***International Women’s Day 2017***

**Joint Message by**

**Honourable Tara Rivers, JP, Minister for Education, Employment and Gender Affairs and Honourable Osbourne Bodden, JP, Minister for Community Affairs, Youth and Sports**

8 March 2017

On behalf of the Government and the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs, and the Ministry of Community Affairs, Youth and Sports, we wish all women in the Cayman Islands a happy International Women’s Day.

The Government is pleased to support this year’s theme “Be Bold For Change”, because it calls for courageous and urgent action from all of us to take up the challenge to build a gender-inclusive world.

International Women’s Day is a platform to inspire women and men to make a difference in their communities, stand up for justice and change and be a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves.  This day is also a great opportunity for us to show our appreciation for those women, and just as significantly those men and organisations that actively strive for the betterment of our islands.

In delivering a joint message, we acknowledge that we must unite to achieve gender equality because gender equality benefits everyone. The Gender Affairs Unit and the Department of Counselling Services’ Family Resource Centre though in different ministries have similarly worked together in shaping today’s International Women’s Day Celebration event.

As the major sponsor of the International Women’s Day Celebration, the Ministry of Gender Affairs was pleased to lend their support to the Family Resource Centre helping them bring this year’s keynote speaker Dr. Jackson Katz to our shores. A renowned anti-sexism educator and activist, his pioneering work in the field of gender relations certainly reflects this year’s theme in asking us all to take personal responsibility and Be Bold for Change. We hope to benefit from his research, and are particularly interested in how his work can be harnessed to actively promote men’s participation in gender equity in our community.

Let us continue to engage in confronting and addressing the corrosive effects of inequality: in our homes, classrooms - in our boardrooms through the courtroom. To enlighten our citizens on the positive economic and social potential that will be unleashed once gender equality is fully realised, we must not only win over new converts but re-inspire each other to continue to strive for what is right. This is why the Gender Affairs Unit’s documentary “*Her Story is our History*” is so apt.

Highlighting Caymanian women and the bold decisions made which have significantly changed the political landscape of these Islands, this film charts the local women’s suffrage movement. An educational tool, it will be used to reach diverse audiences to spark discussion and explain women’s voting rights, entry into politics and other major achievements initiated by Cayman’s gender equality pioneers. Hopefully, the film will inspire boys and men, girls and women to also become change agents through involvement in civic movements and take personal responsibility for being the change they themselves want to see.

We urge you to take part in Honouring Women Month and use this opportunity as your own catalyst for taking concrete action to move our society closer to gender parity. We encourage you to visit the Family Resource Centre’s Facebook page for further details on the planned activities for the month.

On International Women’s Day, we also need to thank the Gender Affairs Unit, the Department of Counselling Services, the Department of Children and Family Services, and all welfare agencies for their efforts in continuing to champion the rights of men and women, girls and boys during trying times.

Let us be bold not just today, but every day so that we can each play a part in furthering gender equality in the Cayman Islands.

Captions

**Honourable Tara Rivers, JP, Minister for Education, Employment and Gender Affairs**

**Honourable Osbourne Bodden, JP, Minister for Community Affairs, Youth and Sports**