

Lucien, Lorna Goodison, Kei Miller, Olive Senior, and Tanya Shirley. But the many students of literature who have areas of interest other than creative writing are also confronted, in their years with us, with the power — whether therapeutic, subversive or persuasive — of the word.

The celebrated poet of Negritude Aimé Césaire affirmed, in the 1939 epic poem **Notebook of a Return to The Native Land**, his intention to articulate to the world the colonial alienation and dismal poverty of his people. The Martinican's declaration that "*Ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont point de bouche*" translated as "*My mouth shall be the mouth of those calamities which have no mouth.*"

COMPELLING MESSAGE

Contemporary readers might view Césaire's youthful confidence as inflated. However, his emphasis on an aspect of the writer's craft, embraced by many Caribbean wordsmiths — the ability to use one's voice to speak for the voiceless, to be advocate and spokesperson — remains compelling.

It is also relevant to what I see as an integral part of the

in literature inevitably valorise both oral and scribal expression, in addition to developing and sharpening critical skills, using the literary text as fertile raw material. Our graduates harness this acquired and rewarding sensitivity to the resources of language in a variety of career options, including professions in the media, law, human relations, editing, teaching, diplomacy, administration, the



Certainly, the love of language and literature has marked out rewarding pathways in my own life. Before joining the UWI, I had worked as a translator, after a UWI first degree in French and post-graduate work in francophone literature. The transition from translation to teaching was not a difficult one. I had always known that I wanted to teach, and in both professions, I found myself obliged to pay attention to linguistic detail and nuance, to

value form as well as content. In 2004, I made another shift — this time from one campus to another, and from francophone literature to comparative literature. Once again, I was able to identify a certain reassuring coherence in these diverse activities: a concern with the power and the potential of language, a lasting fascination with the dense

seem to be unorthodox interpretations. Fluency and accuracy in oral and written expression, attention to detail, and a thoughtful though passionate engagement with ideas are ultimately, I believe, empowering for students.

In May this year, I had a wonderful opportunity to witness all those qualities demonstrated by three UWI students/former

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