

Inmate looks to Jamaican Government for assistance

Earl Moxam,
Senior Gleaner Writer

A JAMAICAN MAN facing death by lethal injection for killing a cop in Florida is turning to the Jamaican Government in a desperate bid to save his life.

A hearing in Broward County Circuit Court on April 14, may be the last throw of the dice, legally, for Lancelot Armstrong, formally of Falmouth, Trelawny.

Already, perhaps in anticipation of failure, Armstrong's lawyer, David Rowe is turning to the Jamaican Government to apply political pressure on Florida's Governor Jeb Bush to spare his client's life.

COURT HEARING

The upcoming court hearing will not take into account any potential new evidence. It will only determine whether there are mitigating circumstances which might justify removing Armstrong from death row.

The threshold for any such decision, however, will be very high, particularly because Armstrong was found guilty of killing a police officer. The only problem is that Armstrong has always maintained his innocence in the murder of Broward Sheriff's Deputy John Greeney.

It was at 2 a.m., on February 17, 1990, that Armstrong and another man, Ercely Wayne Coleman, with whom he worked, entered a Church's Fried Chicken Restaurant. A robbery and shoot-out with the police ensued, during which Officer Greeney was shot dead.

INNOCENCE

Armstrong has always maintained that he was never part of the robbery, but was framed. Nevertheless he was convicted and sentenced to die for the murder in 1991. The death sentence was thrown out on a technicality in 1993, but was later reinstated.

A witness to the murder, Kay Allen, has recently given a deposition attesting to Armstrong's innocence; but that, according to his lawyer, David Rowe will not be considered at the upcoming court hearing. His client's main hope for clemency, according to Rowe, lies with the Jamaican Government which, up to now he claims, has been missing in action. Rowe has accused the Jamaican Consulate in Miami of ignoring Armstrong's many entreaties for support, never visiting him once in 16 years of incarceration.

SUPPORT

"Lance Armstrong has received more support from places like Sweden and Denmark, than he has from Jamaica!" Rowe indignantly told **The Sunday Gleaner**. He was recently in Jamaica along with Armstrong's mother, Dorett English to lobby local human rights groups to add their voices in support of his client.

English, her face a picture of deep despair, spoke passionately about the family's ordeal. "It is very hard to bear, knowing that he is innocent and having the threat of death hanging over his head," she lamented.

David Rowe is in no doubt that his client's chances are slim: "Lance has three strikes against him: he is accused of killing a cop; he is a black man in America; and above all, he is Jamaican."