



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
To the House of Assembly**

**by
The Hon. Owen K. Darrell, JP, MP
Minister of Tourism & Transport, Culture & Sport**

**BERMUDA DAY 2026: ANNOUNCEMENT OF GRAND
MARSHALS**

Friday 15th May 2026

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce the Grand Marshals for the 2026 Bermuda Day Parade, a group of outstanding individuals whose lives and contributions reflect the very spirit of this year's Heritage Month theme, "For the Culture."

Mr. Speaker, as I shared previously, "For the Culture" is a celebration of the people, traditions, and creative expressions that define Bermuda. It speaks to the pride we carry, the stories we tell, and the responsibility we share to preserve and uplift our cultural identity. It is both a reflection of who we are and a call to continue building on that legacy.

Mr. Speaker, each year, the selection of Grand Marshals provides an opportunity to honour individuals whose contributions have shaped

Bermuda's culture in meaningful and lasting ways, often without widespread recognition. These are individuals who have worked with consistency, passion, and quiet impact, building, preserving, and strengthening our culture and community over time. In recognising them, we ensure that their influence is not only acknowledged, but celebrated as an essential part of Bermuda's story.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to announce the 2026 Bermuda Day Parade Grand Marshals, "For the Culture":

Mr. Speaker, Demeka "Tiny T" Tacklyn is a standout presence in Bermuda's cultural community. As a young girl, she famously found her way into Richardson's Gombey's as the troupe's only female member, beginning a lifelong connection to Bermuda's traditions through dance and performance. She later represented Bermuda internationally as a dancer and gained national recognition after winning Bermuda's first Dancehall Queen competition. Her work extends beyond performance into entrepreneurship and youth development, creating spaces where creativity, confidence, and culture can thrive. Through her continued efforts, she has shown what it means to live and lead "for the culture."

Mr. Speaker, Jules Roberts, the voice and spirit behind Ital Foundation, has been a cornerstone of Bermuda's reggae movement for decades. Since the late 1970s, his music has carried messages of unity, resistance, and cultural pride. Rooted in Rastafarian spirituality,

his songs tell the stories, struggles, and experiences of everyday Bermudians in the tradition of a griot, using music to preserve and share the voice of the people. As both a performer and mentor, he has shaped generations of musicians and ensured that Bermuda's voice continues to be heard through the universal language of music.

Mr. Speaker, Tawana Lee has dedicated her life to preserving and strengthening Bermuda's majorette and drum corps tradition. Through her leadership of the PHC Majorettes & Drum Corps, she has built not only a performance group but a community grounded in discipline, inclusion, and pride. At a time when many majorette groups across Bermuda had faded away, Tawana continued to carry the tradition forward, ensuring that the majorette culture remained visible, vibrant, and alive for a new generation. Her commitment to youth development and cultural education has ensured that this cherished part of Bermuda's heritage continues to grow and inspire future generations.

Mr. Speaker, Sonya Smith is a distinguished figure in Bermuda's sporting history, whose achievements in track and field have left a lasting mark on the Island. From a young age, she demonstrated exceptional talent, setting national records in javelin and earning multiple medals at the Carifta Games. She went on to represent Bermuda at major international competitions, including the Commonwealth Games and the Olympic Games. Her dedication,

discipline, and achievements continue to inspire generations of Bermudian athletes to pursue excellence in sport.

Mr. Speaker, we also take this moment to honour the late Allan Warner, a legendary Gombey whose influence continues to resonate across Bermuda. From a young age, he dedicated himself to the art of Gombey, leading Warner Gombey for over five decades with passion and integrity. His work as a performer, mentor, and cultural ambassador helped to preserve and elevate this vital tradition, leaving a legacy that continues to guide and inspire.

Mr. Speaker, these five individuals may come from different paths and disciplines, but they are united by a shared commitment to community and cultural pride. They epitomise this year's theme, "For the Culture," through the way they have preserved traditions, uplifted others, and contributed meaningfully to the cultural and sporting life of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Culture looks forward to celebrating these Grand Marshals, alongside all participants, during the Bermuda Day Parade on Friday, May 22, 2026. This year's parade will once again bring our streets to life with colour, sound, and creativity, with more than 60 participating entries reflecting the energy and diversity of our people. After receiving rave reviews last year, the parade will once again conclude in traditional fashion with the Gombey, followed by a 30-minute intermission before the celebrations

continue with an after-party featuring D'General's high-energy soca truck.

Mr. Speaker, the Department has also worked closely with participants and stakeholders this year to strengthen parade flow, pacing, and overall event management to improve the experience for participants and spectators alike. As participation continues to grow, these efforts are important to ensure that Bermuda Day remains safe, enjoyable, and full of the energy and spirit people have come to love.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Bermudians to come out, support our participants, and show up "For the Culture."

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**