

Graduation 2013

First, let me congratulate you graduates on reaching this staging post along a journey of learning that I trust will be lifelong. Since I trust this will be read by your significant others as well, let me not only congratulate them, but also thank them as well for having supported you through your University career.

To you all be the glory of the occasion!

This is the high point of our academic year. If one of our University's main functions is to prepare students for life and living by having them for a start incorporate a set of information that is the substrate of their knowledge, then it is a responsibility and a pleasure for us to celebrate this auspicious occasion that marks that achievement.

Some universities refer to this day as a "commencement" and others like us as simply graduation. The difference is perhaps semantic, but the purists would have us recognize that this ceremony which involves the granting of certificates, degrees and diplomas, represents the commencement or beginning of a new phase of your lives. Your teachers hope that that you exemplify the attributes of a good graduate of the University of the West Indies. Let me cite what our current Strategic Plan lists as these attributes. ***Our graduate should be a critical and creative thinker; and effective communicator with good interpersonal skills; IT skilled and information literate; innovative and entrepreneurial; globally aware and well-grounded in his/her regional identity; socially, culturally and environmentally responsible and guided by strong ethical values.*** I am sure each of you will recognize that you have all those qualities in abundance.

But I do wish to stress particularly the need for social responsibility. We repeat it almost as an article of faith that our graduates represent the human capital essential for Caribbean growth in all its dimensions. This can only be achieved if you are truly good citizens and seek to contribute in some way to the betterment of our Caribbean, in addition to earning your daily bread. I believe firmly that a part of that social responsibility means keeping faith with your alma mater, being responsible alumni and making some contribution to it. The support of alumni is measured not by a few making large contributions but by the many who give regularly whatever they can afford.

One of the ways we mark the significance of this occasion is by holding to the pageantry that has signalized these ceremonies for at least eight centuries. The beautiful gowns with which we are accoutered with their specific color coding can be traced back to the ancient European university tradition. The procession is brought up by the Chancellor preceded by a bearer of the mace-an ancient symbol of prestige and authority. Pageantry and ritual have always been

important for human group identification and you belong to a group that with a distinguished lineage.

I hope the memory of this ceremony will remain with you if not forever, at least for a very long time. I still recall vividly my own graduation of over 50 years ago. I trust that the memories will be a mixture of high expectations of what is to commence, along with a tinge of sadness at having to leave a relatively cloistered environment where you made some of the friends who will remain friends for life.

Let may say with GB Shaw: ***“Just do what must be done. This may not be happiness, but it is greatness”***, but wish you happiness as well as greatness.

George Alleyne