

Remarks by Chargé d'Affaires Margaret B. Diop
Embassy of the United States of America
Independence Day -- July 2, 2014
Hyatt Regency, POS

SALUTATIONS

- ❖ The Honorable, the Chief Justice Mr. Justice Ivor Archie, and Mrs.
Archie
- ❖ The Honorable Wade Mark, Speaker of the House of Representatives
- ❖ Dr. the Honorable Surujrattan Rambachan, Acting Minister of
Foreign Affairs and other Cabinet Ministers
- ❖ The Honorable Orville London, Chief Secretary of the Tobago
House of Assembly
- ❖ Ministers of State
- ❖ Ambassadors and High Commissioners accredited to the Republic of
Trinidad and Tobago
- ❖ Major General Kenrick Maharaj, Chief of Defense Staff
- ❖ Mr. Stephen Williams, Acting Commissioner of Police and Ms.
Quinlan
- ❖ Mr. Sterling Stewart, Acting Commissioner of Prisons and Mrs.
Stewart

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- ❖ Mr. Roosevelt Bruce, Acting Chief Fire Officer and Mrs. Bruce
- ❖ Esteemed members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps
- ❖ Staff of the U.S. Embassy
- ❖ Members of the Media
- ❖ Other Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome *and* thank you for joining us this evening to celebrate America's 239th Birthday!!!!

I first want to *commend* the citizens, officials, and institutions of Trinidad and Tobago, for your perseverance and dedication. *I'm especially* proud, knowing that the friendship between our two countries is, *and will continue to be*, deep and robust.

I also want to express my sincere gratitude *to everyone* who assisted in organizing this celebratory event.

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To the U.S. Embassy Staff and Marine Security Guard Detachment, thank you for all of your excellent work. Thank you, Thank you.

To our many donors -- listed on the back of the program *and on the banners in the hallway* -- Thank You for your generosity, in helping to ensure tonight's success.

To the Prison Services Band for the wonderful music...*thank you.*

To Soloist Ms. Tahirah Osborne, for the wonderful Rendition of the *Anthems* of the United States and Trinidad and Tobago (Wasn't she fantastic?!)

The theme of this year's celebration is: "Songs of America..."

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We have such a rich and diverse musical tradition in the U.S.: *Blues, Country, Rock, Soul, Classical, Rap*, and everything else.

Just like Trinidad and Tobago. With *Calypso, Soca, Parang, Chutney*, and, of course, How-can we-forget- Pan?!

In America, music has been part of many of our great national moments.

From Mahalia Jackson, Joan Baez, and Bob Dylan singing at the March on Washington in 1963.

To Bruce Springsteen and Pete Seeger singing, “This Land is Your Land” at President Barack Obama’s first inauguration concert where the theme was “We Are One.”

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In Stevie Wonder's song, "Black Man," he celebrates the contributions of persons of color to American history when he sang, *in part*:

"Now, I know the birthday of a nation
Is a time when a country celebrates,
But as your hand touches your heart
Remember we all played a part in America
To help that banner wave..."

In fact, Stevie will open the Special Olympic Games in my hometown of Los Angeles, California this summer!

SIXTY-FOUR athletes, from Trinidad and Tobago, will be participating *in the Games*, and I had the pleasure of meeting some of them when they came in to get their visas. These are

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truly inspiring young men and women, who, with their talent and hard work, are reaching their “Highest Ground.”

So, let's have a round of applause for the Special Olympic Athletes, representing Trinidad and Tobago.

America's 239th year has seen many changes, and one that I am *especially proud of*, is the announcement, yesterday, of the Restoration of Diplomatic Relations with Cuba.

President Obama's vision for this hemisphere *is an Americas* where responsibilities are widely shared, and where countries combine their strengths to advance common interests and values.

Yesterday, we took a Big step toward making that vision a reality.

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As the President himself said: “This is what change looks like.”

Now, as we all know, in Trinidad and Tobago, this is an election year.

So.. I am going to stay away from Politics.

But, I do want to say one thing:

The U.S. Government does not endorse, *nor support* any candidate or party.

What we Do Support is....*the Democratic Process.*

And, frankly, we look forward to continuing to work closely -- together with the government, public institutions, the private sector, and civil society.

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Independence Day -- July 2, 2014
Hyatt Regency, POS

In security, with our partners in the Trinidad and Tobago Defense Force, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and other security services.

In commerce, to promote trade between our two countries, and to work with Trinidad and Tobago to diversify its economy.

In governance, to support your efforts to build strong national institutions and promote human rights *for all*.

And in education, as we work closely with the great tertiary and secondary institutions here, and promote opportunities for study and exchange in the U.S.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention our college fair, taking place here at the Hyatt on October 24-25....*in collaboration with our Canadian colleagues.*

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The United States and Trinidad and Tobago have so much in common: Language, Culture, Values.

Like Trinidad and Tobago, America is a diverse nation: A country comprised of: willing immigrants, the already-present Native Americans, and African-Americans, who were brought in chains.

But...whether our people were already settled in America, *came willingly*, or arrived *as slaves*, we have worked together to build a nation that aspires *to the ideal* of equal opportunity *and justice for all.*

We have made great progress. But, there is still much work to be done, as the horrific events in Charleston, South Carolina make all too clear.

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When faced with violence, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”

So while we all hope that justice is served in South Carolina and beyond..., we also must heal and come together as a nation.

And, the healing will happen when we recognize that what we have in common is so much greater than what divides us. When we realize that we all want the same things... When we respect and learn to listen to each other.

There is only one way that we can succeed...

...Together...

Shortly after signing the *Declaration of Independence* that we celebrate today, Benjamin Franklin said: “We must all hang

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together, or, assuredly, we will all hang separately.”

That's still true today, in the United States and throughout the world.

Two hundred and thirty-nine years ago, Franklin and his colleagues undertook this experiment we call democracy—imperfect and incomplete as it was at the time, unfinished as it is now.

They were bold enough *to insist* that people were born equal, with rights that could not be taken away by any king or state.

Those ideas were radical at the time.

Now, they are common practice and aspirations of people all over the world.

And...For this year's celebration, we chose the theme:

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Independence Day -- July 2, 2014
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Songs of America, because music celebrates the human spirit.

And speaks to our highest aspirations...

Like Richie Havens singing about “Freedom...”

Aretha Franklin demanding “Respect..,” (R-E-S-P-E-C-T)

...Or Whitney Houston saying “You can't take away my
dignity...”

These words resonate with us all...

They *might be* American songs, but they are not exclusively
American...

...Because the promise of America is a dream of all people.

The chance to become the best of ourselves...

To be touched, as Abraham Lincoln said, by the better
angels of our nature.

Or, as Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell sang it, “Ain't no

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mountain high enough...”

There is no limit to what we can do...

...Forged from the love of liberty...with boundless faith in
our destiny...side by side we stand: The United States and
Trinidad and Tobago...

“You and I...”

Together, as partners *and* friends...

“We are family...”

“All of We...”

So please, everyone, join me in raising a glass to our lasting
partnership with the people of the Republic of Trinidad and
Tobago, and the 239th Anniversary of *United States of America's*
Independence. Happy July 4th!

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I would now like to introduce, Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan,
Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, to bring greetings on behalf
of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago --
Dr. Rambachan, *please*.