

Barack Obama

June 18, 2007

Caribbean Heritage Organization

Dear Friends,

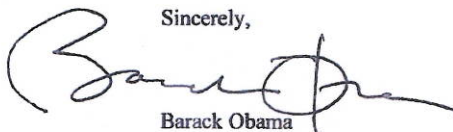
This is a letter to congratulate Suzanne de Passe on being awarded the Caribbean Heritage Organization's first special tribute, and Dr. Claire Nelson on a lifetime of invaluable service to the Caribbean-American community. Thank you for the opportunity to share these greetings with you.

We all know about Suzanne's remarkable professional achievements, as an Emmy Award-winning producer and the only African American woman ever to be nominated for an Academy Award for writing. But I would also like to take this occasion to acknowledge Suzanne's role as a trailblazer – a person whose career has made the path of every young man and woman of color in the entertainment industry that much less arduous. They have a debt to you, just as I have a debt to the African American leaders who made my career possible. I am proud to join the Caribbean Heritage Organization in saluting your accomplishments, and I look forward with awe and affection to many more years of creativity.

I also want to commend Dr. Claire Nelson, Founder and President of the Institute of Caribbean Studies (ICS), for her pioneering work. No one in this country has been more tireless – or more effective – in making the Caribbean-American community heard in Washington, D.C. Dr. Nelson has improved the lives of countless Caribbean-Americans through programs like the Caribbean American Leadership Dialogue and HIV/AIDS Prevention Awareness Seminars, bringing a new era of hope, health, and prosperity, both here and in the Caribbean. Claire, the spirit and culture of the Caribbean-American community today are strong and growing stronger because of your work.

Both of you have had an incalculable effect on the fabric of our nation, and we owe you a debt of gratitude. Last year's creation of the National Caribbean American Heritage Month was an overdue reminder that the fates of the U.S. and our close neighbors to the south are intertwined. I look forward to working with you in the coming months to strengthen our ties, and I wish you the best for a successful gala.

Sincerely,



Barack Obama



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