



*Government of Bermuda*  
Ministry of Community, Culture and Sports

## **Emancipation Events - July 2014**

**Ministerial Statement**  
To The Senate

By

**Senator Alexis Swan**  
*Junior Minister of Community, Culture and Sports*

**Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014**

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**Madam president**, today I wish to share with my colleagues and the people of Bermuda the Emancipation events being organized by the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs. It is critical to our sense of pride in who we are as a people that we recognize and acknowledge the works and contributions of our fore-parents. Bermuda's story of enslavement, emancipation and the post-emancipation era is in many ways akin to the global stories throughout the African diaspora.

However, this does not in any way detract from the importance of sharing and teaching about the struggles endured by our forefathers and mothers of African descent.

**Madam President**, this year there is a "suite" of emancipation events being organized by the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs beginning with

the Kenneth E. Robinson/Cyril Outerbridge Packwood Memorial lecture at 6pm tomorrow evening (Thursday July 24<sup>th</sup>) at the Bermuda National Gallery.

**Madam President**, the next event is the Emancipation Ceremony which will take place on Sunday July 27<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the Earl Cameron Theatre. This is when we take a moment in our cultural heritage calendar to pause, reflect upon and salute those people who persevered against insufferable odds so that today we may have a more just society.

As we have done for the past two years **Madam President**, the Emancipation Ceremony will honour many of our ancestors who - during the post emancipation era- demonstrated such noble characteristics as courage, perseverance, self-discipline, concern for others and self-reliance. This year the ceremony will shine the spotlight on six families from Hamilton Parish and six families from Southampton Parish.

The families being honoured from Hamilton Parish are the Furberts, the Gibbons', the Hills, the Hodgsons, the Richardsons and the family of Seward Ethelbert Smith Sr. The families from Southampton Parish are the Burrows', the Lees, the Raynors, the Wilsons and the family of John Ellis Smith. We will be informed about their entrepreneurial skills and business acumen. We will be reminded of men such as Seward Ethelbert Smith, Sr., Prince Hodgson and others who advocated for racial equality and social justice; and of their strong work ethic and commitment to improving not only conditions for themselves but others as well.

**Madam President**, during this ceremony, we will pause and pay homage to those individuals on whose shoulders we now stand. For example, because of men such

as Ernest Thompson Furbert, who was the first black member of Parliament for Hamilton Parish; and was succeeded by his younger brother W. B. Furbert, who won a seat in Parliament during a time when blacks were underrepresented in the House of Assembly, many of us now serve the people of Bermuda and have the honour and indeed privilege of sitting in these hallowed halls.

**Madam President,** the ceremony will also acknowledge some of Bermuda's cricket legends who hail from the Raynor family. This family not only contributed such great Cup Match players, they were also businessmen. Another family that contributed much to sports, politics and the church was the Burrows family; and a singularly major accomplishment for them was their pioneering work in the plumbing business.

**Madam President,** one of Bermuda's first black architects hails from the Lee family. Other families, such as the Hodgsons and the Hills demonstrated their entrepreneurial skills and business prowess as well.

**Madam President,** there will also be a mini exhibition in the foyer of the City Hall prior to the start of the Emancipation Ceremony. There will be items on display from yesteryear which serve as reminders of the work and skill of our fore-parents. All of this underscores the rich heritage that we will be celebrating on July 27<sup>th</sup>.

Then **Madam President,** on Tuesday July 29th the Department will launch the Bermuda Heritage Documentary Film and Lecture Series with the airing of an Emancipation film which features Angela Barry, Maxine Esdaille, Dr. Radell Tankard, Joy Wilson Tucker and Sharon Wilson.

**Madam President,** it is with a great deal of pride and gratitude that we honour families from Hamilton and Southampton Parishes. And we encourage everyone to come out and support this event. There is an African proverb that says "*a child we refuse to build today will end up selling the house we may build tomorrow ...* "

**Madam President,** we must continue to educate, inform and uplift our people for the betterment of all.

**Thank you Madam President.**