

**Toast by U.S. Ambassador Beatrice W. Welters**

**July 4, 2012 Reception**

**Hilton Trinidad**

**AS PREPARED**

- The Honorable the Chief Justice Mr. Justice Ivor Archie and Mrs. Archie
- Dr. the Honorable Roodal Moonilal, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mrs. Moonilal
- The Former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honorable Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson
- The Honorable Timothy Hamel Smith, President of the Senate and Mrs. Hamel Smith
- The Honorable Wade Mark, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Mrs. Mark
- Cabinet Ministers and Other Members of Parliament
- My Colleagues of the Diplomatic Corps
- Dr. the Honorable Keith Rowley, Leader of the Opposition & Mrs. Rowley
- Basdeo Panday and Mrs. Panday
- The Honorable Orville London, Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly
- Permanent Secretaries & Senior Government Officials
- Staff of the U.S. Embassy
- Members of the Media
- Other Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening and welcome and Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July everyone!

As the United States of America **celebrates** the 236<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its **independence**, I am **thrilled** to be here with you during this **special 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Trinidad and Tobago's Independence**.

Our two countries have a **long history of shared ideals – freedom, democracy, and equality** to name a few – and **our governments collaborate** actively to promote these values for the **citizens of Trinidad and Tobago** and for people around the world.

As we **come together** to celebrate America's Independence, we remember **it was not an easy road**.

Indeed, the battle for a **free society** is one that must be **continuously** fought.

And the **commitment to freedom** is a value that America and Trinidad and Tobago share.

I would like to take a brief moment to commemorate Private **First Class Leron Adrian Wilson**, a son of Trinidad and Tobago, who **joined** the US Army, **served** in Iraq during Operation Enduring Freedom, and was killed five years ago this Friday, making the **ultimate sacrifice** for **freedom** and **democracy**.

Leron was a brave and dedicated soldier, only 18 years old at the time of his death.

Leron's family is here tonight, and I would like to acknowledge them as well, as we honor the hero for the two nations and for his sacrifice will not be forgotten.

This year, my Embassy explored one aspect of our **shared roots** through the production of a documentary film about the **Merikins of South Trinidad**, whose ancestors chose to fight and settle in a new frontier.

America has come **a long way** since that time and its **respect for equality** has become **an inspiration** to many other nations around the world.

Trinidad and Tobago, too, is a leader in fostering **freedom and democracy**.

Especially as we near T&T's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence, I commend your citizens and your elected officials for their dedication to **human rights, economic prosperity**, national and international **security, peace, justice, self-determination** and **sovereignty**.

The United States and Trinidad and Tobago are **partners** in all of these areas.

I would like to take a few moments to highlight some of the many instances of our **successful cooperation** over the past twelve months.

This year, for instance, we've **connected Trinbagonians and Americans** in everything from **rocket science** to **underwater archaeology**, **climate change** to **disaster management**, **FBI training** to **youth education** and development.

The Embassy issued approximately **thirty thousand visas** for Trinbagonian travelers to visit the United States, a testament to the **numerous personal ties** between the **people** of our two countries.

We've sent **hundreds** of Trinidad and Tobago leaders on **official visits** to the United States.

In fact last week, three of your secondary school **track and field athletes** had the chance to meet Secretary Clinton in Washington!

And in the past year, **Navy Divers**, a **Nobel Laureate**, a **Neuro-radiologist**, and America's **National Symphony Orchestra** **have all visited T&T** to share their talents and exchange ideas.

Trinidad and Tobago hosted US Attorney General Eric Holder as well as the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies as part of our ongoing partnership to strengthen **peace and safety** in the Western Hemisphere.

I'm proud that Trinidad and Tobago and the US also **work together** on child protection, women's empowerment, economic partnerships, and HIV, ophthalmology, and other health issues.

And we're **delighted** to have members of Trinidad and Tobago's own **Youth Philharmonic Orchestra** here tonight to perform for us.

Young musicians, you are a **wonderful example** of the **bright future** of T&T.

It's been a very productive year and we have great cause to celebrate.

So, I would like to **thank** everyone for being here, and express my gratitude to everyone who worked to make this celebration happen.

**To the many generous contributors**, thank you for making this event possible, and my best wishes for your **continued success** in T&T.

To the **Hilton staff**, we appreciate all your efforts and hospitality.

To my **Embassy team** and the Marines here tonight, thank you for a **wonderful presentation**, and for all the planning and organizing that went into ensuring this evening is a smooth success.

You know, in my life, I have had the good fortune to travel the world and I have seen with my own eyes the difference between a country whose people are **free** and a country whose people are **not**.

Our two great countries share a great gift, the gift of freedom...that we must never, never take for granted and that we should **always, always** cherish.

So please, everyone – Join me in raising your glass in a toast to the United States' 236<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence and to our deep resilient **friendship and continued partnership** with the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago!

Cheers!