

Elson Gaskin: The Frank Collymore Literary Endowment - building on its legacy

Remarks by Mr Elson Gaskin, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Barbados, at the 26th Frank Collymore Literary Endowment Awards Ceremony, Bridgetown, 14 January 2024.

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Good evening.

In commencing, let me, on behalf of the Governor, Board, management and staff of the Central Bank of Barbados, extend condolences to the family, friends, and loved ones of the late Sonia Williams, who on more than one occasion was a finalist in this competition.

As I began to prepare for this awards ceremony, I looked back at what we have said on previous occasions as it is sometimes important to take a retrospect before moving forward. What stood out during that exercise is that we have often spoken about the role that the arts play in creating a [national identity](#). Just last year, we spoke about the fact that not only is the FCLE a part of the Bank's legacy, it has created a [legacy of its own](#).

The Central Bank of Barbados' unswerving support for and commitment to the Frank Collymore Literary Endowment is precisely because we recognise that in addition to fulfilling our core mandate, we must be a part of, and never apart from, the society we serve. We see this programme as an [essential part of the Barbadiana that we are](#).

One year ago, the Bank was winding down its 50th anniversary celebrations and the FCLE was marking its silver jubilee. The parallels between the two institutions - and I choose this word deliberately because the Frank Collymore Literary Endowment has become an institution - extend beyond celebrating milestone anniversaries around the same time.

Both are interested in Barbados' national development. For the Bank, that is primarily, but not exclusively, related to the economy. For the FCLE, it is about the development of this island's literary tradition. It is a role we both take seriously, and from which comes a second parallel: our respective commitment to excellence.

The Central Bank of Barbados' vision is to become and maintain an institution of world-class excellence, and we are working every day to internalise this vision and reflect it in not only in the many activities in which we are involved an but also in the quality with which we execute them.

I am confident that the FCLE and its committee also live by this ideal. Over the past 26 years, the competition has become a bellwether of quality writing. Publishers, critics, and the public-at-large see winning this competition as an endorsement. I commend the judges for remaining faithful to these ideals and never compromising in their assessments of entries.

The final parallel I'd like to draw relates to how we view our legacy. While the Bank and the FCLE have each created a legacy, we are not constrained by it. By that, I mean that although we respect the legacy we have built, we do not see it as static. Rather, we see it as a solid foundation to be further built upon.

For the Bank, this includes updating our processes, including through the digital transformation we are currently undergoing. It also means adjusting how we approach fulfilling our mandate, be it through developing a strong monetary policy toolkit or finding new and creative ways to educate the public about the economy and how it impacts them, as we have through our new explainer series.

For the FCLE, this has meant allowing for the electronic submission of entries and, by extension, accepting entries from Barbadians in the diaspora. In less than three years, this expansion proved successful, with Ronald Williams, a US-based writer, emerging as the first prize winner of the 24th edition of the competition in 2022.

This year, the FCLE has innovated again by introducing a spoken-word category. This once again opens up the competition to more artists, more perspectives, and more opportunities for talented Barbadians to gain exposure. Kudos to the committee for this initiative.

Indeed, I want to convey my appreciation, and the Central Bank of Barbados' appreciation, as sponsor of this endowment, to the FCLE committee, now ably led by Dr. Yvonne Weekes, for your enthusiasm and tireless dedication to this programme. The Bank has long been a supporter of the arts, and you have helped us to contribute to their development in a tangible way.

I must also thank the writers: the stalwarts, who have contributed to the legacy I have spoken about this evening, and the first-time entrants, who heard about this competition, saw its value, and decided to participate. A special thank you to the spoken-word artists, who, by their entries, have helped us to add a new dimension to the competition. Congratulations to those of you who will emerge as winners later this evening. And to those of you for whom this is not the year, I encourage you to continue to write and to hone your craft.

Finally, I am grateful to you in the audience who have turned out tonight, either to support specific writers or Barbadian writing in general.

I thank you.