



GRADUATION ADDRESS

on behalf of the Honourable Mr. Justice Saunders
and Professor Owusu

**on the conferral of the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD)
from The University of the West Indies**

The Hon. Mr. Justice Adrian Saunders
President, Caribbean Court of Justice

**Address on behalf of myself and fellow Graduand
on the conferral of the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws (LLD) from The
University of the West Indies**

On behalf of myself and my fellow graduand, Professor Owusu, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the University for conferring upon us, respectively, the honorary degrees of Doctor of Science and Doctor of Laws. We receive these awards with profound gratitude and deep humility. One can hardly conceive of a greater privilege than to be recognised in this way, at such a solemn ceremony, by an institution of learning that is second to none in this region.

Certainly, in my case, I can say without hesitation, that this honour is, at least in part, a tribute to the tutelage and guidance that I and so many others have received from the eminent faculty that have taught at the University. I vividly recall sitting at the feet of towering Law Professors like Keith Patchett, Ralph Carnegie and Telford Georges. For each of them, the law was, above all else, an instrument of social change; a tool that could enhance social progress in the Caribbean. With passion and with patience, they imbued us with the desire, the skills and the confidence to treat with the law in that fashion...

The Vincentian Students Association here at Cave Hill did an interview with me a week or two ago. They asked me to reduce to three words my UWI experience. I told them "Work and Fun". Someone gently remonstrated that I had proposed only two words. I thought to myself that "Work and Fun" were indeed three words but, if that were not thought to be the case, then perhaps I could have added "Enrichment" because, the truth is that, almost in equal

measure, Work, Fun, Enrichment accurately describe the time I spent here on this Campus.

My university years were not just about the law. Far from it. Many of us immersed ourselves in the social and cultural life of Barbados and we took an active interest in world affairs. I still have fond memories of participating, for example, in the 1974 African Liberation Day demonstrations, displaying solidarity with the peoples of Southern Africa in their fight against apartheid and oppression. Most of all, I have always treasured the opportunity UWI afforded me to get to meet - and to form strong, lifelong bonds of friendship with – sisters and brothers from other countries of Caricom. These experiences formed me. They prepared me well for the tasks that presently are ahead of me. I am eternally indebted to UWI for them.

This university has every right to be proud of its achievements over the course of 70 glorious years. Its student enrolment has grown from a few dozen persons when it opened its doors in Mona in 1948 to tens of thousands at the present time. More importantly, UWI alumni now occupy leading positions in all fields of life, in all professions, in the region. It is fair to say that the realisation of the dreams and aspirations of the people of the Caribbean Community, in large measure, rest with those who have graduated this institution.

This is, of course, a huge credit to UWI. But it also generates enormous expectations, especially in the context of the times in which we live. This is the age where information has never before been as accessible as it is today. The ability to publish information to millions of persons has never been easier.

That ability can be a powerful force for good. It makes it possible for all of humanity, instantly, to be mobilised behind the most impactful endeavours.

But the opposite is also possible. Nameless, faceless publishers, with hidden agendas, can manipulate public opinion, sometimes with tremendous political, economic and social consequences. Innocent recipients of information have the greatest difficulty distilling truth from falsehood; sincerity from deliberate deception; democracy from populism.

In the face of these realities, it behoves all of us, but especially institutions of higher learning, to prepare present and succeeding generations to rally around eternal core human values. Truth, Compassion, Cooperation, Caring, Courtesy, Peace, Empathy, Hard honest labour ... These are values we must safeguard and promote if we are to take full advantage of the rich bounty the information revolution makes available to us.

But there is another value to which I must call attention. One that is vital for us in the Caribbean with our fractured experiences over the past four centuries. That other value is Self-belief. A clear sense of ourselves. An understanding of our worth as human beings and of our ability to forge our own destiny...

It is perplexing to me, for example, that so many people in the region contrive to find excuse upon excuse to justify the anomaly that, after 50 years of political independence, the laws that we proudly make should ultimately be interpreted and applied by a British institution, staffed with British judges all of whom reside in Britain. This, after Caricom states, over 15 years ago,

established their own Court, precisely to serve that purpose. This, after US\$100 million was spent to guarantee that Court's sustainability. This, after the Court, has successfully been operating for well over 10 years serving the needs of some States.

When I try to explain this to my colleagues from Asia, Africa and Latin America (as I am sometimes obliged to do at judicial colloquia), this ceases to be an anomaly. In the face of the incredulity expressed by my colleagues, it becomes an embarrassment linked directly to our perception of ourselves and the level of confidence we have in our capacity to take full responsibility for our own governance...

I temper my perplexity, I look to the future and I remain confident.

I remain confident that, as is the case with, for example, The Caribbean Development Bank, the Caribbean Examinations Council, and of course The University of the West Indies (to name just a few), the time will come when the CCJ also will be recognised as another of those Caribbean institutions whose vital contribution to the region can almost be taken for granted.

I remain confident that our institutions of learning, and UWI in particular, will rise to the challenge of inspiring our students with the notion that Caribbean people are inferior to no one; that we do have the capacity to govern ourselves, to build and maintain worthy institutions; that we are able to and that we do produce the human resources effectively to manage such bodies; that these institutions, when locally established, work for us in ways in which

no others can; and that if we observe carefully, objectively, we will see these truths demonstrated over and over again. Yes, I remain confident.

Once again, I express on behalf of myself and Professor Owusu, our deepest thanks to the University Council for this wonderful gesture of bestowing this signal honour upon us. We accept it on behalf of and we express our gratefulness to our spouses, our parents and siblings, extended family members, our teachers and mentors, our colleagues and indeed, all those who contributed to our respective careers.

I thank you.

