



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

TO THE SENATE

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MINISTER OF TOURISM, CULTURE AND SPORT

“EMANCIPATION 2024: SNAPSHOTS OF OUR PAST”

WEDNESDAY 17th JULY 2024

Madam President, I stand before you today to recognize one of the most significant milestones in our history – the emancipation of our ancestors from the bonds of enslavement. This year’s emancipation commemoration theme, “Reimagining Community: Snapshots of Our Past,” as set forth by the Department of Culture, provides us with a profound opportunity to reflect on our journey, celebrate our heritage, and envision a future built on the lessons of our past.

Madam President, Emancipation Day holds a historic and intrinsic connection to our cherished Cup Match holiday, a tradition established by the Friendly Societies in the aftermath of slavery. This two-day celebration, filled with cricket, fellowship, and

cultural festivities, serves as a living testament to our resilience and unity. While Cup Match has become a beloved sporting and social event, it is essential to remember that its roots are deeply intertwined with the struggle for freedom and equality.

Madam President, the first day of Cup Match is officially recognized as Emancipation Day, a public holiday dedicated to commemorating the abolition of slavery in Bermuda. On this day, we honour the courage and sacrifices of our ancestors who fought tirelessly for their freedom and laid the foundation for the rights and liberties we enjoy today. The second day of the Cup Match holiday is designated as Mary Prince Day, in honour of a remarkable woman whose bravery and activism have left a memorable mark on our history.

Madam President, Mary Prince was born into slavery and became the first woman of African descent to write an autobiography detailing the horrors of enslavement in the British Empire. Her narrative, “The History of Mary Prince,” played a pivotal role in the abolitionist movement, shedding light on the brutal realities of slavery and galvanizing support for the cause of emancipation. Through her courage and eloquence, Mary Prince gave a voice to

the voiceless and inspired generations to fight for justice and equality.

Madam President, Mary Prince’s autobiography, “The History of Mary Prince,” remains a seminal work in the history of the abolitionist movement. Through her vivid and harrowing account of her life as an enslaved woman, she brought the brutal realities of slavery to the forefront of public consciousness. Her narrative challenged the prevailing notions of her time and galvanized support for the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. Today, we honour her legacy as a pioneering activist and celebrate her contributions to the cause of freedom and human rights.

Madam President, the Department of Culture has curated a calendar of events to mark the commemoration of emancipation. These events, organized in collaboration with government departments and community groups such as CURB, Friends of Sandys, and Titan Express, provide a platform for education, reflection, and celebration.

In addition to sponsoring several community events leading up to the anniversary of emancipation, the Department of Culture is

proud to host two signature events that promise to be both enlightening and inspiring.

Madam President, as part of a Throne Speech initiative, the Department worked closely with students associated with the Family Centre to delve into the history and culture of the Court Street area. This collaborative effort resulted in the creation of “Heart of the City,” a 30-minute documentary produced by filmmaker Marq Rodriguez and researcher/journalist Meredith Ebbin. The documentary explores the vibrant history and enduring spirit of the Court Street community, capturing its significance as a cultural and historical hub. I am delighted to announce that “Heart of the City” will be screened at the Court Street Market on July 28th. This screening will not only showcase the engagement of our young people, but also serve as a tribute to the resilience and vitality of the Court Street community.

Madam President, we are also thrilled to welcome the return of the Dr. Kenneth E. Robinson / Cyril Outerbridge Packwood Memorial Lecture, an event established to honour these two distinguished Black Bermudian historians who dedicated their lives to preserving and promoting our heritage. This year’s lecture

will be delivered by Mr. Yusef Bushara, a passionate researcher who spent last summer interning at the Bermuda National Gallery. Mr. Bushara's talk, entitled "Eyes Wide Open: The Awe and Delight in All of Us, Everywhere - Lessons from Richard Saunders," will take place on August 21st. The lecture will focus on the singular impact of Richard Saunders, a Black Bermudian photojournalist whose work earned international acclaim.

Madam President, Richard Saunders is one of the few Bermudian photographers to have gained such widespread recognition for his work. He spent the majority of his career in the United States, where he established himself as a highly respected photojournalist. His captivating images appeared in leading publications such as *Life*, the *New York Times*, *Fortune*, and *Ebony* magazines, showcasing his exceptional talent and unique perspective. Through his lens, Saunders captured the beauty, strength, and resilience of the African diaspora, providing the world with a powerful visual narrative of our shared humanity.

Madam President, the importance of commemorating emancipation cannot be overstated. Emancipation is not just a historical event; it is a testament to the power of human

resilience and the enduring quest for justice and equality. It reminds us of the importance of standing up against oppression and advocating for the rights and dignity of all people. As we reflect on our past, we must also look to the future with a commitment to building a society that values and respects every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Madam President, the Department of Culture's theme for this year's emancipation commemoration, "Reimagining Community: Snapshots of Our Past," invites us to look back at our history with fresh eyes and a renewed appreciation for the strength and resilience of our community. It encourages us to reimagine our collective future, building on the foundations laid by our ancestors and striving for a more just and equitable society.

Madam President, may this year's commemoration be a time of reflection, celebration, and unity. May it inspire us to build a future that honours our past and embraces the strength of our community. And may we all have a joyous and memorable Cup Match, filled with the spirit of togetherness.

Thank you, **Madam President**.