



A Gift to the People of Barbados: 40 Years of the Frank Collymore Hall

Remarks by Dr., The Most Honourable Kevin Greenidge, F.B., Governor, at the
**Frank Collymore Hall's 40th Anniversary Gala Evening of
Celebration**

Saturday, October 3, 2026





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Good evening,

I am delighted to be with you as we celebrate a very special milestone: forty years of the Frank Collymore Hall.

Tonight, we are not simply marking the age of a building. We are celebrating four decades of creativity, talent and culture, and the cherished place this Hall holds in the life of Barbados.

This Hall bears the name of Frank Collymore, a Barbadian man of the arts in every sense. He was a Combermere schoolmaster for nearly half a century, an actor in some 41 plays, a poet and an artist, and, as editor of BIM, a champion of young Caribbean writers such as George Lamming and Kamau Brathwaite. It is fitting that his name stands over a stage that has given so many Barbadians their voice.

When this Hall opened in 1986, our first Governor, the late Sir Courtney Blackman, called it a gift to the people of Barbados, a place where local and international artists could share their talent. At the time, it was a controversial gift. A concert hall was no part of a central bank's traditional role, but Sir Courtney was adamant that the Bank's headquarters should include spaces the public could use. Forty years on, that gift has been opened again and again, by every artist who has stood on this stage and every audience that has filled these seats.

Sir Courtney was fond of quoting Pablo Picasso: "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life." No words better describe what happens in this room. For forty years, people have arrived carrying the cares of the day and left renewed and uplifted.

Fittingly, tonight's programme is a nod to the Premiere Concert of 1986, which brought together music, dance, theatre and the literary arts. The performers who graced this stage that first night began a tradition. Tonight, a new generation carries it forward.

That is the true measure of this Hall: a platform where talent is discovered, nurtured and shared, and where many young Barbadians have had their first encounter with the performing arts.

None of this happens by itself. I pay special tribute to the Hall's first manager, Dr. The Honourable Allyson Leacock, who laid the foundation on which everything since has been built, and to the

managers who followed, each of whom carried that vision forward. I thank the staff who, over four decades, have welcomed audiences and cared for this space, and the technical teams whose skill with lights, sound and stage has so often been the unseen hand behind a memorable performance.

I also thank the performers and artists who have given so generously of their talent, and the friends of the Hall whose loyalty and support have sustained it through the years. Many of you are here tonight, and this celebration is as much yours as it is the Hall's.

Looking ahead, the Hall's future will depend on the talent and imagination of our people, and on our conviction that the arts are not an optional extra in national life. They are part of who we are, helping us to tell our stories, preserve our heritage, and see ourselves through new eyes. And they are part of our economy. As I have said before, culture is not charity. It is an economic sector, and one that deserves deliberate investment.

May the Frank Collymore Hall remain, for generations to come, a gift to the people of Barbados: a place where established artists practise their craft, emerging talent finds its stage, and every soul that enters leaves enriched.

Congratulations on forty remarkable years.

And now, in the spirit of that first performance in 1986, let us celebrate the extraordinary talent of Barbados.

Thank you and enjoy your evening.