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The Frank Collymore Literary Endowment Comes of Age

Remarks by

Mr. Cleviston Haynes, Governor, Central Bank of Barbados

at the

Frank Collymore Literary Endowment Awards

Saturday, January 5, 2019

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with a certain degree of pride that the Bank celebrates the 21st birthday of the Frank Collymore Literary Endowment Awards. This celebration represents the legacy of former Governor Winston Cox who imagined the FCLE and envisioned this competition to inspire writers to practise and develop their craft, and to share their works with peers and the people.

He wanted to develop the literary Arts in Barbados and build a body of Barbadian literature for all generations. At the same time, he was celebrating and honouring the late Frank Collymore, poet, teacher and actor and the person for whom this competition is named.

Subsequent Governors believed in the vision set by Governor Cox and we have nurtured the Endowment to its current state of maturity. We have maintained the Bank's noble tradition of supporting projects and programmes that improve people's lives and add economic value by so doing.

As these Awards come of age, we must celebrate their adulthood with the same energy, enthusiasm, optimism and hope with which many of us marked our own coming of age. It is also an opportunity for us to use this anniversary to reflect on how we can expand the competition, build the Endowment and enliven the literary arts in Barbados. We must plan for a new phase of the Endowment.

The Bank has provided a platform for these Awards, but the ultimate success is largely due to the dedication of the Committees that have served the FCLE. The Bank is appreciative of your ongoing effort to inspire excellence in the literary arts and for supporting and developing the country's writers through your feedback, counsel, educational programmes and your adjudication of this competition. Yours has been a labour of love. Join me in saluting past and present FCLE Committees.

I single out the current chairman, Esther Philips, for special mention and recognition. She is now as you may be aware Barbados' first poet laureate. This is a deserving honour and yet another accolade to which our writers should aspire.

Ms. Philips and Committee members, our task now is to reposition the Endowment. To this end, I met with the Committee, including retiring members, early last year to hear their views on how we can advance this mission.

The Committee was clearly engaged as:

- a) We considered ways to enhance this competition for the benefit of writers, the literary arts and the nation
- b) We reflected on how we can sustain interest and excellence in writing; and
- c) We considered ways to motivate new writers to participate.

Arising from these discussions, it was clear that we must reflect on how we can help you to publish your works, even if in a digital context and or audio formats. Moreover, we must reflect on how we can move your work from the page to the stage by producing films, movies and animations.

In this regard, now is the time to partner with institutions like the Barbados Film and Video Association Inc. to explore the synergies for generating more wealth for our artists, and to propel the local film and literary arts industries.

I laud the Committee's support for winners to take their works into schools. You are exposing our young people to excellence in local literature and introducing them to literary role models. This effort enriches children's education; it builds their confidence in realizing their true potential; it arouses latent dreams. It exposes the cross disciplinary value in literature and in the arts in general.

The arts expand imagination, develop creativity, stir critical thinking and hone communication skills. These are the skills that young people must master today to prepare for tomorrow.

We must sustain this schools' outreach programme.

Ladies and gentlemen, Barbados' current economic circumstances also provide opportunities for writers.

We have taken difficult but necessary steps to stabilise and grow our economy.

We are restoring fiscal discipline and we are seeking out ways to boost our earnings from exports of goods and services.

We are transforming and modernising the Barbados economy and society.

We are making it easier for everyone to do business and improving the country's competitiveness.

We are strengthening our resilience to domestic and external shocks and to climate change.

These circumstances offer the potential for enlightening and informative poetry, prose, plays and films because they embody the vagaries of life: change, challenges, hurt, conflict, highs and lows, intrigue, sacrifices and people. The challenges are great but not insurmountable because of the commitment of all of us to see our country prosper.

These developments engender hope, inspire new dreams, and unearth new opportunities.

These themes are the elements of good literature.

You must capture the turn of events for posterity. Let us heed Maya Angelou's words, "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

So you must tell our story, past, present and future; the story of Barbados's Economic Recovery and Transformation so that we never forget these efforts at rebuilding our economy and our children and their offspring know of the sacrifices so many of us made for our country.

The Bank, through this competition, will support you. We recognize that you will require more funding to expand the Committee's work, and to take you through the next phase of life.

I am delighted to announce that we have established an endowment of one million dollars to provide the FCLE with additional financing. We will invest the funds as soon as market conditions allow. The income from the investment will supplement our annual budgeted allocation enabling the Committee to provide greater support and opportunities for writers, to enrich the literary arts in Barbados and to sustain it through its adulthood.

We envisage that this income flow will support the FCLE's desire to offer scholarships in creative writing at the University of the West Indies and sponsor a literary award in NIFCA for writers of school age.

I trust that this wonderful 21st birthday gift! These are more incentives for you to write.

I commend this year's awardees. To unsuccessful entrants, continue to practise your craft. And to all aspiring writers, take out your pens.

Finally, as we mark the Endowment's 21st birthday, the Bank and the Committee are readying the FCLE for the adult phase of its life: a phase filled with hope, ideas, opportunities, and great writing. Some of these are the attributes that guided us through our adult life, and they will steer the FCLE through the next phase of its being successfully as well.

Happy New Year and I thank you.