



## Subesh Ramjattan

Degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt)

*Chancellor, over the last two decades, Subesh Ramjattan has devoted his life to public philanthropic service to mainly underprivileged persons in the society. His abiding empathy may well have its roots in his own very humble upbringing in the rural community of Plum Mitan in North Eastern Trinidad.*

*Early on, he knew that starting his own business was something he wanted to achieve. After attending secondary school at North Eastern College in Sangre Grande, he sought employment for the kind of schooling one can only acquire in the working world. And he took to that world with considerable energy, first at the Bata Shoe Company in Port of Spain and then with the Neal and Massy Group. Being in possession of ample humility and sharply tuned powers of attention, he learnt quickly and thoroughly. Many are the hats he wore during that time: Stock Keeper, Customs Clerk, Purchasing and Costing Clerk, Production Supervisor, Accounts Clerk, Purchasing Manager and Route Sales Manager.*

*By 1976, aged 25, he launched his first business venture. The House of Marketing Limited was borne from his observations of business opportunities and his own imagination. He filled a niche supplying and installing acoustical and flooring products. He subsequently developed six further divisions catering to building and home improvement needs. Expansion would ultimately take him to the United States where a new stage of his development would begin to take shape.*

*In 1980, he created North American Carpet Mills and subsequently achieved a level of financial security that supported his calling to community service. In 1998 he would pick up the challenge of caring for abandoned and underprivileged children with the establishment of the Bridge of Hope Foundation in the rural community of James Smart Village, east of Sangre Grande. The Foundation acquired eighteen acres of land and developed dormitories, classrooms, a playing field and an agricultural plot. Today, thirty children call it home and with help from corporate organisations, courses are offered in cosmetology, computer*

*literacy, animal and plant husbandry as well as academic subjects needed for entrance into secondary schools in the area. This serves to underscore his deep belief in supporting communities by truly empowering people. The Foundation also developed Olive House on the same compound which provides a haven for retired persons who are in need of professional care in their senior years. The obvious synergies of this arrangement continue to benefit young and old.*

*In 1998, Subesh Ramjattan began the development of the Annapausis Community in St Augustine, Trinidad. Here he established a meeting place for members of the public desirous of engaging in a faith-based model of philanthropy, mentoring and coaching. The site has become an advisory centre for marital counseling and family-life guidance. It also functions as the Headquarters of the Oasis Institute of Higher Learning which is a State-recognised centre for programmes in social work. Mr Ramjattan has chaired the Oasis Board since 2002.*

*Prior to that, he partitioned his time to pursue a programme in pastoral training at the Kingsway Biblical Institute in Iowa and was ordained as a Minister of Religion in 1999.*

*In 2009, Mr Ramjattan pushed further into rural Trinidad to create the Kernahan Centre for Community Development in Manzanilla. With the support of state and corporate sponsors he was able to build the Centre which houses a pre-school, homework and computer facilities and an outreach programme for the agriculturally-sustained population from the area.*

*Exploring a need to share his experiences and insights, Mr Ramjattan has authored several books and recently established Bridge of Hope (Kutumb Jyothi) India to assist families in impoverished areas.*

*He has consistently demonstrated a belief that there are lessons to be learnt from all those around us. He has charted his life's path to empower himself not as an end to itself but as a means to serve the national community with distinction and to teach by example.*

*Chancellor, I present Subesh Ramjattan, and ask that by the authority vested in you by the Senate and Council of The University of the West Indies, you confer on him the degree of Doctor of Letters, honoris causa.*

*St. Augustine Campus*

*October 25, 2014*