



The Hon. Mr. Justice Julius Isaac

(On the occasion of the Award of an Honorary Doctorate of Laws, University of the West Indies - Graduation Ceremony, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, October 21, 2000).

Chancellor, ever since a son of the soil of St. Lucia, our first Vice-Chancellor, was awarded the Nobel Prize, the lights out of this part of the West, these gems of the Antilles, have shone ever more brightly across the world. Our people have reached the highest pinnacles of achievement in every sphere, around the globe - economists, poets, writers, actors, dancers, diplomats, doctors, jurists, soldiers, priests, cricketers, athletes - especially hundred metre sprinters - you name them, they're out there, bringing glory and inspiration to us all. But the spirit of the islands never leaves them, and they return to share the riches of their experience - "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but lose his own soul?" The Honourable Mr. Justice Julius Isaac, born in the Isle of Spice, has reached the highest pinnacle in the world outside, but his soul is here tonight, in this place, in these islands, in this precious homeland of the Antilles, which it never really left.

Julius Alexander Isaac was born in the rural village of Morne DeLice, Grenada on the 18th of July, 1928, and so he shares a birthday with Nelson Mandela. For a tiny infant, in a tiny island, the names his parents chose, serendipitously, prescribed the task ahead. He would, like Julius Caesar, live the just, wise and honourable life of a trusted leader, and like Alexander the Great, he must conquer continents in the name of civilization. I submit, Chancellor, the illustrious Julius Alexander Isaac has done both.

After distinguishing himself at the Grenada Boys' Secondary School, he entered the University of Toronto to study law, graduating with his Bachelor of Arts in 1955 and Bachelor of Law in 1958. He is a member of the bars of Ontario, Saskatchewan, Grenada, and Alberta, and was certified by the Law Society of Upper Canada as a Specialist in Criminal Litigation. He has had a rich and varied, one might say "spicy" professional life

- first, in private practice in Toronto and Guelph, Ontario, and Regina, Saskatchewan; then in Grenada as a Senior Magistrate; back to Ontario as Legal Adviser to the Ontario Securities Commission, and on to the Federal Department of Justice as Chief of Federal Prosecutions in Toronto; then Assistant Deputy Attorney General, Justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario, and finally Chief Justice of the Federal Court of Canada, on December 24th, 1991 - a Christmas gift, you might say, from the people of the Caribbean to the people of Canada. If the law, as they sometimes say, is an ass, then Justice Isaac has ridden it like a prince, and made it look like a thoroughbred. He has recently retired, but continues to serve part time on the High Court in Ottawa.

His professional achievements are legion, but of particular interest in our context is the long list of lectures on issues of substance, across Canada and the Caribbean. His audiences indicate his concerns - from the Association of Caribbean and African Peoples of Manitoba, the Congress of Black Women of Canada and the Quebec Black Medical Association to the Canadian Bar Association and the Federal Court of Canada. His topics are no less varied: from "*The rule of law in developing countries in the era of globalization with particular reference to the mini-states of the Caribbean*," given as part of the Distinguished Public Lecture Series in Grenada, to the growing problems of minority youth in Canada.

He has raised the international profile of his Court by establishing relationships and consultations with the Federal Court of Australia, the Supreme Court of the Eastern Caribbean States, the Supreme Court of Trinidad and Tobago, the Supreme Court of Jamaica, and the Supreme and Constitutional Courts of South Africa. As you would expect, he has received many awards, including a Doctorate of Civil Law (*Honoris causa*) from the University of Windsor, the Commemorative Medal of Canada and the Silver Jubilee Award of Grenada. The University of the West Indies now dares to top them all.

Chancellor, the Honourable Justice Julius Isaac has served the cause of justice and caused justice to be served, with honour and integrity, from the reaches of Upper Canada to the courts of the Lesser Antilles, with increasing interest and service in the Caribbean. As he grows older and wiser, he seeks again the shores of Paradise. I trust Shakespeare would not mind if I paraphrased him, "for Julius is an honourable" man. For the honour he has brought to his office, and his contribution to jurisprudence in Canada, in the West Indies and the wider world, I invite you, by the authority vested in you by the Council and Senate of the University of the West Indies, to confer on him the Degree of Doctor of Laws (*Honoris causa*) of our University.

21st October 2000