

**ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE, MR JUSTICE IVOR ARCHIE
AT THE ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
NATIONAL ACADEMY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, PORT OF SPAIN, DECEMBER 29, 2011**

Let me begin by saying what a privilege it is to be here this evening, and to have been invited to be a part of this event. It is an opportunity to acknowledge and pay special tribute to Trinidad and Tobago's finest. It seems to be an unfortunate part of our culture that we spend a lot of time denigrating ourselves. In this celebratory season, it is important that we take the time to celebrate our accomplishments and to acknowledge the positive qualities that reside in us that have made those accomplishments possible. Accordingly, I thank the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee, not only on my own behalf, but also on behalf of the vast number of our citizens identifying with this event. I trust that our sense of pride in our country and people will be lifted, as much as mine is, by the well deserved recognition that will be bestowed on some of our own for outstanding feats performed in the field of Sport.

That recognition and acknowledgement will be accorded against the backdrop of Olympism, which is the foundation on which the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee has been built: a set of internationally adopted principles and a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind; a global Charter that blends sport with culture and education, finding in that combination the creation of a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental, ethical principles.

It is important for our own self-confidence to remember that our achievements are measured against international standards. Olympism also has as its goal, the placing of sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society – and one concerned with the preservation of human dignity. As I have been at pains to remind us at every opportunity, that is the standard of legitimacy that all of our national institutions must meet.

These principles are articulated in the more modern versions of what has become the Olympics Charter. But when we go back several centuries to the origins of the Olympics, we are told that the procreators of the games, citizens of Ancient Greece - and I emphasise, CITIZENS and not ATHLETES – were meant to

live by a set of ideals, values and morals. These ideals, morals and values embodied the Olympic Spirit, and were classically termed in Greek: Areti, or virtue; Amila, noble competition; Timi or honour; Elefteria, freedom, and Irini or peace.

We are told further that for the athlete himself, as a part of the community, only a life of honour was worth living. An honourable man was a man with self discipline and respect for himself, the Gods and the laws of the city. He took pride in carrying out his duty towards his family and his town. He valued moral rewards more than profit. If only everyone in public office could rise to that standard, think of the kind of society we could create! Our awardees, by their achievements, are therefore challenging us to create a better Trinidad and Tobago.

The athlete who was well respected by his fellow athletes and citizens was the one who aspired to be the best. He showed respect for his fellow competitors, and followed the rules of the Game. Such an athlete exhibited restraint and avoided overzealous behaviour. A noble competitor accepted both defeat and victory gracefully.

The philosophy espoused by the founder of the modern Olympics, Pierre de Coubertain, however, is that the Olympic Spirit is neither the property of one race or one age. I extend that to mean that the Olympic Spirit is also neither the property of one person, nor one group, nor one community, nor the exclusive property even of the athlete as is popularly held.

My framing of the model athlete of ancient Greece in the bigger picture of the wider ancient Greek society which infused the Olympic spirit is very deliberate. I am suggesting that this function cannot be about performance in the field of sport alone. This really ought to be the catalyst and benchmark for the transformation of our whole society.

At the very least, it has to be about the prerequisites to performance in any field, and ideally, it should be about the promotion and diffusion of that spirit beyond our sportsmen and sportswomen, to each and every member of our society, particularly those of us in positions of authority and influence: a spirit that up to the present is synonymous with the quality and the value of excellence.

Excellence, to borrow from the conclusions of Ronnie Oldham, is the result of caring more than others think is wise, risking more than others think is safe, dreaming more than others think is practical, and expecting more than others think is possible. It is the commitment to high quality performance that produces outstanding results of lasting value. Excellence believes in continuous improvement and never being satisfied with anything being less than it can be. It is quality as a way of life. It is the formula for the realisation of every successful society.

An objective appraisal of our society and our region will reveal that, as small as our countries are, we have been able to produce men and women who possessed those qualities, and who expended their extraordinary gifts and attributes selflessly on the improvement of their own citizens and societies beyond their shores.

Because of their caring for others, the confidence with which they assumed risk, the vigour with which they pursued their dreams, their positive response to high expectations, and their commitment to quality performance, life became a far better experience for them and countless others. As a result, their contributions are indelibly etched on our own and many other societies, and remain unmatched up to today, embracing almost every field of endeavour: politics, economics, business, law, the arts and literature, humanities, and religion and the field of sport. Their legacy abounds with a wealth of experience that in turn has honed values such as discipline, production and tolerance, which are supposed to guide the continuing development of our society. I dare say that this function this evening is also about those values.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, values such as hard work, sense of responsibility, integrity in human relations, tolerance and respect for others, aren't mere noble ideas or ideals. They are really pragmatic principles for accomplishment which every society must learn and transmit to successive generations as a psychological foundation for its further advancement. The values of a society are a crucial aspect of its people's self-conception of who they are and what they want to become.

And so this evening's awards lead me to once again pose a number of fundamental questions I asked at the opening of the new law term in September, namely: What sort of society do we want to build? What are our core values? Where are the virtues of discipline and tolerance that we espouse? Is mere tolerance enough as a watchword or must we revisit our national motto.

One may well summarise all of those questions into a quite simple one: When will we adopt the Olympic spirit? Because by so doing we will be recreating an era in which living was by a set of ideals, values and morals encompassing virtue, noble competition, honour, freedom and peace; of people seized with self discipline and respect for themselves, for their God and for their fellowman at all levels of our society, and taking pride in performing their duty to family and country.

As we prepare to celebrate 50 years as a nation, I don't think these ideals are too lofty for us to aspire towards and achieve together.

I congratulate this evening's awardees, and, in the spirit of the well adopted Olympic principle that the most important thing in the Games is not to win but to take part, I salute all athletes of Trinidad and Tobago, those of generations past and generation now, those who are here tonight and those who were not able to be with us this evening, and I commend their excellence to the entire national community. May they continue to inspire us, and may the Olympics Spirit descend on all of us, particularly in this season of peace and goodwill.

I thank you.