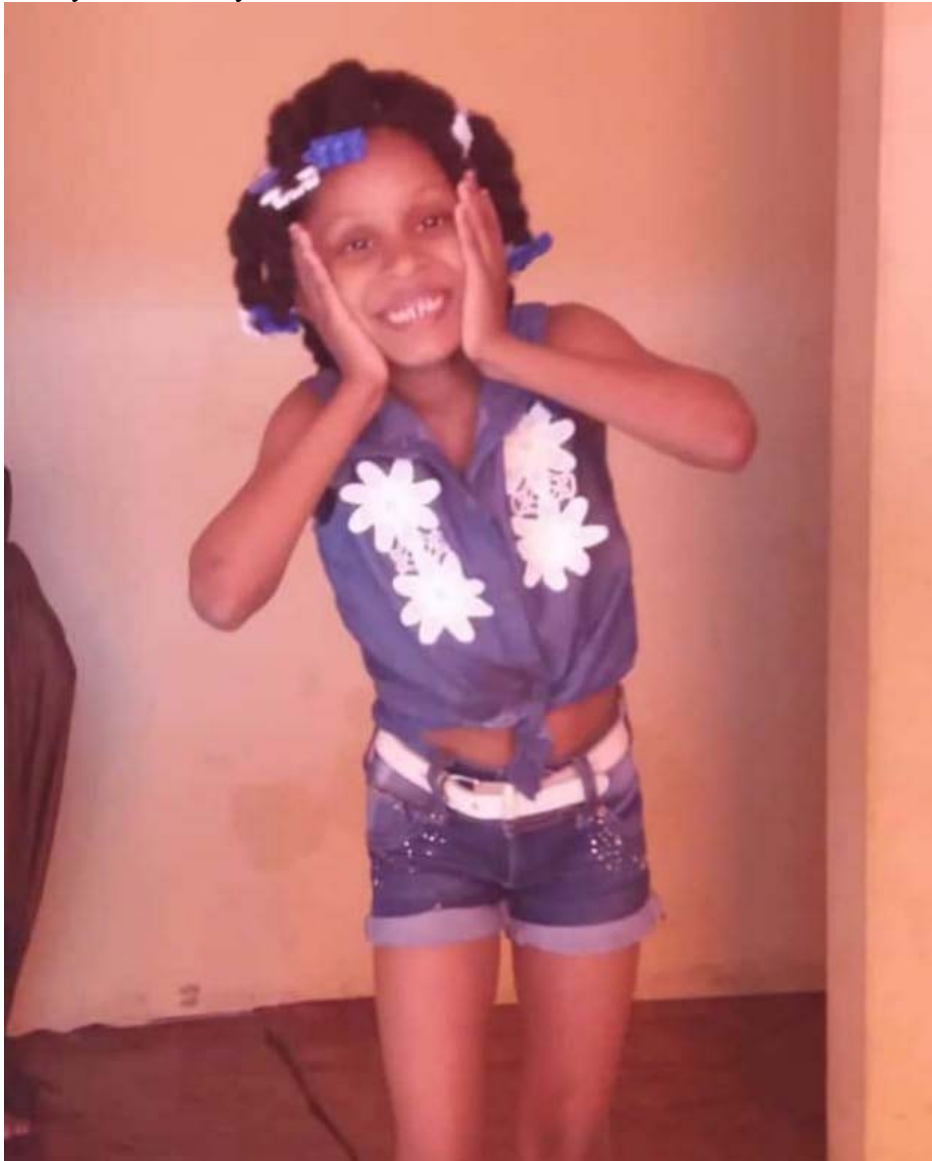


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UWI speaker: Where was help for Michael Maynard?

[Julien Neaves](#)

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Mukeisha Maynard -

ON FEBRUARY 9 the country was rocked by the death of eight-year-old Mukeisha Maynard after she was beaten by her father in Kelly Village. But global chartered accountant and

chairman of the University of the West Indies Development and Endowment Fund Nigel Romano has asked where was the help for the father.

Romano was delivering the feature address on Thursday night at a UWI St Augustine Faculty of Law panel discussion on mindset change and crime prevention: how seeing the other can reduce crime and ignite economic growth. The event was held at the Noor Hassanali Auditorium on campus.

Romano said long-term sustainable change starts with education, but before that happens the social situation in which many students find themselves must be examined.

"Do we see the other? Do we see the mothers, fathers, sons and daughters?" he asked. "Do we know what breakfast looks like in their homes? How would we have fared if we had been subjected to the same treatment? Before you judge, seek to understand.

"Who was seeing the brutal conditions under which young Mukeisha Thomas (sic: her last name was in fact Maynard) lived and the abuse she suffered at the hands of her father? Who knows what trauma the father, Michael Maynard, suffered? Where was the help necessary to help him navigate his challenges? Before you judge, before you brand, as one newspaper did, the person a 'monster,' seek to first understand."

It was originally believed that Maynard had beaten his daughter to death but the autopsy showed she did not die from blunt force trauma. After the incident Maynard took his own life.

Romano said teachers and leaders should be trained to really see and care about the whole person. He questioned whether the society was shaming prisoners and treating them as bad people or people who had done something bad.

Romano suggested a need for data for strategic responses to the crime situation.

"I hope this conversation will spur institutions like UWI to initiate more studies in collaboration with the ministries of Education, National Security (and) Legal Affairs, TTUTA, the Law Association of TT, the Prison Officers Association, and religious, business and labour organisations to develop holistic end-to-end approaches to solving the crime problem...approaches that are grounded in good theory."

He said the police forces have been "beefed up" and money has been spent on prisons, detection and incarceration, but despite these efforts, the murder rate continued to rise. The crime situation needed to be tackled from two sides, he suggested: prevention via working with the family and community level, and reforming and rehabilitating criminals; and detection, prosecution and incarceration via the police, judiciary and the prison system.

"I do not believe the strategy adopted so far has focused as much as it needs to on prevention, on analysing and addressing root causes to stem the supply of young men, particularly young black men, into a life of crime."

He stressed that any change had to be started with a mindset change and recalled a case in Kansas where police were seeking to address crime by unemployed minorities. He said that when increasing police force and arrests failed an officer provided a restroom and beans for the men, and after working with them for some time, crime in the area fell dramatically.

Romano said mindset change is not a sprint but an "ultra marathon," and it was important to see others as people.

"Before you judge, seek to understand."