

## **Elson Gaskin: The Frank Collymore Literary Endowment - literature enriches the tapestry of our nation**

Remarks by Mr Elson Gaskin, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Barbados, at the 27th Frank Collymore Literary Endowment Awards Ceremony, Bridgetown, 11 January 2025.

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Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Central Bank of Barbados, I am delighted to welcome you to the 27th Frank Collymore Literary Endowment Awards Ceremony. This evening, we gather not only to honour excellence in literature and spoken word, but also to celebrate the enduring legacy of this competition and its pivotal role in shaping Barbados' cultural landscape.

As we mark this 27th edition, it's important to reflect on the journey so far. From its inception, the Bank's vision for the Frank Collymore Literary Endowment has been to nurture our literary heritage, ensuring that Barbadian voices resonate far and wide. The competition has grown into an institution, earning respect as a hallmark of quality and creativity, and it continues to inspire both emerging and established writers.

Literature plays a profound role in shaping and preserving our national identity. When we tell our stories – stories infused with the culture, language, and history of Barbados – we are not only entertaining but also educating. We are building a repository of our experiences, documenting who we are for future generations.

Each poem, short story, novel, or play by a Barbadian writer, each piece of spoken word performed, enriches the tapestry of our nation. It reminds us of our shared struggles and triumphs, our rich cultural heritage, and our unyielding spirit. By supporting our writers, we strengthen our identity as Barbadians and assert our place in the global literary community.

Beyond its cultural significance, literature is also a cornerstone of the orange economy – the creative economy. Literature, alongside music, film, and other artforms, holds immense potential for economic diversification and growth. The works birthed from the FCLE have the power to attract international attention, spark collaborations, and create opportunities for our writers both at home and abroad.

Indeed, we can find examples of the FCLE's past winners who have made their presence felt in the global literary sphere, among them the late Kamau Brathwaite, Barbados' first poet laureate, Esther Philips, and our current committee chair, Yvonne Weekes, who I must, on behalf of the Bank, publicly congratulate on having her work, *Volcano*, translated into Spanish. I will also point out that *Volcano* was her winning entry back in 2004, which goes to show that entering and winning the FCLE has legs.

Moreover, as we continue to innovate and digitise, the orange economy presents opportunities for leveraging technology. E-books, audiobooks, and online platforms can

amplify our voices even more, reaching audiences far beyond our shores and turning creativity into a sustainable livelihood for our artists.

Tonight, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all of this year's finalists and winners. To those who may not walk away with an award, let me encourage you: the act of putting your work out into the world is itself an achievement. Perseverance, discipline, and a commitment to your craft will bear fruit.

To all writers here tonight, I say this: you are custodians of our stories, ambassadors of our culture, and architects of our identity. Keep writing, dreaming, and daring. The FCLE exists because of you and for you.

To our dedicated committee, which as I mentioned earlier, is led, and ably so, by Dr. Yvonne Weekes, your vision and hard work continues to be instrumental in the competition's success. Your efforts ensure that the FCLE continues to uphold its high standards and remains an inspiration to Barbadian writers.

And to you, the audience, thank you for showing up for these artists and their work. Your encouragement helps fuel their creativity and strengthens our literary culture. May we all remember that by supporting the arts, we are investing in a richer, more vibrant future for Barbados – one where our stories are not just told, but celebrated.

So, as we honour the finalists and winners of this prestigious award, let us also commit to championing our writers and the creative sector as a whole. Let us recognise that investing in the arts is not a luxury but a necessity for national development.

As we look to the future, I am confident that the Frank Collymore Literary Endowment will continue to thrive, offering a platform for exceptional talent and fostering a deeper appreciation for the written word.

Here's to another year of literary brilliance and to the enduring power of storytelling. Congratulations once again to our winners and participants.

Thank you, and enjoy the rest of the evening.