unit of organisation in society. To support this case, they endorsed the family as an indispensable structure of emotional, financial and social support. They passionately defended the unconditional love that most families have for their members, which, despite some families being abusive, generally overrides the comfort that a person can find elsewhere.

Team Jamaica's position was twofold: One (1), the downward trend in the dominance of the family is an inevitable result of the evolution of various social conditions. They pointed to the transformation in economic production, away from village farming towards capitalism; religious faith, away from theism to secularism and science; philosophical theories and moral values, towards existentialism and libertarianism, all reducing the importance of the family in many aspects of life. Two (2), the trend translated to less dependency on harmful values which once subjugated women, allowed for more supportive organisation for marginalised people and the increase in other personal friend groups and socio-cultural fellowships.

**Round 5: This House Would Implement Fairness Doctrines on Broadcast News Media with Significant Audience Reach**

For this Motion, Team Jamaica was assigned the role of opposition with Team Nigeria in proposition.

Jamaica's opposition was grounded on the idea that the implementation of Fairness Doctrines would create uniformity amongst broadcasters that would push viewers to pernicious alternative media entities such as those on social media. They provided evidence that persons generally seek out information that proves their biases, and detailed how social media's algorithm based operating systems fueled bias and how the model (or lack thereof) for these fairness doctrines would not efficiently combat this issue.

Team Nigeria, stressed the chokehold large Broadcast News Media had over the population and the effects it had on the government and the under-represented views of minorities. They pointed out that larger media outlets also utilised social media to spread information.

**Round 6: This house would require all elected officials to stand for a recall election if a significant minimum threshold of voters within the constituency demand it.**

For this round, Team Jamaica (Proposition) faced off against Team Morocco (opposition). The essence of Team Jamaica's case was that a recall election under these circumstances is necessary for the security of the nation's democracy, holding corrupt politicians accountable for their egregious actions and regaining the rapidly declining confidence that the nation's people have in its government. They indicated that oftentimes elected officials commit horrifying crimes such as embezzlement and are not held accountable for their actions due to the length of time it takes for re-elections. The team constructed a mechanism to ensure that these substantives were appropriately met. Emphasising that once implemented, it would lead to both the improved governance of the country as well as the rejuvenation of people's belief that they are being heard.

The opposition, Team Morocco, attacked Team Jamaica's model in numerous ways. They then proceed to present their model as being more effective, claim that corruption stems from re-elections, that supporters of elected officials will be outraged at the re-elections leading to aggression and that re-elections are costly which all exacerbate political instability.

#### **Round 8: This House would allow ex-convicts to apply to join the police force.**

Team Jamaica in opposition to this motion contested Team Bermuda in proposition on both principled and pragmatic bases. Jamaica firstly contended that ex-convicts would have betrayed their society's trust to remain law abiding and thus lose certain rights (social contract). Furthermore, the policy would weaken unity within the police force as officials would find it difficult to cooperate with persons they once persecuted. Additionally, this could worsen the strained relations between the public and police-force. More pragmatic arguments included that these persons are liabilities in the sense that firstly, having already committed prison worthy crimes makes them predisposed to recommitment and corruption secondly, their criminal background and prison time would have increased their criminal network and systematic hatred and given these claims, there is no reason to allow these risks since more effective ways of reintegration into society exist.

Proposition (Team Bermuda) presented a mechanism where only those who have been released for five years and have remained constantly on good behaviour would be given this right. They mainly sought sympathy for changed ex convicts who wanted to serve their country. They also pointed out that as former criminals they would be better able to empathise with criminals and have an intimate understanding of criminal operations and organisation. Proposition also detailed how this could be a mechanism for reintegration of ex-convicts into society and that it would be wrong for them to be robbed of this right, especially since they've already atoned through their prison sentence.



**DEBATERS' REFLECTION**



**L-R: Shavar Campbell, Mattheu White, Ronaldhino McLean, Jacey Henry, Jevon Henry(coach), Jordaina Denton.**

### **Shavar Campbell - Port Antonio High School, Grade 10**

This tournament challenged us all to the deepest level. Several of us had conflicting thoughts regarding the motions. These debates caused us to seriously consider different points of view. They allowed us to reason things from new angles and search for dormant knowledge in our minds so as to present a valid case. Overall it was teamwork, cooperation and unity, as well as our open-mindedness which allowed us to grow from this experience. I have nothing but gratitude and appreciation for my excellent teammates as well as my competent and considerate coaches who helped us to develop as debaters and persons on a whole. This tournament is a perfect example of why I believe debating is a miraculous sport which doesn't only exercise one's mind, but helps to develop one's sense of self and understanding of the world.

### **Mattheu White - Cornwall College Grade 11**

This experience has been time consuming and a rigorous test of my focus, acclimation, and ability to stay awake for long periods of time. I have been able to hone my skill under the tutelage of marvellous coaches with advanced knowledge; but most memorable has been the scintillating conversation provided by my teammates and the amazing sense of camaraderie that surrounded me. I will always be grateful for this opportunity to witness the art of debating on the international stage and also to witness the art of persuasion, merrymaking and co-operation locally.

### **Ronaldhino McLean - Campion College, Grade 11**

The period of the competition was truly an unexampled time in my life. The experience it afforded in the realms of public speech, argument and research combined with the opportunity it provided for engagement with foreign individuals and cultures was immense and beneficial. I was pleased to have shared it with an eclectic bunch of talented debaters and superb coaches, whose growth, with each passing match, was stellar and marked.

### **Jacey Henry - Titchfield High School, Grade 12**

I would sacrifice the weeks of time and effort invested into intense research, writing, discussions and debating all over again because from it I have been exposed to a diversity and complexity of thought that has expanded my capacity to understand, analyse and implement ideas. Pouring over four motions for weeks under the guidance of our coaches has greatly deepened my scope of historical and contemporary analysis of the world, better sensitising me to my global environment and the ever-expanding limits of my local one. The pinnacle of this process being captured in eight rigorous debates with the best of several nations has challenged my ability to convey ideas succinctly and exposed me to our strengths and weaknesses in debating and teamwork. Retrospectively, I can't imagine a venture more integral to my growth in confidence, leadership and communicative skills than competing in WSDC.

**Jordaina Denton - Immaculate Conception High School, Grade 12**

This experience was exceptionally rigorous. I was not expecting it to be easy but this was far from it. Long hours were dedicated to this strenuous process in which we would research information related to the topics as well as receive feedback from our excellent coaches. I must say though, that I am a better person for having this experience. I learnt how to improve on my investigative skills, broaden my scope of knowledge on numerous subjects, mainly International Relations as well as question my own beliefs to a degree that I never have before. I can truly say that I have gained a deepened appreciation for the art of debating as well as the tools to better my craft at it. It was also both inspiring and fulfilling to be around such intelligent young debaters whose perseverance and willingness to improve were unmatched. I am eternally grateful for this opportunity and cannot wait to see what the future holds for not only this incredible group but also for Jamaica's future in regards to this underappreciated art.

Report Prepared By: **Jamaican Association for Debating and Empowerment (JADE Limited)**