

Laureates' Acceptance Speeches



Winslow Craig, Arts & Letters, Guyana

Before I formally accept this award I would like to express my deepest and most sincere condolences on behalf of my family and myself to the family, close relatives and associates of the late Dr. Anthony Sabga.

Dr Sabga was a giant of a patriarchal figure who stood tall and strong among Caribbean peoples. He was a shining example of Caribbean patriotism and generosity. His absence will be felt for a long time but his generous spirit will live on forever in the lives of many. While we mourn his passing, this evening is a celebration of his long and fruitful life. May his soul rest in peace.

When I embarked on my artistic journey as a sculptor it was not because I expected to be honoured or rewarded for the work that I did, but rather, recognising that my talent was a divine blessing from God, I could do no less than honour Him by giving thanks and

striving to do the very best that I could do and to be the very best that I can be every day of my life as a sculptor.

It was never my objective to please anyone but rather to allow creativity to flow with freedom in to sculptural forms that reflected the very best of my artistic gift. This evening, I am greatly honoured that the Anthony Sabga Caribbean Award for Excellence has recognised my efforts in my chosen field of sculpture and placed it on the pedestal of excellence.

It is with great humility and much pleasure that I receive this honour as a Laureate and accept this award for the recognition of my work in the category of Arts and Letters. I am proud and deeply moved to be placed among the esteemed and exalted company of the Laureates who came before me. It is with the most profound gratitude that I say a heartfelt thank you to

Laureates' Acceptance Speeches

patron Dr Norman Sabga and his father before him and the ANSA McAL Foundation for this significant recognition of my work over the years. As I look to the future I will continue to do my very best to merit this honour that has been bestowed upon me this day.

I encourage the ANSA McAL Foundation and its esteemed Regional Eminent Persons Panel to continue supporting and promoting excellence in the Caribbean and I applaud you for your shining example of excellence that you have been throughout the years to all Caribbean people.

To Sir Shridath Ramphal and his distinguished colleagues of the Panel, thank you all. To Dr Seeta Shah Roath and members of the Guyana Nominating Committee, thank you for seeing the merits of my work. To Ms Roxana Kawal, persistent and relentless researcher, thank you. To my referees Dr Frank Anthony, Mr Philbert Gajadhar and Mr Shimuel Jones, thank you all very much. I would also like to say thank you to:

- My extended family – especially my dear old mother and my now four years departed father whose latent talent for carving blossomed in me as a sculptor.
- My 3 sisters – Debbie, Lola and Barbara and my two brothers Henry and Stephen.
- Special thank you to my beautiful, loving and supportive wife Joan-ann and our three sons, you are my inspiration and joys of my life.
- I would also like to say thanks to all my former teachers tutors and lecturers.
- Earl Bowen thank you for the applica-

tion form that opened the door to my career as an artist.

- Josefa Tamayo you taught me the abc of sculpture, thank you.
- Burrowse School of Arts thanks for refining raw talent.
- The Commonwealth Foundation for Arts and Crafts, thank you for providing the opportunity for me to expand and improve my capacity as an artist.
- To Castellani House, thank you for providing a home to some of my most significant works.
- The University of Guyana, thank you for providing the platform from which I can share and give back in a most meaningful way.

To friends and colleagues, supporters of my career and lovers of my work, thank you all. To Phillip Alsopp, a dear friend, supporter and collector of my art over the years, thank you. To all whose names I may have failed to mention and to this distinguished gathering thank you all. I conclude by extending warmest congratulations to my fellow Laureates. All praise and thanks be to The Almighty.



Laureates' Acceptance Speeches



Mr Kwamé Ryan, Arts & Letters Trinidad & Tobago

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen: people often ask me what it is exactly that an orchestral conductor does. What, they ask, are those strange patterns traced through the air, and is the conductor vital to the performance or rather a kind of ornamental figurehead?

Most of all, they are fascinated by “the stick” and want to understand its seemingly magical properties.

The scoop is as follows:

The patterns are a code, the stick is dispensable, but the conductor himself is not, because he or she is the source of the *over-arching idea* that, moment for moment makes 80 – 100 individual musicians into an orchestra in the first place. You see, in essence, conducting is the art of bringing diverse people, with diverse talents and ideas together in the service of one common idea.

This means not micro-managing, but rather inspiring and encouraging the

musicians, interweaving their unique qualities into a whole, greater than the sum of its parts. In the space thereby created, they “hear each other” - discover what they have in common, but also what makes them different and then occupy one stage from which they represent their common idea, be it composed of unison or counterpoint, contrast or connection.

From the moment I arrived in Guyana and started meeting my fellow laureates, I was struck by the unmistakable familiarity of the experience I was having, but could not quite put my finger on it. Then this morning it dawned on me. I have become a player in a new ensemble!

Just think: My fellow laureates and I are diverse individuals of diverse talent, brought together to represent an idea. To be sure, we all play very different “instruments”, but in the course of just twenty-four hours, I have found myself by turns inspired, challenged,

Laureates' Acceptance Speeches



affirmed and engaged by each and every one of them.

Each of us follows his or her own line, but as we entered into this process, we became aware of the lines being followed by others, and now have the opportunity to learn and transform as parts of a greater whole.

I regret that I will not have the opportunity to

meet the great “conductor” after whom these Awards have been named and to whose vision for the identification and nurturing of Caribbean excellence I hope to make a meaningful contribution in music and the other performing arts. I am however aware, that the truly great conductors influence not only by their physical presence, but also by their ethos, which endures, and remains enshrined in the institutions they have led.

Going forward, my Youth Music Exchange (or YMX as it is commonly known) will unite musicians of diverse backgrounds and traditions, but common love of music, and will commit to offering to its international community of students the benefit of what I feel so privileged to now enjoy. I refer to: Timely encouragement and the inspiration to set goals higher and with greater adaptability than I ever thought possible. I simply cannot imagine doing anything more rewarding.

Heartfelt thanks to the Trinidad and Tobago nominating committee and to the ANSA McAL Foundation for this honour, and also to you ladies and gentlemen for being here this evening to share this experience with me and my fellow laureates.

Laureates' Acceptance Speeches



Shadel Nyack Compton Entrepreneurship Grenada

This is indeed a very special moment for me. I guess this may be a bit of what it's like to receive an Oscar - so I am considering this Grenada's Oscar! Thank you!

It is great to be here in Guyana. We have been extremely well received here. The hospitality has been amazing, and I would like to thank His Excellency David Granger warm reception yesterday, the ANSA McAL family, the Hotel staff, and everyone that has been very welcoming and caring!

I wish to express sympathies and that of the people of Grenada to the family of Dr. Anthony Sabga. Exactly two months ago, I had this extraordinary opportunity to meet Dr. Sabga, I was a bit intimidated about meeting this magnanimous man, but he immediately put me at ease with his graciousness once I entered the room. We chatted like we were old friends. I was actually quite flabbergasted that this mighty business magnate, was so mild-mannered, humble, caring and overwhelmingly charming. He was interested in me, in my business and he immediately imparted valuable business advice that I eagerly received. He even went on to say, "We are going to work with you and pay some attention to your business," but

quickly added this disclaimer "not to worry ... I am not going to take over your business." I thanked him for his insightfulness and altruism, in offering these outstanding awards to our Caribbean people.

We spoke of the future, and I looked forward to making him proud by expanding my business ventures as a result of my award. I left his office feeling inspired and on top of the world. His passing deeply saddened me. I was looking forward to personally learning at his feet. (I hope that his children will still grant me that favour). The legacy he left behind serves as an inspiration for all Caribbean people. By his passing, I am even more driven to honour his legacy by committing to achieve further heights of excellence and to dedicate more to the service of others.

I am extremely grateful, honoured and humbled to be recognized on this regional stage for my work as an entrepreneur. I wish to sincerely thank the ANSA McAL Foundation for this recognition and bestowal upon me. I am also grateful to the Foundation, that you had the insight to make this award non-gender specific. This allows for women to be recognised and celebrated, women as having the vision, the talent, the ability and courage to achieve at great heights in what has traditionally

Laureates' Acceptance Speeches

been a male-dominated area. A person's gender should not be a hindrance nor an advantage – great work is rewarded regardless of who you are.

I thank God first of all, for his rich blessings and all the opportunities He has afforded me through this business, for His service and for the service of my country and my people. To my nominator, Dr Beverley Steele, I stand here today, because of you! Thank you for believing in me - thank you for persisting, even when I tried to bow out! Thank you for your mentorship and encouragement. By this award, I plan to inspire others to excellence as you have inspired me. I also thank Charmaine Gardner, the OECS Nominating Committee Chair, for advocating so strongly for me before the Eminent Persons Panel. Thank you to the

Eminent Persons Panel who made the final selection, for seeing merit in our work at Belmont Estate. I pledge to enlarge this award and to make you proud. Thank you also to all my referees for your astounding references.

When my journey with Belmont Estate began, I never envisioned that it would have blossomed into the business it is today – contributing to the developmental goals of Grenada and

impacting the lives of so many. Being nominated was the catalyst for deep introspection, not just about my journey as an entrepreneur but as a Caribbean woman, employer, mother, daughter, social entrepreneur and a Christian. The underlying theme in my introspection was **GRATITUDE**. I am grateful to Almighty God for my mum, who raised me to be God-fearing, honest, and compassionate towards others, to live the golden rule - a life of service, sacrifice and passion. I still remember the little rhyme you taught me - Good, better, best, never let it rest, til you make the good better, and the better best. That was excellence in the making. All that I am is because of you! Thanks mum for your unflinching support - always! I trust

that I can be as good a mother to my children Anna and Benno, and that I can impart to them the values that you taught me, so that they too can live life with passion could go out and make a positive contribution to this world. Anna and



Laureates' Acceptance Speeches

Benno, I love you both and thanks for filling my life with laughter and love. I am also grateful for the tremendous support that I have received from all my family and friends, and grateful that my dear friends Dr Dessima Williams, Justice Shiraz Aziz and Dr. Barry Aziz are here to support me. You represent my friends and family who cannot be here today, and I am very grateful.

To my team of about 100 committed loyal staff who have stood with me in thick and thin, who give of their all without reservation, who sacrifice, who believed in me when we started and we were about 10, and they had to believe my dream that one day busloads of tourists would drive one hour from St. Georges to experience plantation life, when all they could see at Belmont Estate at that time was "bush" and the only visitors to the estate then were "sandflies".

They believed, and have stuck with me through hurricanes and several devastating personal tragedies. They too are my family. Belmont Estate belongs to them. And I wouldn't be here today without them. And so, I would like to recognize several of my team that are here today, Phebe, Jillian, Petrina, Alicia, Rochelle and Dwain. To Paula and Shereen who are here in spirit. You represent all of Belmont Estate, my heartfelt thanks goes out to you for all that you do everyday, and for your belief in me and in Belmont Estate's mission - To be a model of sustainable agriculture and tourism practices, by producing organic products, creating extraordinary experiences and preserving our heritage and environment, so as to enrich the lives of others. I also wish to thank all our stakeholders, partners and customers. You have all paid a valuable part in our journey. Thank you.

I am also deeply grateful that I am from a country that provided that enabling environment for me as a woman to establish and grow my business, and for the Grenadian government's strong policy position towards

supporting business development in the areas of agribusiness, sustainable tourism, and value added manufacturing. Concessions, technical support, training, recognitions, grants and soft loans, enabled by the government, have all assisted entrepreneurs in building a sustainable business. As the OECS candidate, with St. Vincent origins, and strong St. Lucian family ties, I also pay homage to St. Lucia for all the contributions made to my life and to the OECS for its policies on sustainable development for the region.

Delivering excellence at Belmont Estate has required me on many occasions to step outside of my comfort zone to define my own route to my destination; and sometimes success was possible only because of my dogged determination. This is not a journey for the faint at heart. It requires one to take risks, overcome disasters, find solutions, and to recognize that somewhere in the midst of the successes and failures is reality. I have learnt as Kipling says in his poem 'If' To meet with Triumph and Disaster, and treat those two imposters just the same. I have learnt that excellence is an ever-changing dynamic. It is about accepting that there are times you would fail; and having the courage to rise again. It is the art of connection, of being human, and of making a difference.

As a Caribbean agri-preneur, I would like to encourage more women, more young people to pursue careers in agribusiness and agri-tourism. And yes, farming is fun, and yes, agriculture is sexy! In this region we are blessed with beautiful landscapes, rich soil, industrious & hospitable people, rich heritage and culture. In this age of technology, the internet has given us full access to all information like the rest of the world. Our communication and transportation networks have us globally connected. We need to harness the opportunities that we have to ensure food security for the region, feed ourselves and lessen our food import bill! Strong regional policies that support private sector

Laureates' Acceptance Speeches

development in sustainable agriculture and tourism initiatives in the Caribbean can drive manufacturing, food production, export, visitor arrivals and make a positive difference in our economies. My personal dream for my island that we optimize our destination branding — Pure Grenada — The Spice of the Caribbean — by committing to organic practices in agriculture — ensuring clean, healthy, safe foods and improving the health of our nation & protecting our environment at the same time.

For over 200 years Belmont Estate has been producing and selling cocoa beans. We are very pleased that this award will allow us to complete the chocolate factory that we recently started, giving us an opportunity to export high quality value added, single sourced chocolate from cocoa, grown, processed and manufactured all at the same source, Belmont Estate.

We are grateful for the MOU collaboration that we have with the Cocoa Research Center at UWI, to ensure high quality standards at every stage along the value chain. This award will also assist us in executing our recently signed MOU. In addition, we intend to expand our goat dairy production from goat's cheese to include high quality feta cheese for the local market and to complete a line of organic spices, sauces, pickles, confectionaries, jams and jellies for the local and export market. Belmont Estate has been able to transition from farm, to agritourism, and now this award into high quality value added manufacturing for domestic and export markets. The sustainability of our business

rests heavily on this new manufacturing thrust, so we are indeed grateful for this opportunity to expand and continue to contribute to nation building and people development.

In closing I would like to congratulate the other laureates my new friends. I am truly pleased to be in the presence of such distinguished men. I stand in awe of your genius, work and contributions. I challenge you, let us bear Dr Anthony Sabga's torch high. His passing provides us with a greater challenge to honour his legacy of excellence and service.

To the ANSA McAL Foundation, I believe the greatest expression of thanks that I could give to you is my commitment to further development, brand excellence, inspiration and excellence. I further invite you to consider holding your next award ceremony in Grenada, so that we can, like Guyana, have an opportunity to express thanks through hospitality, and share with you the wonders of the Spice of the Caribbean.

Thanks to all you distinguished ladies and gentlemen. You have been a fantastic audience. Do enjoy the rest of the evening.



Laureates' Acceptance Speeches



Dr Christopher Bulkan Public & Civic Contributions Guyana

I'd like to join the previous speakers in expressing my regret at the passing of the Patron of these awards, Dr Anthony Sabga and to extend to his family and associates my sympathies. Though this may be of little comfort now, Dr Sabga's life and legacy will endure for a long time – not only for how much he has personally accomplished, but more powerfully through all the persons and organisations he has empowered with his generous philanthropy as well as through the countless others, throughout our diverse region, who will in turn be inspired to aim for excellence.

I make this observation regarding excellence as a general comment on the stated purpose of the award, and in no way as embracing it as a description of what I've done. To be frank, I feel undeserving partly because so much of what I do is collaborative. In particular, all the recent work I have undertaken in the way of human rights advocacy has been as part of a group of law teachers at

the UWI Faculty of Law, which we call the University of the West Indies Rights Advocacy Project, U-RAP for short. And comprising the heart and soul of U-RAP is my colleague at UWI, Tracy Robinson, who is a tireless, unyielding, dedicated, and wholly altruistic advocate for the rights of others. I couldn't possibly overstate my debt to her, but wish to acknowledge it, honour our very special and productive and sustaining friendship, and express my profound gratitude to her.

Briefly, to give you a sense of our work, U-RAP aims to promote human rights, equality and social justice in the Caribbean through strategic litigation, research, advocacy, capacity building, teaching and public education. We have brought two cases seeking to promote the rights of LGBT persons: one in Belize and the other here in Guyana. U-RAP has also:

- sponsored and partnered in multi-disciplinary research on

Laureates' Acceptance Speeches

several human rights issues: the value of which is to deepen understanding of these norms and even enhance the potential for influencing policy and even law beneficially;

- provided opportunities for students to work on ongoing litigation and even intern with human rights organisations: our aim being to nurture in our students an awareness of social justice and a sense of civic responsibility; and most recently,
- we have partnered with CVC (the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities coalition) in a 3-year project to strengthen the capacity of regional lawyers to provide pro bono services and strategic assistance for several vulnerable communities including at risk youth, migrants, drug users, LGBT persons and sex workers in seven Caribbean territories.

In short, U-RAP's work is very regional in its scope, embracing multiple forms of strategies or interventions, and our targets are some of the most marginalised communities of our societies.

In keeping with my earlier disavowal of any claim of being excellent or singular, I must acknowledge that I have been the beneficiary of enormous privileges, and whatever I do pales next to the advantages I've enjoyed. Not the least of this is that I have consistently, all my life, enjoyed considerable support from family, friends, teachers, colleagues... A lot of people can take credit for nurturing and supporting me, and while it is impossible to mention them all, I would like to single out a few.

Principally, I wish to thank my mom. My siblings and I agree that we won the lottery of life, not to have been born rich or privileged, but to have had a mother whose singular purpose has been and still is to care for and nurture us – and who has had to do this, every day for the past 43 years, on her own. My mom has taught us by example, living a life of complete and unconditional generosity to all around her, a lifetime of giving and caring for many more than her 7 biological children.

I wish as well to thank my siblings, not just for their nurturing of me but also the example they have set, which have been hugely influential on my own life; my extended family, some of whom are here with me tonight; Joel Chee Alloy, who has been consistently and unconditionally supportive of all that I do; and finally, so many colleagues over the years but in the present – my U-RAP associates; Gino Persaud and Nigel Hughes whose solidarity in the ongoing litigation in Guyana has been both practically and symbolically important; and most especially Tracy Robinson and Alissa Trotz, both of whom are more like family to me than colleagues or friends. In short, I owe a tremendous debt to many; it is very empowering to have the support of so many, and for that I am truly grateful.

Finally, I wish to thank the ANSA McAL Foundation. This very generous award could not have come at a more fortuitous time, for U-RAP's funding for our two cases finishes in 2 months and both of our cases are ongoing. This award will help us with the ongoing litigation in Belize and even to fund some of the research projects we have been contemplating. As well, a huge thank you to Maria and

Laureates' Acceptance Speeches

Raymond, who have shepherded me through all the processes leading up to this award ceremony.

But even more than the monetary dimension I am appreciative of what this award potentially represents, and am grateful to both the Sabga Foundation and the respective panels that have voted for me because of what their endorsement signals. Even though equality as a broad goal is something everyone can get on board with, U-RAP works with those on the very fringes of society, and so recognition of our work represents a clear rejection of the prejudice those communities often face.

This award says to me that the respective panels see as valuable our goal of working towards a more inclusive society, which is hugely encouraging and reassuring not just in the context of the setbacks we continue to face, but also in the context of what seems to be a surge of intolerance globally. In the face of all the setbacks and challenges of this work, not to mention my own feelings of inadequacy, this award is thus enormously encouraging and once again in closing I thank all those, past and present, who have made this possible.



Dr Christopher Arif Bulkan and members of his family in Guyana, 2017