

**Chargé d’Affaires Margaret B. Diop**  
**Embassy of the United States of America**  
**Independence Day Remarks**  
**July 3, 2014**

- ❖ The Honorable the Chief Justice Mr. Justice Ivor Archie and Mrs. Archie
- ❖ Dr. the Honorable Roodal Moonilal, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs
- ❖ The Honorable Wade Mark, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Mrs. Mark
- ❖ Cabinet Ministers
- ❖ Ministers of State
- ❖ Dr. the Honorable Keith Rowley, Leader of the Opposition & Mrs. Rowley
- ❖ Ambassadors and High Commissioners accredited to Trinidad and Tobago
- ❖ The Right Reverend Claude Berkley, Bishop of Trinidad and Tobago
- ❖ Brother Harrypersad Maharaj, President of the Inter-Religious Organization
- ❖ My Colleagues of the Diplomatic Corps
- ❖ Members of the Senate
- ❖ Members of the House of Representatives
- ❖ Chief Representatives of International Organizations accredited to Trinidad and Tobago
- ❖ Ms. Margaret Parillon, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Head of the Foreign Service
- ❖ Permanent Secretaries
- ❖ Mr. Roger Gaspard, Director of Public Prosecutions
- ❖ Mr. Stephen Williams, Acting Commissioner of Police and Ms. Avason Quinlan
- ❖ His Worship Raymond Tim Kee, Mayor of Port of Spain and Mrs. Tim Kee
- ❖ Senior Government Officials , Heads of Department and Chairmen of Statutory Boards and Authorities
- ❖ Honorary Consuls
- ❖ 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 238<sup>th</sup> birthday!**

Although *honestly*, America doesn't look **a day over 200**.

While the Declaration of Independence was signed 238 years ago tomorrow, it took a few more years of struggle before we gained independence.

Moreover, it took the contributions and sacrifices **of many** who strongly believed in the values of freedom and equality – *across race, ethnicity, gender and religious differences* – to help build our nation into the inclusive democracy **that it has become**.

When President Obama proclaimed yesterday, July 2nd, the “50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,” he noted that laws alone cannot right every wrong, but they possess an **unmatched power** to anchor **lasting change**.

The passage of the Civil Rights Act **transformed** our understanding of justice, equality, and democracy, and banned discrimination in public places; **prohibited** employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and provided a long-awaited **enforcement mechanism** for the integration of schools.

Over time, and *through struggle*, America continues to work towards being a country where, as you say here, “**every creed and race finds an equal place.**”

America and Trinidad and Tobago share a desire to promote common ideals of liberty and democracy *for both our citizens, and* for people *around the world*.

As many of you are aware, we have not yet been able to welcome our Ambassador, as he awaits confirmation by the United States Senate.

**Yet, despite his absence,** we have maintained the strength and depth of the relationship between our two nations.

Resting on the foundation *of our shared principles,* we have continued our active collaboration and have relied **not on** a single individual, **but on** our institutions and organizations – **and the dedicated people therein** – to work together.

There's so much we accomplished together this year, from very successful joint exercises with the TT Defence Force and the U.S. Southern Command, to *countless* law enforcement exchanges.

One area I must also highlight is our mutual commitment **to defend human rights**.

Over the last year, we have worked with groups like the Consortium of Disability Organizations to **improve access and education for persons with disabilities**.

The **U.S. Department of State also recognized** Trinidad and Tobago's success in combating human trafficking, which is -- in reality - modern slavery.

**This June**, Ms. Charmaine Gandhi-Andrews was honored by U.S. Secretary of State Kerry as a Trafficking in Persons Hero -- for her **extensive work** as head of the Counter Trafficking Unit.

Her tireless efforts to **protect victims and punish offenders** are emblematic of Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to securing human rights.

*In addition*, this April, the people of Trinidad and Tobago welcomed Judy and Dennis Shepard. Their son, Matthew, was murdered in 1998 in a hate crime for the simple reason that he was gay.

In the years since, they have delivered a message of **understanding and acceptance for all**, regardless of sexual orientation. We join them in recognizing that gay rights are human rights. **We were pleased to see during their visit** how many leaders in society and Government came forward to welcome them.

I'm proud that we have been able to work together not only in this capacity, but in other important areas, **such as trade, education, and cultural exchange**.

I 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**.

As I move to close, I wish publicly to express my personal thanks to **Ms. Margaret Parillon**, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, who will be leaving Government service after thirty-four (34) years. “Margaret, I, -- *if I may* -- along with colleagues in the Diplomatic Corps -- wish you the very best as you embark on a new adventure.”

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

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

Thank you to the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force Steel Orchestra -- performing here tonight.

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.

I would like to conclude with words from **the late Maya Angelou**, whose Trinidadian roots helped to shape her work. Dr. Angelou's poems spoke volumes about the human capacity to bridge differences and unite for a common cause. As she wrote, "**We can learn to see each other, *see ourselves in each other*, and recognize that human beings are more alike than we are unlike.**"

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 238<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *United States of America's Independence*.  
**Happy July 4<sup>th</sup>!**

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