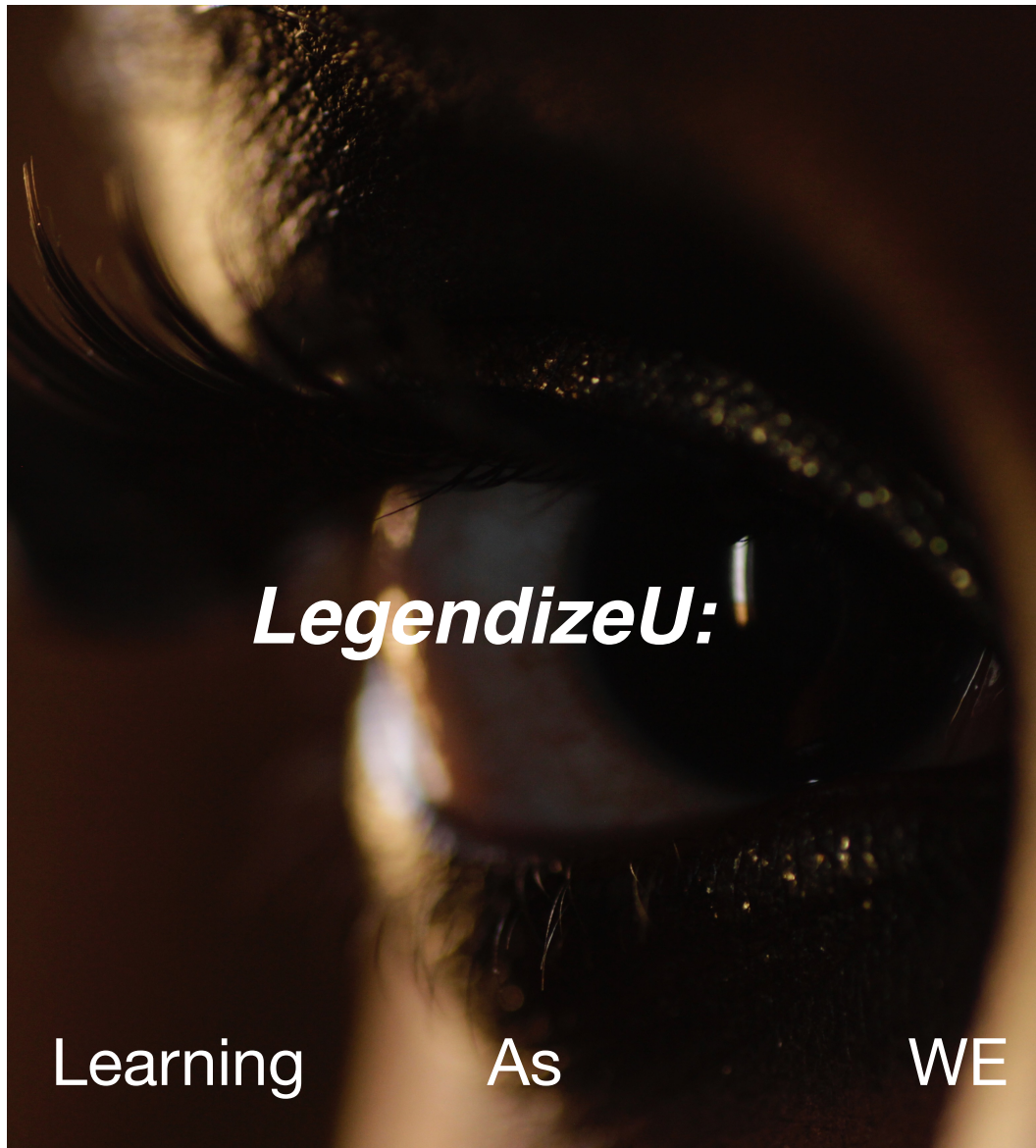




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ABSTRACT:

LegendizeU: Learning as WE, is a Model of indigenous Caribbean-focused learning, informed by what I identify as the Caribbean Brand of Learning.

The ***LegendizeU*** Mission is Revolution in Education that calls for building a new Model of Learning that battles Self-Blindness with Intangible Worth.

LegendizeU rests on the pillars of 4Cs - ***Curiosity, Color-In, Creativity*** and

Consciousness.

LegendizeU Tools center around storytelling in the C21st.

KEYWORDS:

- ***LegendizeU***
- Decolonizing Education
- Folklore
- Sapotee Soil
- Storytelling in the C21st

BACKGROUND - WHAT DE TEACHER LEARN:

My first teaching appointment took me to Moruga Composite to teach History.

I strode into Moruga ready to teach.

And Moruga taught me.

I learnt that for many, education was not a priority, as my students who missed weeks of school to go hunting reminded me that, 'Books doh put food on de table, Miss.'

I learnt that my idea of an 'educated' person needed shifting, as my Moruga students taught me about Papa Neeza and Mother Cornhusk, how to tell when it's a good time to go fishing, what food to plant when, and how not to get lost in the forest.

And I learnt that many students were confused and disinterested and wondered:

Where 'WE' in this story?

Teaching History was not easy at Moruga Composite, yet Moruga is one of Trinidad's historically richest places.

As I struggled to teach the first topic on the syllabus - The Coming of the Europeans - because of my students' boredom and disinterest, I remembered hearing somewhere that the community of Moruga re-enacted every year, the arrival of Columbus and his meeting of our First People, right there on the Moruga shores, in what they called 'Discovery Day'.

So one day I ditched the books, cleared a space in the classroom and asked my students to show me what they did on the beach on Discovery Day...and my class came alive!

I realized my students did not see the connection between their Discovery Day enactment and the text; their community Columbus was not related to the white man in their history text, their community Columbus was someone they knew, someone they recognized, someone they connected with.

This knowledge led to three powerful recognitions that would forever inform my teaching and spur me to the work that I call '**LegendizeU**'¹.

The first recognition was that without connection, knowledge is useless.

For knowledge to be empowering, it must make sense to the receiver.

The starting point of sharing knowledge in the case of teaching history was wrong; it gave topics and asked students to embrace these topics, instead of asking students to look at their world, their community and see where and how history applied.

The second was that the learner must be central, engaged, involved in his/her own learning; telling people what they should know is less important than people being curious and interested so that they learn naturally.

The third was that disinterest and boredom come naturally when students feel overwhelmed, it perhaps is a defense mechanism used to disguise the feeling that they are inadequate and incompetent.

¹ <https://www.joannehaynestt.com/>; YouTube, TTT Live Online, In-Depth with Dike Rostant, Creatively Reforming Education with Joanne Haynes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt0YTpuQAPs>; Haynes, J., Sapotee Soil 3rd Ed., pgs. vi - ix

The intelligence I saw the day the beach rolled into my Moruga classroom was not something I could ignore.

These students, many of whom were under the literacy rate for reading and writing, had pulled script and props and characters out of nothing and created a play in a matter of seconds!

Isn't that intelligence?

The nagging knowing that despite their rich history and their knowledge of it, my students would fail their SBAs because somebody decided that if a student couldn't write X amount of words they didn't deserve to be seen or heard, and somebody else decided that knowing the text was the only way to assess and mark intelligence, made me eventually march to my Principal's office one early morning and plead the case for my students to be given the opportunity to present 95% of their SBAs orally.

My Principal, a man invested in his students, in his school and in his Moruga, listened and heard and saw and understood. Together we worked out the how and that year, Moruga Secondary students stood a fighting chance to pass CXC History because they went into the exam with good SBA marks.

This victory didn't feel like a victory though, it served a group of students, but something bigger was missing and I hadn't yet figured out what it was.

My next teaching appointment took me to what was then called San Fernando East Junior Secondary.

Shortly after I entered this school, I became selected to attend a Self-Esteem Programme that the Ministry of Education wanted to institute at schools.

A foreigner was brought in with his programme he had successfully instituted abroad and armed with workbooks and exercises, he proceeded to map out how we could roll out this programme in our nation's schools.

I sat there listening to the discussions and going through the handbooks and thought how great it sounded on paper, but how would my Moruga students react to the idea that their self-esteem was low? What I had learnt at Moruga was that poverty and being forgotten by the rest of the society did not mean Moruga had forgotten its pride.

How would my San Fernando East students react to the idea that their self-esteem was low? Mostly poor, all city-smart and hardened by hard life, did not mean my city students had forgotten their pride.

The Caribbean student is part of our collective imagination, we do not take well to the idea that we are flawed and need to be fixed and truthfully, doesn't everybody have self-esteem issues?

I was picked to lead the Self-Esteem building programme at San Fernando East and while I was excited at the idea of doing something new and different and certainly needed, I recognized that the programme and the way it was instructed could never work in our nation's schools because it started with How To Fix The Problem rather than with: What Is The Problem?

The problem to me was that Self-Esteem cannot be built if Self is eroded.

My Moruga students were unseen in a system of education that determined one way and one method to harness and assess intelligence.

The storytelling didn't work like magic at San Fernando East as it had at Moruga, because many of these students here had already been quieted by life.

Most of the students embraced the workshops, perhaps to some extent because it took them away from classes! Some of the social issues we had been dealing with reduced in terms of the numbers of students engaging in delinquent activities, but again, something bigger was missing.

I was teaching Social Studies here, and the syllabus then gave me more room to flex because it sought to address life-issues.

The first time I woke my students up was when I played Buju Banton's 'Single Parent' to introduce the topic Types of Families.

The suspicion I had seen in my Moruga's students' eyes before they believed I was actually interested in hearing what they had to say, came out from behind eyes that hid

self-erosion behind boredom.

Still, there were about four boys in my form class who remained perpetually unreachable.

One day I stayed back late after school to finish some work and as I walked from my class across the school, the sound of steelpan playing in the hall got my attention.

I walked across to the hall out of curiosity.

There in the group of students playing pan, were those four perpetually bored, disinterested, boys from my form class - animated, involved, connected, alive!

I stood there, rooted by confusion and curiosity.

That piece of the Moruga puzzle that was missing - that something bigger after the SBA victory, slid into place - right alongside my Moruga students turning the classroom into a beach and turning the history into story and now, my disconnected San Fernando students, who were already destined to be labeled 'failures' by the system - now shining, slapped me with the question: *What are WE missing in reaching our students?*

PURPOSE - THE CARIBBEAN BRAND OF LEARNING VS THE FORMAL SCHOOL SYSTEM:

Our formal school system is a colonial system that we keep trying to fix, like trying to save a bad hair-cut instead of going bald for a while and letting the hair grow back naturally.

The school system is at odds with our Caribbean essence - it is formal, rigid, structured, forced, impersonal.

Its elitism, its insistence on testing and rote and regurgitation as hallmarks of intelligence, and its ignoring of our varying types of intelligence and the need to connect student reality with learning, is destructive to our people because it is eroding WE.

The formal school system defines our students by their exam performance and categorizes them into 3 groups:

The Failures - These are the learners who resist the classroom lessons, the testing, sometimes even the discipline. Often, they are failing in the classroom

yet excelling in the panyard or art room or drama club or on the football field.

The Middle Grounders - These are the students who struggle in the system and plod along because they are forced or expected to, who scrape through with passes just good enough, and who often cause teachers no amount of stress because they are failing to rise to their 'potential' and 'can do better'.

The Excellers - These are the students who ace their exams, win scholarships and medals, who know everything in the text but seldom look up out of the text long enough to part-take in extra-curricular activities or have a social life.

My BIG question: We still allowing colonization to label WE?

This impersonal formal school system's only assessment of how a student is doing is based on his/her exam performance².

So we never really know HOW any student is really doing.

So we never really know the character and qualities of our next generation being honed and harnessed by our formal school system.

² Daily Express, April 8, 2011, Haynes, J., 'Not Just About Passing Exams': https://trinidadexpress.com/news/local/not-just-about-passing-exams/article_a3c91ede-3e7c-583b-830d-5f8643ceb421.html

So a student can excel in his/her exam and be judged a success, yet be quieted in his/her creativity, expression, freedom of thought, opinion, ideas, sense of Self.

Then these same students are expected to show initiative, creativity, dynamism, resilience, leadership, in the work place.

Our formal school system is focused on churning out 'good' students, not on empowering vibrant citizenship.

The formal school system straight-jackets our people, ignores our creative color and black-and-whites us into excellents, so-so's and failures.

The formal school-system white-washes our color, our creativity, our very conscience, in restricting our thinking, our thought, our imagination, our expression.

The formal school system treats us as Consumers of the education system by making our students vessels for absorbing and regurgitating information that is often disconnected with their realities.

The formal school system does not recognize that WE are Creators.

Caribbean Learning recognizes and celebrates WE as Creators.

Caribbean Creations such as carnival, calypso, soca, steelpan, tell a story of learning that is centered on experimentation, exploration, expression, experience.

At the center of this experimentation, exploration, expression, experience, is the signature of Caribbean identity: Play and Passion and People-Power.

Caribbean Learning allows for natural, unforced, fluid, incidental, ongoing, organic, inclusive, connective, creative, artistic and user-friendly, learning.

In the Caribbean classroom, the panyard brings ear and hear and intuition and creativity together to produce excellence.

In the Caribbean classroom, the mas camp brings imagination and problem-solving and trying and erroring and re-trying together with maths and physics and art and history to produce magnificence.

In the Caribbean classroom, the calypsonian is teacher, sharing licks to corruption and bad governance and bringing dread stories of history and people and ketchass and revolution, softened by rhythm, pun, innuendo, humor³.

The panyard, the mascamp, the calypso stage, I call *Unconventional Spaces of Caribbean Learning*.

These Unconventional Spaces of Caribbean Learning embrace the reality that:

- Student could be Teacher
- Rumshop is Debate platform
- Elderly is History
- Madman is Inspiration
- The Homeless is Knowledge

³ The University of the West Indies, Tout Moun Caribbean Journal of Cultural Studies, Vol. 7 No. 1, November 2022, DREADNESS: The Mystic Power, Philosophy and Performance of Shadow, 1941 - 2021, Convois - Moderator, Omari Ashby, Joanne Haynes, Zeno Constance, Aiyegoro Ome & Robin Foster: https://journals.sta.uwi.edu/toutmoun/papers/issue7No1/Tout_Moun_November_2022_Vol_7_No_1-1-COVOIS.pdf

- Artist is Ideology
- Calypsonian is bold-face Voice
- Comedian is Balm
- Steelpan is Survival
- Obeah Man/Woman, is Papa and Mama
- Myths, Legends, Superstitions, Folklore, are WE People Secrets

The Caribbean Brand of Learning Sees WE and applauds WE for who WE are:

- WE like to dig up in ting - WE learn through doing, through trial and error, experimentation, exploration and what-iffing.
- WE fas and WE like to maco - WE learn through supposing, watching, seeing, investigating, carrying stories, adding our version to the story.
- WE is expert, boss, know-it-all - WE learn through sharing, connecting, informing, critiquing, debating.

- WE like to show-off, take in de show, be part a de show - WE learning through performance, seeing ourselves on stage, seeing each other on stage and getting something and waving because we must partake in the experience.

The Caribbean Brand of Learning knows that WE must SEE our Selves as a vibrant, intrinsic, central, part of our learning and doing.

The **LegendizeU** Model recognizes these elements in The Caribbean Brand of Learning:

- No top-down teaching but Color-In Learning, defined by inclusion, exploration, commonality, enjoyment, expression, experience, experimentation, creativity, artistry, recognition.

- No need for big-stick discipline because discipline, dedication and devotion come naturally when people enjoy and are connected to what they do.

- No one-subject learning, because learning is fluid, so learning pan is not only learning pan, it is engagement, camaraderie, connectivity, community, discipline, dedication, enjoyment.

- No one-type of learner and one-way of expression because it SEES the panman as professional, intelligent, valuable, knowledgeable, respected as any professional.

- No constant assessing and judging because the focus is on learning, doing, being, creating, enjoying, learning, not on testing.

In short, we cannot build a nation through a system of learning that disconnects our students from our intrinsic Self⁴.

Colonization thrived on erasing a people's memory and identity, if we are 'developing' our students using a system that erodes and erases WE, we cannot expect to mold citizens who are invested in this place, who feel a sense of connectedness and dedication to our place and who add their excellence to our space, because they simply do not know they are excellent, valuable, capable, and they don't see this Space as important.

I call the People's role in shaping, saving, preserving, impacting and enhancing our

⁴ Caribbean Association For The Advancement Of Curriculum Studies, Virtual Conference, 2023, LegendizeU - The Adventure of Learning, J.Haynes

space, *Intangible Worth*.

The Intangible Worth of Caribbean people is a force that has impacted not only our little small space, but the world - in music, academia, sport, drama, medicine, science, cuisine, politics, literature, movements of social change - the list goes on - because our Caribbean is Innovation and Creativity.

Recognizing and celebrating our Intangible Worth is the key to building proud, strong, capable, conscious, invested citizens, which should be the point of education, not so? Instead of fitting our students into the world mould, we should be impressing on our students that *The Caribbean is a Value to share with the world*.

Instead of a demanded, restricted learning, we should be leading our students on a journey of discovery that recognizes the Intangible Worth of WE.

Our system of Learning should reflect this by placing WE at the center of our Learning both in What WE learn and How WE learn.

Our education system, inherited from colonization, distances WE from WESelf.

To combat this *Self-Blindness*, we must find, as our ancestors did, our Memory.

To ensure we do not remember our Self as the corrupted, colonial version of WE,

and to ensure we recognize of Intangible Worth, we must build a *Color-In History*.

For once colonized people, it is important to tell our own story, in WE way, from

WE point of view, for WE people, so that WE challenge the corrupted colonial version of

Self and create our own ground on which to stand proudly.

WE Caribbean people cannot recognize our Intangible Worth, cure Self-Blindness

and know that the Caribbean is a Value to Share with the world if we do not re-meet

and re-introduce ourselves.

Colonial history chained us into master, slave, black, white, bought, brought,

erased and ruled.

We have fought for our Space and created all of this out of all of that, but all of this

means nothing if we continue to separate and demarcate ourselves according to

colonial restrictions.

Our history is still taught as sections and groups, so how do we forge a nation and a region out of that?

We need to assess our history through new paradigms and we need to find ways to forge a collective history by building a Color-In History.

A Color-In History is defined as:

- WE story

- History that breaks the black and white restrictions of formal textbook learning.

History that breaks with the colonial parameters to analyse and assess with
alternative parameters.

- History that Respects and Promotes alternative sources, including Oral History,
Storytelling, Unconventional Spaces of Caribbean Learning.

- History that is Inclusive, allowing for many voices, many truths, many angles.

- History that is Connective, Circular, Ongoing, User-Friendly rather than instructive,
authoritative, disconnecting and final.

The awareness of how our history can still corrupt, prejudice, disconnect and divide, because it is influenced by a colonial paradigm, came to me as I was writing my Work-In-Progress (2016 - present) on my Philip family.

My Philip family is identified in history as wealthy and as 'owners' of enslaved Africans.

My research led me to the truth that this identification is only one part of the Philip story.

The other part is that the Philip family was also made up of individuals who were neither wealthy nor enslaved African-owning, of revolutionists who fought against slavery, of family men and women, lawyers and politicians and doctors, who rebelled against White Supremacy, in both the Caribbean and in the U.K.

I recognized how our failure to reposition our history, our analysis and telling of it in contexts beyond the narrow black and white colonial view, makes us lose our Color!

We cannot frame a Caribbean history out of a colonial version of us.

This causes us to lose the Big Picture of the WHO are the people who contributed to this Space, and HOW did their actions create this Space.

Without looking at our colonial History differently, without reframing new paradigms for analysis, without looking for alternative sources of information, we will continue erasing and dismissing our own people and lose the early lessons of Intangible Worth and the much needed connection between curing Self-Blindness through new Historical perspectives.

In sharing my research with the University of Edinburgh, where two of my C19th ancestors qualified as medical doctors, Drs. Jean Baptiste Philippe and St. Luce Philip, to become two of the first black doctors in Trinidad, I was able to add an alternative story to their histories in these archives⁵.

My research on these two ancestors is now archived with the University of Edinburgh.

Another ancestor, Michel Maxwell Philip II, who returned to Trinidad as a highly-qualified lawyer from Middle Temple, was brought to Middle Temple's attention through my research and analysis of his petitions to that institution.

⁵ The University of Edinburgh Archives Online, Papers of Jean-Baptiste Philippe and St. Luce Philip: https://archives.collections.ed.ac.uk/repositories/2/archival_objects/195468

This led to Michel Maxwell Philip II being included for the first time, in England's Black History Month⁶.

My analysis of his petitions is now housed at Middle Temple's Archives⁷ and forms part of his history there.

It is important that WE Caribbean people meet those who came before us - who shaped this Space during that time in our history when the People's Shaping of their Space was not allowed - in a room with an open window, a Color window, so that we step out of that restricted, prejudiced, mis-identifying colonial portrayal of our people, and embrace our whole Selves and our history, through our eyes, from our perspective, to know all sides of our story.

⁶ X (formerly Twitter) Middle Temple, Michel Maxwell Philip: <https://twitter.com/middletemple/status/1181517151997435906?lang=en>

⁷ The Honorable Society of the Middle Temple, Black History Month at the Inn: <https://www.middletemple.org.uk/archive-history/archive-month/october-2020-west-indies-east-riding-black-history-month-inn>

What has been most rewarding for me in all of this, was meeting my ancestors outside the labels of colored, slave-owner, wealthy...when I stripped off these labels, I found these men and women who challenged the system despite being in the system, who defied the colonial logic of the Black man staying in his place, who were determined to add to the Intangible Worth of our Caribbean and who knew how to remedy Self-Blindness with words and actions.

Had I believed the colonial portrayal of them and been prejudiced by our own repetition of colonial history's lies that lead us to dismiss and marginalize our own people, I would have missed out on meeting some trail-blazing Caribbean Flagbearers.

My research on my Philip ancestors begs the questions: *What other stories are we missing? What other histories have we discarded? What other images of Self have we failed to know and embrace?*

Without re-finding and re-telling our stories, we remain enchained by a colonial version of Self.

The Caribbean Brand of Learning is a celebration of WE, as WE.

This type of Learning is why we find youths bored in the classroom, enlivened in the panyard, because the panyard provides a Space where they see and connect with Self.

LegendizeU is not about tweaking the present system of education; it is a call for breaking down and rebuilding the present system with a system that ensures WE Learn as WE.

LegendizeU recognizes the Intangible Values in the Caribbean Brand of Learning and reminds those who may say that these Values form part of the hidden curriculum that these Values are too important to be hidden in any curriculum.

THE CARIBBEAN BRAND OF LEARNING vs. THE FORMAL SCHOOL SYSTEM:

The Caribbean Brand of Learning	The Formal School System
Informal, Casual, Incidental, Inclusive	Formal, Rigid, Structured, Limited
Learning through an Experience	Learning through Instruction
Learning through Exploration	Learning through being Taught and Told
Learning through Experimentation	Learning through Rote & Regurgitate, Memorization
Freedom of Various Ways of Expression	Expression limited to ability to write, based on text material

THE INTANGIBLE VALUES IN THE CARIBBEAN BRAND OF LEARNING:

The Caribbean Brand of Learning	Intangible Values
Exploration	Curiosity, Interest, Enthusiasm, Creativity
Experience	Association, Connection, Recognition, Identity, Belonging, Community, Enjoyment
Expression	Voice, Visibility, Involvement, Communication Skills, Sharing, Thought & Opinion
Experimentation	Courage, Confidence, Self-Awareness, Pride, Ownership, Critical Thinking, Analysis, Creative Problem-Solving

APPROACH - THE 4Cs IN *LegendizeU*:

The ***LegendizeU*** Model centers on 4 Cs to promote the Intangible Values in the

Caribbean Brand of Learning:

- **Curiosity**
- **Color-In**
- **Creativity**
- **Consciousness**

Curiosity - because the most powerful tool is to want to learn something.

Color-In - is harnessing imagination, play, passion, to fill the stern, formal, restricted spaces of black and white textbook learning and right and wrong answers.

Creativity - is celebrating the vibrancy of WE people; the knowing that creativity is a Caribbean super-power.

Consciousness - involves connecting the dots: filling the gap between formal learning and life.

These 4 Cs often overlap because learning, like the panyard knows, is fluid.

The **LegendizeU** Model creates a Space for Learning as WE, where Learning is play, passion, incidental, casual, connective, voice.

The environment for Learning the **LegendizeU** way is one of freedom, safety and creativity.

At the center of all **LegendizeU** Tools is the recognition that WE Caribbean people are Creators, not merely Consumers, of our education system.

THE LegendizeU MODEL:

The 4Cs in <i>LegendizeU</i>	How Each Promotes Intangible Worth
Curiosity	Awe, Awareness, Appreciation, Respect for WE space
Color-In	Voice, Value, Seeing, Hearing, Knowing, WE
Creativity	Boldness, Confidence, Assertiveness in being WE
Consciousness	Awareness, Maturity, Self-Recognition, Connectedness among WE and beyond WE

LegendizeU TOOLS:

1. SAPOTEE SOIL⁸ (book)

As a celebration of our Intangible Worth, *Sapotee Soil is a Call to Memory*⁹ that modernizes legends and legendizes history to remind, inspire and connect us through the universal appeal of thrill, humor and inspiration.

Memory, passed on through the oral tradition of storytelling, reminded people of their legends, myths, superstitions, folklore, and served to preserve the people when their very identity, belonging and Self were threatened.

Memory is how the people held on to what they knew to be true and important and distinctive and defining about themselves, regardless of what the system promoted, so that they would not be erased and so that they would continue to SEE them Selves.

⁸ Haynes, J., *Sapotee Soil*, 3rd Edition, 2024.

⁹ <https://www.joannehaynestt.com/joannehaynes-3author?lightbox=dataitem-is0c5iy42>

A mixture of magic and imagination, color and drama, Sapotee Soil weaves spaces of national interest, stories of misplaced men and women, scary tales of the supernatural, lost histories and forgotten legends, into stories that are more than stories, stories that are, in fact, a combat against Self-Blindness¹⁰.

In the style of **LegendizeU** learning, Sapotee Soil is not a single-subject or age-related book; Language, Literature, History, Social Studies, can be learnt from reading the stories, but Sapotee Soil celebrates Learning, not by Subject, but by connection, cognition, recognition, imagination, thought, expression, experience.

Sapotee Soil calls the reader to use his/her own Curiosity, Color-In, Creativity and Consciousness to build his/her critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills.

¹⁰ Newsday, <https://newsday.co.tt/2023/11/18/joanne-haynes-tells-stories-of-we-in-sapotee-soil/>

Sapotee Soil honors our fasness and maco abilities as the power of Caribbean
Curiosity.

It is the Color-In of our history, social studies, language, literature classes that
takes them out of the stern, formal, restricted spaces of black and white textbook
learning into WE stories and WE color and WE doings.

It is an ode to WE Creativity as it celebrates the Imagination and asks its reader
to come with me on a journey of possibility.

And **S**apotee Soil raises Consciousness in connecting the reader with him/her
Self, in connecting people with their spaces, in connecting one space with
another, in connecting all to one...one Trinidad, in connecting Trinidad to the
Caribbean, to the world.

In his introduction of the 17 authors and their Works at the NALIS Celebration of 50 years of Imaginative Literature, of which I was one, Professor Kenneth Ramchand applauds how these works stand as witness and experience to:

‘...provide (in a sense) an intimate and deep sense of what independence has meant to us as a people and as individuals...[and to] speak to us in the way only art can speak, about ourselves, our social world, the worlds of other peoples, and the universe, sometimes all at the same time.’¹¹

Ka’en, my older son, who did the cover and illustrations when he was sixteen years old said:

‘I appreciated having the creative freedom to illustrate the cover and stories however I wanted. It took long because I had to read each story before I illustrated it and I was in the middle of CXC. Reading them wasn’t tedious, some scared me and some made me laugh, all made me think and imagine.’

¹¹ National Library and Information Services (NALIS), 50 Year of Imaginative Literature Guest Speak Professor Kenneth Ramchand: <https://www.nalis.gov.tt/Media-Center/Press-Releases/ArticleID/202/50-YEARS-OF-IMAGINATIVE-LITERATURE>

Sapotee Soil¹² features 10 stories and essays that take the reader on a journey across Trinidad from Waterloo, Chaguanas, all the way to Moruga.

- **Beyond the Horizon** - A re-imagining of Siewdass Sadhu and his drive to build the temple in the Sea, as a love story.

- **She Never Walks Alone** - A dramatic retelling of the legend of the ghost, Maria, who haunts the Solomon Hochoy highway just before the Claxton Bay overpass.

- **The Mislaid Lady** - a personification of one of Trinidad's oldest artefacts, The Lady McLeod Bell, as an unearthing of lost history.

- **Cracking Up** - a fictionalized history of one of Trinidad's worst industrial accidents, as an example of History as Fiction.

- **Close Encounters of the Caribbean Kind** - An embracing of a good old soucouyant story, using elements of the oral tradition.

¹² Haynes, J., *Sapotee Soil* 1st Ed 2010 Lexicon, 2nd Ed. 2016 Joanne Haynes, 3rd Ed. 2024 Joanne Haynes, purchase via: <https://www.joannehaynestt.com/>

- **A Tale From Sobo Village** - A snapshot of Trinidad, back in time, that brings an obeah curse to life with terror and humor.
- **The Fallen People of the Black Land** - A modernization of our First People's Colibri legend of the Pitch Lake.
- **The Black Hope** - A merging of the three legends as story, on how the statue of La Divina Pastora came to be here.
- **Superhero, Trini Style** - A witty account of Mahal, labeled a 'madman', that prods us to consider him a superhero, WE style, for doing something we are unable to do - walk, mostly barefooted, endless miles in one day.
- **The Mystery of Moruga** - Witten as essay rather than story, to further legitimize and demystify Obeah through the telling about Moruga's famous Obeah man, Papa Neeza.

Inspired by my teaching experience at Moruga, where I learnt the value of storytelling and the power and promotion of intelligence through the oral tradition, Sapotee Soil answers my Moruga students' question:

Where WE in de story?

With: Look! WE in de story!

Senior Lecturer in Educational Leadership, at the University of the West Indies,

St. Augustine campus, Dr. Freddy James said: *'When I picked up Sapotee Soil to read*

it, I couldn't put it down. Sapotee Soil is indigenous learning, it is a powerful

representation of storytelling in our time. It is Self stories that show us who we are and

how we learn. And Sapotee Soil is not just the telling of a story, it is a reflection of the

people in the stories; it is a reflection of Self. Sapotee Soil is a balanced view of us, you

get dark and you get light, so you can make sense of yourself as a Caribbean person in

a global world.

Sapotee Soil is a reflection of the way in which we should approach education - it brings several subject areas together through its constructions and complexities to provide different perspectives that relate in various ways to several pathways of life.'

The new 3rd Ed. of Sapotee Soil reaches further in connecting our students with Self and Space, using the **LegendizeU** Model.

Every Sapotee Soil story guides on using the 4Cs.

The section, Connecting WE, uses Sapotee Soil to give topics that are relevant to students' lives and gives creative activities that generate critical thinking and creative problem solving.

The section, Claiming WE, makes learning an adventure through its call for stories.

The section Calming WE is a consciousness-building exercise that

uses Sapotee Soil to connect students with their inner Selves.

Sapotee Soil reaches beyond age, level of learning, Subject area, because

it is Learning as Fun, Adventure, Story, Exploration, Gossip, What-If, Look WE!

The NALIS, ELSD One Book Many Schools (OBMS) PROGRAMME:

Sapotee Soil is the NALIS (National Library and Information Services) ELSD

(Educational Library Services Division) *One Book Many Schools (OBMS)*

selection for 2023 - 2024¹³.

The fantastic work being done by school librarians to ensure Sapotee Soil's further enjoyment can be viewed on my website where some of these schools are featured.

I provided additional support for this national project through:

1. Placing additional resources on my website including:

- Films of adapted Sapotee Soil stories
- Films of adapted stories by previous competition winners
- Written and audio Works of previous competition winners
- Feedback by those who have worked with me in the **LegendizeU** way

¹³ NALIS: <https://www.nalis.gov.tt/Media-Center/Press-Releases/ArticleID/686/NALIS-ENCOURAGES-STUDENTS-TO-READ>; NALIS: <https://www.nalis.gov.tt/Media-Center/Press-Releases/ArticleID/686/ONE-BOOK-MANY-SCHOOLS-SAPOTEE-SOIL>; NALIS: <https://www.nalis.gov.tt/Media-Center/Press-Releases/ArticleID/686/ONE-BOOK-MANY-SCHOOLS-SAPOTEE-SOIL>

- Ideas for discussion and connecting more with Sapotee Soil
- A student empowerment activity called 'We Planting Seeds on De Sapotee

Soil' where I ask Educators to set up a box in the Library so titled, where

students can anonymously answer questions like: What Makes Me, ME?

How Can I Be a Peace-Keeper at Home, at School?

- **LegendizeU** support tip entitled HSAC, for students to enhance their reading, comprehension and writing skills.
- Calls for students to find their stories of their communities
- Social-conscience building videos

2. Facilitating interactive Zoom sessions so as to meet and interact with as many schools as possible:

The Zoom sessions are very interactive. Two of these readings began with a reading of a Sapotee Soil story by Dr. Sharmila Harry, whose presentations were so dynamic they made me wonder how my own story would end! Throughout her readings, Dr. Harry paused to ask thought-provoking questions that fueled active student responses.

During the readings, the students and Librarians ask questions via Zoom chat, 90% of which pick my brain about my inspiration for story, how I came up with the characters, why did this character act this way, and, as I begin each session reminding the students that this is a safe space where they are free to share their thoughts, ideas and opinions, I've often been challenged, to my glee, by students on their varying opinions about a particular story!

Considering the interaction, even as students do not have their own personal devices, I often wonder how much more interactive the sessions would be if each student had a device!

The sessions comprise secondary students from schools throughout Trinidad, ranging from Forms one to six, Librarians and Library staff, and even teachers and Vice Principals of some schools.

The sessions go all the way to the full hour without pause and the interaction and enthusiasm is so tremendous that I sometimes do not get to answer all the questions or add to comments.

The Library School Supervisors have expressed how pleased they are that Sapotee Soil was chosen for the OBMS, and how much it is being enjoyed by staff and students.

The Librarians of various schools have not hesitated to tell me how much they and their students are enjoying Sapotee Soil and how Sapotee Soil has been adopted as Reading Club material, Drama class material, and Book Club readings.

Students have asked about Sapotee Soil as film, as play, as Art work, as Graphic novel.

The creativity and exploration of Sapotee Soil in the OBMS project has blown my mind and humbled me.

Staff has created word search puzzles, mazes, board games, word of the day features, videos, amazing online and live presentations of the book and the author and some schools have planted the seeds on the Sapotee Soil and grown it into a tree, where the leaves showcase the students' feedback.

You can view some of the activities being done on Sapotee Soil by Librarians and students on the ELSD Facebook page¹⁴, #joannehaynes #sapoteesoil

¹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/NALISELSDTT/>

2. LEGENDS REVISITED (film)¹⁵

Legends Revisited reminds us that *Legends are a People's first media*¹⁶, that storytelling and the oral tradition are invaluable ways of minding and reminding, that Folklore is a People's identity.

WE Caribbean people need to continuously build A Color-In History, because the history books cannot keep up with us!

Here, every day has its own story, and a new voice adds to an old story and a calypso is penned overnight spurred by yesterday's happenings and a meme is spreading across the internet seconds after a national happening.

WE Caribbean people are always creating, changing, disrupting, re-imagining, our landscapes.

Legends Revisited is a forty minute mixed-media film, made up of five shorts tied together by three **LegendizeU** characters - The Pot Stirrer, Danger and Mr. Memory.

¹⁵ <https://www.joannehaynestt.com/>

¹⁶ © Joanne Haynes, 2014.

The five shorts are:

- **The Fallen People of the Black Land** - an animated short adapted from the story of the same name in Sapotee Soil, voiced by veteran Errol Fabian, which I had done two years earlier.

- **Beyond the Horizon** - a monologue adaptation of the Sapotee Soil story written and enacted by Javid Saddique Ail.

- **Tales from Aripiero** - a dramatic monologue written and re-enacted by a past competition winner, O'Neil Lima Samlal.

- **Forever Young** - an adaptation of the story of the same name, written by past competition winner, Lorissa George.

- **A First People's Legend of San Fernando Hill** - written by Toni Lima.

The 3 **LegendizeU** characters are reminders to WE Caribbean people:

- **The Pot Stirrer**¹⁷ is the confusion that is caused when a people's consciousness is raised.
- **Danger**¹⁸ is the threat to identity and self that is the insidious undermining of lesser known and under-recognized peoples and cultures.
- **Mr. Memory**¹⁹ is the power of Calypso as conscience, awareness, pride, memory, knowing, SEEing, Self.

¹⁷ © Joanne Haynes, 2014.

¹⁸ © Joanne Haynes, 2014.

¹⁹ © Joanne Haynes, 2014.

Legends Revisited, which made its World Premiere at the Cannes Pan African Film Festival²⁰, was an official selection of the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival²¹ and nominated for a People's Choice Award, and named as one of the top 10 films at the TTFF²², Legends Revisited turned me back into a full-time student.

With no previous film experience, my older son, Ka'en, and I had a crazy idea one day to make a film.

The only thing I knew for sure about making this film was that I wanted to use the experience as a learning space, that I wanted to have a 100% now-generation cast, that I wanted to showcase now-generation talent in acting, in writing, in every way I could, and that I wanted to say as much as I could, so that I could reach the non-readers who would quicker watch a film than pick up Sapotee Soil.

²⁰ Cannes Pan African Film Festival: <https://fifp.fr/en/portfolio/legends-revisited/>

²¹ Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival: <https://tffilmfestival.com/film/legends-revisited>

²² Loop News: <https://tt.loopnews.com/index.php/content/10-local-films-watch-trinidad-tobago-film-festival-2016>

Ka'en on the other hand, had been making fake blood out of food coloring and coercing his younger brother and unsuspecting cousins whenever they visited, in enacting a dramatic saga made up in his head as he went along, for years! He was more ready to make a film than I!

I networked with Danielle Dieffenthaller, who connected me with two of the best men in the business - Videographer, Sean Edghill and Sound Engineer, Kerron Lemessy. These two men really helped me produce a quality film on a shoestring budget.

My garden and backyard became major sources of locations, Naparima Girls High School lent us their space for shooting, for rehearsals, for make-up and I looked around, inspired by my Moruga students who had made something from nothing that day they created a play in the classroom, and saw that Palmiste Park, San Fernando Hill, Mosquito Creek, the Temple in the Sea, were all locations waiting to be noticed.

My former student from San Fernando East Junior Secondary, Leon Foster

Thomas, brought me his CD, Brand New Mischief, and gave me permission to use any and all tracks I wanted.

Legends Revisited taught me many things.

Firstly, the film reinforced my admiration and respect for the now-generation.

The youngest member of the cast was my younger son, Izayah, then eight years old, he stood exhausted, take after take, giving each take his best. All of the other actors were either studying for or writing exams, yet the long days, hours in make-up, dozens of takes and months in production, never diminished the interest of the cast and crew.

So often we hear older people criticize youth, but this experience showed that young people have fortitude and focus to see the job through and to do it well.

Secondly, the film is made up of a 99% young cast comprised from seven educational institutions covering primary, secondary, tertiary schools.

Thirdly, none of the now-generation actors, writers, director, had had any previous film, so like in my Moruga days, we were all learning together.

I trained the actors with intuition as my guide, on how to appear naturally, how to flirt with the camera when needed, how to feel what they were saying. I gave the writers free reign to express themselves with minor editing of their scripts from me. I gave Ka'en total creative freedom to envision the scripts into film.

Fourthly, the making of the film was a learning space like none I had ever known, and I imagine this space was similar to the learning space of the mas camp or the panyard, this space of learning was a Caribbean classroom and learning was done in the way of the Caribbean Brand of Learning.

The space lent itself to Curiosity, Color-In, Creativity and Consciousness.

For every young actor, I told them, they were not simply coming to act and play a role, they were coming to connect - so every piece that they did required them to research the place, visit the place, meet the land before telling its story.

I involved the actors in marking takes, in creating props, in rehearsing with each other, in learning some make-up tricks from the amazing make-up artist who transformed young into old and beautiful into ugly.

My home buzzed with that wondrous energy that comes from creating.

The fluidity and discipline and unpredictability of film taught us all patience, dedication, letting go.

Fifthly, the feedback²³ from some of the young cast and crew made me so much more appreciative of the opportunity to impact young lives:

²³ <https://www.joannehaynestt.com/>

Co-Director, Ka'en Haynes:

'When I co-directed Legends Revisited, it opened something in me. Directing people who were my age and who like me, had no experience, was daunting and thrilling and like the actors, the stories inspired me beyond the work into a whole world of telling our Trinidadian stories.

Legends Revisited inspired me forever, now my life dream is to make my own movie. I see the film, the book, Sapotee Soil, as the telling of truth, the truth of imagination, the truth of many voices, many stories, many people, given a space to BE.'

Writer, Performer, Javid Siddique Ali:

‘Two things have stayed with me from the experience of making this film, the first is that when I did the research (on the Temple in the Sea), I was really blown away by the amount of hardship endured to build this Temple. It made me appreciate the man and his dream and our possibilities as one people.

The second thing was that Ms. Haynes did not limit my thinking and expression. I used to write poetry but never really got an outlet to express it, with the film, Legends Revisited, I got to write my own material with a little bit of editing from Ms Haynes. That project just gave us all that outlet ...to be free.’

Musician, Chryston Floyd (Mr. Memory):

‘This film made me come out of my comfort zone, Mr. Memory is outgoing and outspoken, I am shy and introverted. Certainly, my respect for calypso as a people’s history, or as a people’s Creative history, as Ms. Haynes says, is now permanent, when I played Mr. Memory, I came to understand the value of calypso in telling our stories.’

Actor, Amit Raghunanan:

'I wasn't aware of the history of San Fernando Hill. As lead actor in the film on San Fernando hill, the experience was very educational, because working with Joanne, it wasn't just about acting, it was about learning. I have a deeper appreciation now for San Fernando hill, I see it not just as a landmark but as a spiritual site.'

Actor, Izayah Haynes, Youngest Cast Member (8 years old):

'My involvement in Legends Revisited made me realize our Amerindians weren't primitive like history taught us. They had their own laws and their own way of living, so they were just like us, just back then.'

Naparima Girls' High School sent many of its Drama students to audition and quite a few of them were chosen to act in Legends Revisited.

I chatted with its supporting teacher after the making of the film to get her feedback.

Educator, Dramatist, Naomi Adonis Woodsley:

'LegendizeU is an excellent project, this is the kind connectivity and creativity we need to reach our students and connect them with their history and identity. I remember Joanne telling me that one of my history students commented she learnt things from the film she hadn't learnt in history texts.'

When we finally got all the takes done and watched some of the raw footage, Izayah,

Ka'en and I, looked at each other and didn't really know what to say.

After I sat for months doing paper edits to send to the editor, Liam Camps, another magician, and Ka'en and I saw what that footage turned into, we just sat for a moment in silence, a bit awed by what our crazy idea had spawned.

After the film was shown to the cast and crew and team, there was again, that silence before the applause, because none of us had imagined that those takes in my garden and the other places we once saw as ordinary, could have transformed into this magic.

Legends Revisited has the same mission as Sapotee Soil - to promote learning as WE. It is done specifically with the non-reader in mind, as a celebration of our various types of learners and as a Consciousness of inclusivity.

To this day I am awed by what two Creatives with no prior film experience, a cast with no prior film experience, and a shoe-string budget, achieved.

Sometimes I wonder how we made Legends Revisited out of nothing, just as I had been stunned that day my Moruga students created a play out of nothing.

And then I remember that WE Caribbean people never start with nothing.

We always have our imaginations, our creativity, our curiosity, our ingenuity, our determination, our capability.

And EVERYTHING is created out of that!

3. BUILDING A COLOR-IN HISTORY - CALL FOR STORIES:

Note: Please see my website: joannehaynestt.com before submitting, for all details including open Call, Themes, submission details and Terms of Agreement.

This project encompasses all the **4Cs of LegendizeU** and can be done as individual submissions or as submissions by groups.

As Sapotee Soil fertilized our people's imaginations, several schools placed in in their libraries as recommended reading and as a text for Language and Literature. These schools asked me to come in to do readings with their students.

As a writer, reading my work aloud is one of my least favourite things. I prefer interactive sessions where students can share their thoughts, opinions and ideas and I prefer students to read the Sapotee Soil stories themselves.

So I turned these readings into interactive sessions by asking the students to share their own similar stories and tell of people, places, things and events of interest within their communities.

Moruga should have taught be better, because again I was surprised with the response

I got when I nudged the students into sharing their stories.

Hadn't I learnt in Moruga that when you open a classroom and let the breeze in, the students ride on the wind?

The sessions always ran over time, as the students fueled my imagination and educated me about things and places and people I didn't know about and they just didn't want to stop talking.

I did this interactive reading for about two years and when it came to an end I didn't want it to end.

So I started a short story writing competition for primary and secondary students called:

I Am Traveling the Sapotee Soil²⁴, which asked them to share stories of their place.

With a small judging team, the top ten entries were selected every year. I then did a one day workshop with these students to show how they could enhance their stories and then did a grand prize giving which included, as one of the prizes, an autographed copy

²⁴ Trinidad & Tobago Guardian, Young Writers Can Create Their Own Legends: <https://www.guardian.co.tt/article-6.2.431547.aea291d2e8>

of Sapotee Soil.

This competition ran for about ten years and two of its winning stories are adapted to film in Legends Revisited - Forever Young by Lorissa George and Tales from Aripiero by O'Neil Lima Samlal.

As my work load increased with the film, working on a new book and part-time lecturing, I eventually brought the competition to an end.

Even as I ended it though, I knew I would return to it sometime later, because the opportunity it brought for the now-generation to be Curious about their place, to Color-In their stories with their voices and imagination, the avenue that it provided for Creativity to be celebrated and writing skills to be honed and the Consciousness it brought about by connecting people with their places, by connecting communities through their stories.

This Call for Stories, I knew, is a life-long part of my work of revolution in education.

I am now on a mission to bring back this Call for Stories to create a Sapotee Soil Digital Collection.

The ***LegendizeU* Sapotee Soil Digital Collection** is less of a competition and more of a collection.

It is now open to all age groups, not only to students.

It can now be submitted both as individual pieces or as group (school class, book club etc.) pieces.

It stretches beyond Trinidad and Tobago, as I call my Diaspora people to tell WE stories.

Dialect is welcome, whether Trinbagonian or that of another island.

I invite you now, wherever you are reading this paper, however old or young you are, to add your Voice to the **Sapotee Soil Digital Collection** and submit via:

joannehaynestt.com

I recently reached out to two previous winners of the Call for Stories for their feedback

Curious to know if they even remembered the competition.

O'Neil Lima Samlal:

'The short story competition inspired me, it gave me chance to tell about my place

[Aripero Village] in my style [Dramatic Monologue]. When my story was selected to be

turned into a short for Legends Revisited, that was awesome. And I got to act the role

of the story teller.

This whole experience gave me confidence to not be afraid to talk to people, before this

experience I used to be shy. Although I'm not pursuing anything to do with drama again,

I believe that the experience I had more than eight years ago, at sixteen years old, with

the writing competition and the film, helped me with what I am doing now, which is

psychology, as I'm not afraid to talk to people anymore and I have the patience to deal

with them.'

Lorissa George:

'The writing competition introduced me to Trinbagonian folktales and helped me gain a greater appreciation for that part of my culture. I remember doing a lot of research on the topic in order to gather inspiration, and coming across such fascinating stories that still resonate with me today.

Additionally, I was inspired to pursue my love for creative writing as the competition gave me a greater confidence in my skill and ability. It most definitely had a lasting impact, so much so that I pursued Literature at both CSEC and CAPE exams.

Even though I rarely engage in creative writing now, the effect of that competition, almost ten years ago, lives on in my new passions which are traditional and digital art and editing.

Seeing my story turned into a film was genuinely one of the best experiences. I still remember pieces of it very vividly. Getting to witness that was almost more rewarding than the actual prizes from the competition.'

4. THE *LegendizeU* SCHOOL PROJECT - TABAQUITE SECONDARY CASE STUDY:

This project requires collaboration with its Creator to ensure it is done in the

LegendizeU manner to achieve specific goals. The success of the LegendizeU Project

at Tabaquite Secondary was achieved by HOW the Project was done.

I am easily accessible at: joannehaynestt.com

The ***LegendizeU*** School Project encompasses Social Studies, Language,

Communication, Business Studies, History.

I formulated the ***LegendizeU*** School Project into a one-year project at

Tabaquite Secondary with the Principal's and the librarian's support.

The ***LegendizeU*** Project exposed students to:

- Reading/Storytelling
- Film
- Creative Discussion/ Opinion/Interaction/Oral Expression
- Research
- Oral History
- Creative Arts

The **LegendizeU** Project closed with a grand prize-giving that encompassed the entire school body as well as persons from the community.

Certificates of Participation were given to all involved students.

The top three entires, determined by Librarian Jori Daniel and Library staff, were awarded prizes and were given the stage to present their pieces to the entire school body and to invited guests from the community.

The **LegendizeU Project** at Tabaquite Secondary exceeded my own expectations.

Firstly, the **LegendizeU** Project went beyond a school library project to a school project, with 48 participating students from Form 1 - Form 6.

Students initially not involved got excited along the way and asked how they could become involved and students who remained uninvolved came to the library asking to see the films, hear the stories and see the entries.

Secondly, library staff asked if they could submit entires!

Thirdly, several teachers got fully immersed, helping their students with Art, Story, Audio, Film, submissions.

Fourthly, the Social Studies Department opted to use the **LegendizeU** Project as Coursework.

Feedback:

- The Principal, Ms. Sherry-Ann Boodram:

*'The **LegendizeU** Project is innovative and excellent. It has so many positives - it gives students a chance to showcase their talents, builds self esteem among participants, motivates others to be involved next time, brings all age groups together and shows appreciation for our elders. I hope to see it continued.'*

- The Librarian, Mr. Jori Daniel:

*'Of all the projects I had done at the school, **LegendizeU** was the most well-received and the most participated with students from ages 11 to 17 getting involved, with teachers from various departments supporting students' efforts and with even Library staff asking if they could submit.'*

*The **LegendizeU** Project has great value - the differentiated approach to teaching and learning is revolutionary, practical and appropriate to satisfy the needs of todays C21st learner.'*

- The Participating Students:

- *Excellent!*

- *Fun!*

- *I learn something!*

- *I feel nice!*

Jori Daniel interviewed the **48 participating students** and all remarked on gaining knowledge, connecting with community and elders and seeing their spaces and people with new eyes.

The pride, Voice, Visibility and sense of Self of the students in having their work shared with the school body and wider community, were all remarked on by Principal, Librarian and Staff.

- The top 3:

Knollys Tunnel by Antonio Bharath, Video:

'I passing that tunnel all the time and never take it on. Now I see it. And I feel nice that I can talk about it. Thanks to this competition and Mr. DeLeon and Salty who tell me bout it and drive me through it. I eh like the bats tho!'

Tracking Train History by Lakshana Ramasar, Written Research Project:

'I live behind Jeffers Crossing. The area got its name after the gatekeeper Mr. Jeffers. I am proud that I live at this historic site and I actually have bits of the train line in my yard! My beloved grandfather, Ramphal Ramasar, told me many stories of his past, including his joy of riding the train.'

Crime Time by Quinson Andel, Spoken Word, Audio:

'I never thought a school competition would involve spoken word and I could write about crime and say what I want to say. This real cool!'

You can view the top three entries here: joannehaynestt.com

I recently caught up with past competition winner, Lakshana Ramasar, and wondered if she remembered the **LegendizeU** Project.

Now 20 years old, she said:

*'It's been 8 years since I participated in that competition. The **LegendizeU** Project showed me what I could do at that young age. It was a joyful and memorable experience.'*

I know the success of the **LegendizeU** Project at Tabaguite school came because WE saw WE.

When our students learn in the **LegendizeU** way, they will always shine - with interest, with involvement, with participation - because there is nothing more rewarding for any of us, than being SEEN.

5. THE INTERNAL JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY:

This Project requires collaboration with its Creator to ensure it is done in the

LegendizeU manner to achieve specific goals.

I am easily reachable at: **joannehaynestt.com**

The Internal Journey of Discovery is a fun, informative, creative approach to

building identity, curing Self-Blindness and connecting with community, to celebrate

Intangible Worth.

LegendizeU IMPLEMENTATIONS IN THE PRESENT SYSTEM:

1. LEARNING AS CREATORS, NOT AS CONSUMERS - HSAC - His Shoes Are Cool:

The real trick in building Creative Writing skills is not teaching the student how to write, it is reminding the student to LOOK, LISTEN, SEE, FEEL.

This **LegendizeU** Creativity tool reminds students that LIFE is the greatest inspiration and writing a good story means pulling from life!

We can use this user-friendly, fun technique, to guide students in developing their story writing skills and in building their connection with stories, plays, characters, poems, historical events.

Educators can print the drawing of Mahal's bare-feet by Ka'en Haynes in **Sapotee Soil**

(and also off the website: joannehaynestt.com), as a visual memory, which goes with

the acronym HSAC: His Shoes Are Cool.

H - HERE:

You are a Caribbean Creation, be proudly Here. Write about WE place, WE people, WE

selves. So unless you've experienced winter, don't write about snow! Let WE language

Color-In your story.

Example in Sapotee Soil: Color-In Language: 'Is just stupidity, Errol!'

Rather than: 'What nonsense, Errol!' in Cracking Up.

S - SETTINGS:

Does your story take place Now, Long ago or in the Future? Use your Curiosity to

Imagine the time - how is clothing different from then to now, to in the future?

Example in Sapotee Soil: Long Ago story, paragraph 1 in She Never Walks Alone.

A - ACTION:

Think of your story like Waze, how do you get from it from start to finish? Create a Map.

Then remember action isn't only about what your characters Do, it's also about what they Say. Dialogue allows free Creativity it lets your characters breathe, it shows who they are, and it brings out the drama, horror, love, fear, anger, hope, joy, in your story.

Example in Sapotee Soil: Mapping the story - A Tale from Sobo Village.

Dialogue, Conversation between Mother and daughters in Close Encounters of the Caribbean Kind.

C - CHARACTERS:

Of all the elements of a good short story, your Characters add the most Color! Use your Consciousness of an aunt, an uncle, a teacher, a brother, a neighbour...think of how this person walks, talks, acts, and use this to give your characters personality!

Example in Sapotee Soil: See how the Bell is brought to character in The Mislaid Lady.

2. CREATING SAFE ZONES:

Using themes from Sapotee Soil to connect students with their inner Selves, We Planting Seeds on De Sapotee Soil, empowers student Voice and Visibility and provides a Safe Space for students to Express without judgement and to Exhale without waiting for the end of exams.

Ensuring our students' 'Safety', means much more than a non-violent school.

In a system that constantly tests and assesses, in a classroom where it is important to be right, not wrong, in a space where exhales like Art, Music, Dance, Drama, Sport, are tested and competitive, not liberating, 'Safety' in our school system means a place to exhale, to be SEEN and heard and unjudged...A Place To BE.

Method:

Educators can set up a 'garden' that is a

Non-judgmental

Expressive

Collective

Connective

Free

Safe Space

For students to 'plant' their seeds, by placing a box in your library/classroom, labeled:

'We Planting Seeds on de Sapotee Soil'.

We can invite students to 'plant' (write & drop) their seeds in the box.

Students can be invited to answer anonymously, in one line or a few words:

- What big dreams do I have?
- What makes me 'ME'?
- What gives me hope?
- What has failure taught me?
- What are my strengths?
- How do I stay in peace?

We can also add you own themes.

At the end of the month, these 'seeds' can be taken out and added to the Sapotee Soil poster (download from the website: joannehaynestt.com) and students can be encouraged to 'water' these seeds by discussing and sharing ideas and opinions.

The WE Planting Seeds on The Sapotee Soil activity can encourage students to see this space you are providing them as one of Safety and may lend to greater sharing by building camaraderie in a natural, easy manner.

In the NALIS, ELSD One Book Many Schools Project, many school librarians turned this idea into a work of art, creating Sapotee Soil Empowerment Trees, with the leaves comprising the students' responses!

The librarians' take on this idea is a symbol of the Creativity of WE people.

8. RE-IMAGINING CONFLICT:

In order to solve our school problems, we must face them, not hide them.

School violence cannot be hidden anymore. Especially with technology and

Social Media that allows for the wide circulation of videos of violent student behaviour!

Caribbean people have never shied away from treating with the difficult spaces in our land, so we should not regress from that powerful characteristic in our identity.

We can allow our students' Imaginations to roam into considering ideas of peaceful rebellion by nudging them into the concept of Martin Luther King Jr. and The Weapon of Dreams²⁵.

We can plug and pump this event up because WE love a good show, by co-ordinating a Movie Day with students, complete with popcorn and soft drinks!

The featured movie would be Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' speech.

We can encourage discussion on how MLK used the power of imagination, dreams, hopes, to inspire and ignite a people.

²⁵ Haynes, J., *Sapotee Soil* 3rd Ed 2024, pg. 110

Everyone, including educators, can then give his/her own 'I Have a Dream' 2 minute speech:

What do you Dream?

- For the World
- For the Nation
- For your Community
- For your Family
- For Your School
- For Your Self

Everyone then votes for the favourite and contributes to sponsor two movie tickets and treats for the winner.

4. FUELING THE IMAGINATION:

The Song of the Day²⁶ subliminally promotes calm, ease, interaction, exhale, movement, camaraderie, in a fun, casual, friendly, creative, way.

Our students are a great source of knowledge.

We can engage our students' critical thinking and creative problem solving skills to address some of the issues they face at school by giving them space for their Imaginations to be engaged in building the schools they would like to see.

Fueling the Imagination is The Way in the Caribbean Brand of Learning.

While I await the day that this old colonial system of education will be shaved off, I will add a mark or two to the bad haircut, just to give it some style, at least!

We can fuel our students' Imaginations as a way to turn down the school stress, we can foster greater communication, interaction and connection between staff and students through the Imagination and we can ignite a love of learning through building interest, connectivity and casual interaction, by implementing a programme called:

²⁶ Haynes, J., Sapotee Soil 3rd Ed. 2024, pgs. 108 - 109

The Song of the Day.

In this programme, the school body walks onto the compound hearing a song being played over the PA system.

At assembly, the message in the song is reinforced, with a specific line given as fuel for the day - for example, using Bob Marley's 'Redemption Song' as The Song of the Day, the specific line could be: 'None but ourselves can free our minds'.

Imagine The Song of the Day playing over the PA system again, as the school body leaves the premises.

Can you Imagine how The Song of the Day could transform students', teachers' and Principals' moods, changing whatever mood the home and the traffic would have put them in?

Can you Imagine how changing the mood can mitigate stress for all?

Can you Imagine the connection forged as Principals, teachers and students come up with song choices to create a playlist?

Can you Imagine the folklore transmission between young and not-so-young as each generation hears another generation's music?

The Imagination must be given space to roam if it is to be honored and to thrive. The rigidity of the school system makes this is a hard task, but WE are Caribbean, which means WE always find a way.

5. LEGITIMIZING WE IN WE CLASSROOM²⁷:

Sapotee Soil and Legends Revisited are tools that show us how the Unconventional Spaces of Caribbean Learning can be used to foster Learning as WE.

I detail here how two Unconventional Spaces of Learning - the Obeah Man and Legends, can be used in the lessons on Consciousness they bring us, all while using avenues of Curiosity, Color-In and Creativity to engage.

²⁷ © Joanne Haynes, 2024.

1. THE OBEAH MAN- Papa Neeza and the Revolution Against Self-Blindness²⁸

Sapotee Soil gives an account of Papa Neeza, once identified as the Caribbean's most formidable Obeah man, in *The Mystery of Moruga*, as an effort to demystify the fear and ignorance surrounding Obeah.

The research for this story, gained only through oral history²⁹, led me on a journey back to myself.

After many hours of phone conversations with Dr. Francis Henry, who readily shared her years spent with Papa Neeza, I made the journey back to Moruga with great trepidation.

You would think that my fear of Obeah and of Papa Neeza himself would have been dispelled after my Moruga students' stories, but I too, have colonial scars.

²⁸ © Joanne Haynes- Reframing Papa Neeza as Storytelling in the C21st; The University of the West Indies Literature Week Presentation, Haynes, J., *Seeing Ourselves Through the Eyes of Pa Neeza*: <https://www.joannehaynestt.com/>; Haynes, J., *Sapotee Soil* 3rd Ed., *The Mystery of Moruga*, pgs. 74 - 81.

²⁹ Oral Historians: Dr. Frances Henry, Elda Elliot, Leon London (Pagan).

My first stop was at Papa Neeza's daughter-in-law, Elda Elliot.

Perhaps she sensed my nervousness or perhaps Papa Neeza himself did, and she brought out a framed picture of Papa Neeza and placed it in my hands.

The picture immediately settled my nerves.

Papa Neeza stared back at me, looking a bit like Marcus Garvey; it was only his eyes that gave him away because they held time and mystery and knowing.

The **Curiosity** in me kicked away the fear and I sat down to find out about this Papa Neeza who had been such a source of pride for my Moruga students and whose eyes told me now, he knew much more than my students could ever have told.

My next stop took me straight to the home of the Obeah man who called himself 'Pagan' and all I can say is that it's a good thing I had been calmed by Papa Neeza's picture earlier, because sitting in Pagan's backyard, with its blue bottles and black flag and its little mounds of dirt piled with candles and flowers and sticks, brought back every story about the mysterious world of Obeah I had heard before.

But Papa Neeza was ready for me, because the information I got from these three sources of oral history opened my eyes and I saw myself through Papa Neeza's eyes that told me: 'See Your Self, Know Your Self, Define Your Self.'

Papa Neeza rejected the notion of himself as an Obeah man.

Why?

People from all over Trinidad, and some say the Caribbean, traveled the treacherous Moruga road - the poor during the day, the famous and powerful under cover of night - all believing that Papa Neeza's Obeah could fix their every problem.

Yet Papa Neeza rejected this notion of himself as an Obeah man.

Papa Neeza referred to himself as a faith healer and bush medicine doctor who knew what he could and could not heal. His rule, I was told, was, 'If you coming to do Obeah, doh come by me'.

Papa Neeza understood that when these African gifts and knowledge and power, loosely termed 'Obeah', came across to the New World, they were vilified.

Papa Neeza learnt his craft under his grandmother, Ma Diamond, who came directly from Africa. His understanding of the work he did was different from the tainted European, colonial, interpretation of it.

Recognizing the power of self-image as a tool of imprisonment, colonization warped our Image of Self.

In Papa Neeza's time, the consciousness was to guard against Self-Hatred.

But Papa Neeza was a man before his time, because he knew that out of Self-Hatred, the people, in an effort to reject the hatred of Self, would become numb, disconnected, apathetic...Blind.

Self-Hatred requires that we see Self and feel hatred because we have been conditioned to reject the image.

Self-Blindness means we struggle to SEE ourselves in the warped mirror and sometimes get so tired of the struggle that we do not SEE that the image in the mirror is not really WE...we become Blind.

In rejecting the 'Obeah man' label, Papa Neeza dispelled Self-Blindness by holding up his own mirror.

His rejection of the label not only said that one cannot define what one does not know/understand, it said: I do not recognize myself in your image of me.

Papa Neeza understood the importance of repositioning Self in a world where Self has not merely been corrupted, but has been erased.

He saw that we cannot forge a positive Self image out of a distorted mirror.

He understood the need to not merely break the mirror as Anansi had³⁰, but to create, re-create, a new mirror that was framed by the People's truth of Self.

If we are to take Papa Neeza's lesson into the C21st, we will recognize that we cannot forge a progressive education system that builds citizenship, identity, pride, out of a system that is framed by a warped image of us.

A system of educating that empowers, requires we frame it around who WE are, how WE learn, connect, understand, communicate, so that WE begin to challenge Self-Blindness by giving our students a mirror to see WE.

³⁰ Senior, O., Colonial Girls School: <https://poetryarchive.org/poem/colonial-girls-school/>

Decolonizing the curricular would see Papa Neeza as a whole chaptered topic, in a

Subject called: Caribbean Development or Caribbean Citizenship, because Papa Neeza was more than an Obeah man.

Papa Neeza was, in fact, a Caribbean Flagbearer.

He boldly and proudly claimed his space as a man of both worlds, the old and new, the Africa and the Trinidad, the there and here, while remaining firmly rooted in his understanding of holding on to his Self Truth, and forging his identity beyond the prejudiced, eroding, misinterpretations of colonization.

Papa Neeza could show us pride, identity, belonging, self-recognition, and all those sub-topics that make up the grand idea of 'self esteem', but he cannot show us how to SEE Self in a warped mirror.

2. LEGENDS - The Fallen People of the Black Land:

Legends are a People's Truth.

Before books, technology, SM, People expressed themselves through the First Media³¹

- Storytelling.

Through storytelling, People passed on their knowledge, their beliefs, their stories of themselves, uncorrupted by the colonial interpretation of them.

One of the greatest impacts of colonization is the Erosion of Memory.

Consequently, the issue of identity remains a haunting post-colonization question.

Long after the colonizers were finally pushed out, their systems, still in place, continue to mock us with the idea that what WE SEE, FEEL, KNOW, DO, is lesser than, irrelevant, cute, simple...

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The University of Trinidad and Tobago, Caribbean Journal of Teacher Education and Pedagogy, Haynes, J., Legends: Recalling, Recognizing, Modernizing Implications for the Local Curriculum: https://utt.edu.tt › large_pdf › cms › cjpeg_2011_2, pgs. 62 - 68.

If WE continue to learn from the colonizers and see ourselves from colonial perspectives, WE continue to partake in the eroding of our own identity.

The 'history' of our First Peoples, would have us believe that these were a group of people, here first, and wiped out by colonization. This is a colonial history that disconnects us from our people and sets us on a path of victimhood that is tremendously difficult to come off of.

The only truth in this colonial history is that our Amerindians were here first.

They were brutalized and their population was vastly diminished by colonization but they were not wiped out because they are very much present here today in our place names, in our vocabulary, in our foods, in the Carib community, and...in our myths and legends.

So let's not give colonization any more props by believing its dismissive, diminishing, marginalizing, impersonal, destructive to a people, history.

Our First People left us their own history...A Color-In History that is their survival, connectivity, connectivity, relevance, identity, presence, color, creativity, story, passed down through the oral tradition.

The **Fallen People of the Black Land**, in *Sapotee Soil*³², is based on one of two Amerindian legends of the Pitch Lake.

According to this legend, the Colibri Legend, a group of our Amerindian ancestors celebrated an important victory by eating the sacred Colibri (Humming bird) and the angered Gods caused the earth to open up and swallow the village in a lake of pitch.

Inspired by what this legend showed me about my ancestors, the **Fallen People of the Black Land** modernizes the legend to connect it with the now-generation.

In my story, Kayana, an adolescent Amerindian boy, is sent to spend the night with his foolish ancestors who live beneath the lake of Piche, as punishment for his wrongdoing. Now alone in the dark land of Piche, he longs for the familiarity and safety of his home and family that he had, mere hours before, taken for granted.

³² Haynes, J., *Sapotee Soil*, 3rd Ed., pgs 51 - 57; Haynes, J., 2016 Film, *Legends Revisited*

Whether it is imagination, fear, guilt or reality, the voices of the doomed ancestors rise, as whispers at first, and then loudly, all around him calling him to them. Kayana calls for his Protector, but he feels no connection and knows that his God is angry.

As he battles hunger and the desire to find a food offering to appease his God, the Colibri appears, looking down at him.

The ancestors' voices rise up.

Kayana faces temptation, his choice: do as his ancestors had done and satisfy his hunger with the easy catch of the nearby Colibri, or learn from his past and stay true to what is right...

Conscience wins and as Kayana chooses to reject hunger and stand for what is right, he feels his God return to protect him.

The legend shows that our First People had a numinous belief and possessed a wisdom of the laws of harmonious living that remain as relevant today. Perhaps one can even interpret that the sunken village of Piche was our First People's own testimony to an existence of Hell.

While some evidence of religious practice among our First Peoples is given in our history books, we may mistakenly relate this to a basic idea of nature worship, when in fact, using this one legend as reference, it is clear that our First People were a highly spiritual people who sought to make sense of their space and to live in harmony with the circle of life and man's place within it.

If we grasp this understanding of our First People, we recognize even more the European lie that annihilated our First People under the disguise of religion and conversion.

The legend reminds who WE are and who WE have come from - a people who opted to make sense of the complicated spaces in their land, who sought to make sense of their space by connecting through spirituality and nature, thereby building a harmony with the land on which they lived.

If our students learn about our ancestors through their legend, if WE learn about our ancestors through their legend, rather than as a mere chapter in a history text that, sadly, continues the impersonal story telling of colonial history, we see them beyond a people who were the early victims of colonization, as a courageous, wise, spiritual people.

The Legend reminds: we are not descendants of victims; we are descendants of survivors!

Surely this knowledge is important in building a People's identity, awareness, confidence and connection!

Instead of our students learning about these old-time people who were here once and who get mash up by colonization, they can learn, through legends, of a people who were here first, who lived in harmony with this land, who created ways of being here and who left lessons we can all learn from.

When we learn this way, a visit to the Pitch Lake, is a visit to WE personal Space, a meeting with our ancestors, a celebration of WE.

This is how we begin to cure Self-Blindness and build our recognition and appreciation of our Intangible Worth!

And let's bet, when we start learning like this, it will be very hard for us to litter and destroy our places because we will KNOW them as WE Space.

As an ode to my Amerindian ancestors, **The Fallen People of the Black Land**, was my first attempt at film³³.

³³Watch here: <https://www.joannehaynestt.com/>
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2945620/>

POLICY & INCLUSION:

We all know the pains of breaking down and re-building.

And we all know that the formal system of educating is failing many more students than it is empowering all.

The 'excelling' students are the minority.

And continuing to assess the system on the performance of a minority is not a valid assessment.

The performance of the school as a whole, in academics, sports, the arts, is often the story of who is at the helm. So schools rise and fall according to their leadership.

We do not have more time to consider the whats and what-ifs of changing our education system; the students who fall out at school often become the adults who either leave this place and gift a foreign country with their abilities that we failed to hone, or the adults who terrorize our society.

In my own experience, I have felt the frustration of doing and then seeing the doing become undone.

The students being allowed to present the SBAs orally at Moruga Composite, the students seeing alternative ways to address anger at San Fernando East Secondary, the students feeling pride and power in their community at Tabaquite Secondary, were all one-off events, embraced by the then Principals and discarded after, more often because there is a lack of funding for continuation.

My recommendations on both Policy and Inclusion, based on my personal experience, are:

1. POLICY THAT STANDS:

Regardless of Principal, change of Minister of Education, change of Government, Policy must stand, with a decided time-period for its re-assessment that should be based on what is working or not and what major global shifts need to be included or re-framed. Policy should not be decided by who is at the helm at the time. We need to remember that education is not a five year term, it is a life-long, ongoing exchange of information that impacts our children for all-time.

2. ALL STAKEHOLDERS CANNOT BE PLEASED:

We also need to remember that there are various stakeholders and all cannot be pleased. One policy that may please parents, such as not changing booklists to minimize parents' book-buying expense, means inevitable boredom for students of Literature, as they are not exposed to new material and frustration for teachers who see another book as more user-friendly, but are restricted in the use of this book because it is not on the Ministerial list.

3. INCLUSION OF CREATIVES:

The inclusion of various bodies and institutions in helping to formulate an education policy needs to consider the Creative aspects of WE. The artist needs to have a say because the fact is that many of our celebrated artists did not even 'make it' in our education system and if we value art and our artists, we should listen to what they have to say on how the system could be made more user-friendly to the Creative.

4. RE-FRAMING THE ORAL COMPONENT IN TESTING:

Give students room and space in their oral presentations. The existing rubrics in various subjects take 90% of expression and creativity out of this testing and the purpose of oral expression is to build confidence, self-expression and communication skills.

6. CO-PARTNER IN EDUCATION:

The NALIS, ELSD One Book Many Schools (OBMS) should be an integral part of the education system, meaning that: 1. The selected book should automatically be included on the Ministry of Education's booklist 2. The selected book should be purchased by the MoE for all school libraries 3. The OBMS Programme should be the standardized Programme for addressing Literacy skills in all schools, 4. CXC's selection of Literature books should be informed by the OBMS selections.

CONCLUSION - I Done Talk...For Now!

I advocate, not for bringing the Caribbean into the classroom, but for a system of Learning that recognizes and applauds WE.

If it was so easy for my Moruga students to see a beach amidst the desks and chairs and blackboard, how much easier would it be for our students to learn in environments that are natural to our Caribbean essence, simply because they would SEE that they are SEEN.

The term 'institutional change' is rocking across the world, as the institution as the final authority is constantly challenged by the now-generation, who know their Voice and Visibility is REAL, in this SM world.

Authoritative, top-down teaching is the old way; the new way is collaborative, collective, Color-In, learning.

Learning by Subject is the old-fashioned, limited way. The new way is Learning by Life-Themes, with the recognition that Learning is fluid, evolving, natural and connected, as is Life.

We simply have to get with the programme if we expect our schools to stay

relevant, because we already wrestle with a vast majority of students who see, like my Moruga students had seen, little/no value in the education system.

And the simple truth is, as much as we applaud the S.E.A. performances and the CAPE Scholarships, we are losing potential every day in a system that dismisses and discards according to exam performance.

As Caribbean, we think our mission is to 'keep up' with the rest of the world.

Yet 'keeping up' does not mean becoming something we are not, it means celebrating who we are, while injecting our essence into a continuously evolving world and moving with confidence and proud identity, in a global world with the recognition that WE are valuable Creators and Contributors.

To hone and nurture and encourage this Value, WE must envelop our students in a system that is honorable and enhancing to WE.

Yes.

Change is disruptive.

Let us remember that the expressions of our People - Carnival, Steelpan, Calypso,

Hinduism, Orisha, Hosay, Canboulay...were once considered too disruptive!

And let us recognize how we would be a shadow of ourselves without these expressions of WE people.

We are a Curious, Creative People, whose Color-In and Consciousness is a Value to share with the world!

It is time for our school system to recognize, applaud, celebrate, who WE are and how WE learn.

It is time for us to Learn As WE.

For the **LegendizeU** tools/projects that require my collaboration, I am easily accessible via my website: joannehaynestt.com

For the **LegendizeU** tools/projects adopted from this paper or from Sapotee Soil, please acknowledge them as **LegendizeU** tools/projects.

Sapotee Soil is available for purchase only through direct order from my website:

joannehaynestt.com

Thank you for taking the time to read my paper.

GLOSSARY:

1. The 4Cs in **LegendizeU** - The **LegendizeU** Learning Model, based on Learning through Curiosity, Color-In, Creativity, Consciousness.
2. Caribbean Brand of Learning - A Recognition that WE Caribbean people have our own way of Learning, Sharing, Communicating, Connecting, Creating. The Identification of the HOW of Caribbean Learning, the SPACE of Caribbean Learning and the Intangible Values of Caribbean Learning.
3. Color-In History - 1. History that breaks the black and white restrictions of formal textbook learning, 2. History that analyses beyond the colonial parameters, 3. the Respect and Promotion of History from alternative sources, including Oral History, Storytelling, Unconventional Spaces of Caribbean Learning, 4. History that is by the People, for the People, from the People, 5. History that is Inclusive, allowing for many voices, many truths, many angles, 6. History that is Connective, Circular, Ongoing rather than instructive and final.
4. Intangible Worth - The People's Role in Shaping, Advancing, Building, Developing, Creating, Impacting, their Space.
5. Internal Journey of Discovery - A Mission of Students Building Schools.
6. **LegendizeU** - A Model of Indigenous Learning that is informed by the Caribbean Brand of Learning.
7. Self-Blindness - The inability to See, Connect with, Recognize and Embrace Self, as relates to a collective, national, regional, intrinsic Caribbean Self.
8. Unconventional Spaces of Caribbean Learning - The Overlooked and Undervalued Spaces where WE Caribbean people Learn, Share, Connect, Communicate, Create.

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