



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Labour, Community Affairs and Sports

Ministerial Statement

By

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Heritage Month 2020

8 May 2020

Mr. Speaker, May is a time when the whole of Bermuda traditionally looks forward to celebrating Heritage Month. It is the time of year when Bermudians come together to celebrate our heritage, our culture, our family connections, our national pride and our national unity. It is a time for festivity and togetherness. It is a time to reflect upon who we are as a people.

Mr. Speaker, the impact of Covid-19 means that Heritage Month 2020 must be observed in a way that we have never done before. The decision to cancel the Bermuda Day Parade for this year was difficult, and sobering, yet entirely necessary in order to safeguard the health of our people. However, as we face this unprecedented threat, there is an even greater need to recall the original intention of Heritage Month, of celebrating our culture, family connections, national pride and unity. Although we are currently bound by the need to physically distance ourselves from each other, in ways that sometimes feel alien to us, this does not mean that the core ideology undergirding Heritage Month must also be cast aside.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that the theme for Heritage Month is “We are Bermudian”, and it is an extremely worthy theme to embrace during a time when we are living history. Now, more than ever, is a time to remember who we are and what we stand for when we say “We Are Bermudian”.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the constraints on gatherings of people, the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs has given consideration to the kinds of programming that will achieve the goal of celebrating who we are whilst keeping Bermuda safe through physical distancing. This will be achieved primarily through partnering with creatives, tradition-bearers, artists and cultural institutions, and other Government Departments to provide virtual content of interest to a broad sector of our community. This will include the preparation of traditional foods, readings of Bermudian stories, enjoyment of Bermudian music, various arts and culture challenges, and more.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs will also work with CITV so that we can provide the public with a “Best of the Bermuda Day Parade” to air on Friday, May 29th highlighting some of the most beautiful floats and memorable dance troupes of our iconic parade in previous years; as well as content for a lineup of cultural films and events to be screened in the leadup to Bermuda Day.

Mr. Speaker, culture and the arts provided us all with a major source of emotional and spiritual sustenance through shelter-in-place; bringing us entertainment as well as a reservoir of inspiration and togetherness during a time when many of us were feeling isolated and discouraged. A significant number of Bermudian musicians, entertainers, artists, DJs, historians, tradition-bearers and creatives provided us with

virtual happy hours, TikTok challenges, virtual lectures, sip-and-paint events, Instagram Live concerts held in living rooms, virtual art galleries, and so much more. As the Minister responsible for culture, I would like to publicly acknowledge their efforts. I have been impressed and proud of our creatives, who quite spontaneously, organically, and effectively utilised their talents and stepped into the breach to give our people what we needed. Despite this **Mr. Speaker**, it is no secret that during times of economic stress, cultural institutions, artists and other creatives often take a financial hit. With this in mind, during Heritage Month the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs will also spearhead a number of national conversations with creatives and cultural institutions to further a dialogue on how arts, culture, and heritage can best remain viable and vibrant during the development of our “new normal”.

Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of Heritage Month, the Department will unveil a brand-new website which will serve as an invaluable tool for members of the public, students, creatives, researchers and educators to utilize. The Department has a treasure trove of materials and information on Bermuda’s culture and heritage; the website will provide the vehicle through which this material can be easily accessed, along with updates about the exciting new programmes that the Department is currently working toward, with the intention of developing our creatives, preserving our heritage, and celebrating our people.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that during this Heritage Month, just as the community appreciates the extraordinary efforts of frontline workers including doctors, nurses, farmers, grocers and others to keep our bodies healthy, safe, and nourished during this time, that we will also acknowledge the efforts of our artists and creatives in keeping our minds and spirits engaged, positive, and inspired.

Mr. Speaker, these are not easy times for Bermuda, but part of our cultural birthright is the long legacy of strength and resilience that we have to draw from. We are a people who are agile in the face of challenges, generous to our neighbours in times of trouble, and innovative with our solutions to problems. This is what we truly mean when we say, “We are Bermudian” and I am immensely proud of who we are.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.