

Go Follow Your Dreams!

This is an excerpt of the address given by Chancellor of The UWI, Mr. Robert Bermudez, at the Graduation ceremonies at the St. Augustine Campus from October 26-28, 2017.

THE UWI ST. AUGUSTINE HONORARY GRADUATES 2017

I've been told that the graduation ceremonies at the St. Augustine Campus have been growing steadily over the last decade. In the academic year that just ended, 18,327 students were enrolled, but there is something else that caught my eye.

Trinidad and Tobago is well known as a place of many cultures. It is a meeting place of nations, and the St. Augustine Campus reflects this.

Here we are, rounding off the southern tip of the chain of islands, and we manage to attract 562 students from countries that are not part of the contributing territories. In fact, those 562 students come from 55 different countries! It is no wonder that this campus and this country are so rich in diversity.

You are leaving here today with a higher degree of appreciation of the diverse cultures that surround you; it will stand you in good stead.

As this phase of your life comes to a close, so does another begin, this is the natural course of things. You are now about to set off on the greatest of adventures - your life! What you make of this adventure is entirely in your hands. You will only be limited by your ambition. I advise you to aim for the stars - nothing else will do! The only regrets you are likely to have in life are not the things you did, but the things that you failed to do.

You are now independent. You have the tools to make your way in the world. For many, this will be the time when you begin rearranging the strands of your life. You may be leaving home, finding a job, asserting your independence.

You have been described as millennials; as having a sense of entitlement, as not having discipline, as being self-absorbed. I know better. You suffer from a wonderful affliction, it is called youth. You will prove your critics wrong; you will be the best of generations.

You have now completed this phase of your formal education and will soon have that piece of paper for which you have toiled so hard. The piece of paper is of little consequence; what is of immense value is the education which you have obtained from attending university. The ability to think critically, to learn, is of far greater value than any material possession, as it is an asset which can never be lost or taken from you. It should be the foundation upon which you will build your life.

Do not allow anyone to ever tell you that you can't achieve your ambition, or to discourage you from your dreams. Walk away from that advice. Believe in yourself. Go follow your dreams!

There will always be obstacles in your life, but you can overcome them.

The story of a young woman who is graduating this year with First Class Honors, Dahryn Augustine is a compelling example. At the beginning of her final year at the Faculty of Science and Technology, her sister was diagnosed with cancer, Dahryn dropped everything to be with her. Sadly, one year later she passed away. Dahryn was so devastated that she considered not completing her degree. In her words:

"Despair, disappointment and sadness had filled my heart, and I no longer wanted to continue. I was confused



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and felt that my leave of absence was to no avail. I did not help her; I did not save her." She pulled herself together. She did not give up.

Dahryn is from Dominica and cannot be with us today as she has been dealt another blow, but we can be certain that she has the strength to rise to the challenge. She is an inspiration!

We must become more assured of ourselves and not be afraid of change. We are a talented people but our past too often follows us to our detriment. There is strength in knowing where you have come from, but we cannot allow ourselves to be paralyzed by our historical circumstance. We all came to these islands under different conditions. We are no longer who our forefathers were; we are what we make of ourselves.

You are about to enter an exciting world, full of possibilities; a place where you can make your dreams come true. To be successful you have to be curious, innovative, analytical, to communicate well, be a team player and most importantly, you must have strong ethical values.

To be successful you have to be curious, innovative, analytical; you have to communicate well, be a team player and most importantly, you must have strong ethical values.

Always define yourselves by the substance of your character. As an educated West Indian you hold a responsibility to your community to provide assistance to those who have been less fortunate. I would like to encourage each of you to mentor a young person who without your help might fail. That way you will make our communities stronger and our societies better.

As the poet has said, "The greatness of a person is not in how much wealth he acquires, but in his integrity and his ability to affect those around him positively."

I would like to see a renewed sense of civic responsibility. Our geography, our history, our size, our culture and our economies give us reasons to consider each other as family.

This University, spread as it is across the region, represents all of our commonalities and all of our differences. You are now part of the UWI family, use it to your advantage.

Your graduation is a time to rejoice, to celebrate your success with your family and friends. It represents a crossroad in your lives, and the lives of your parents, your guardians and all those who have played a part in getting you to this point.

Those who supported you on this journey have much to be proud of today, this is as much their success as it is yours; never underestimate the huge contribution that your family and friends make to your success.

We should reflect for a moment on the damage that has been done to our sister islands as a consequence of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, along with the massive flooding in Trinidad. It reminds us of how susceptible we are to climate change and natural disasters.

The responses to these crises have reassured us that we are a caring people.

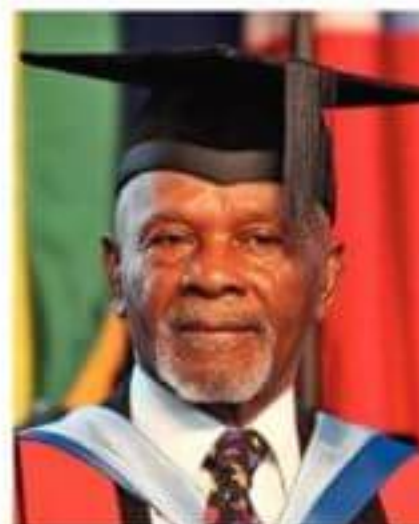
In Grenada, after the graduation ceremony for the Open Campus, I was asked to sign a graduation booklet for Tessa Flayten, a St. Lucian graduate who did not attend the ceremony. Tessa, who graduated with a BSc in Social Sciences, First Class Honors, donated the money she had set aside to come to her graduation to the relief effort in Dominica. Tessa has set an example for all of us, of selfless leadership, and we all congratulate her today!

We know the rebuilding process will be long and hard, but acts like these keep us strong.

You are inheriting the problems and the blessings of your countries; the responsibility is now yours to shoulder.

Today as graduates of this University, you are proud West Indians. Be prepared to give to your community, your country, your region. You have the power and opportunity to build the countries of your dreams.

I wish you well.

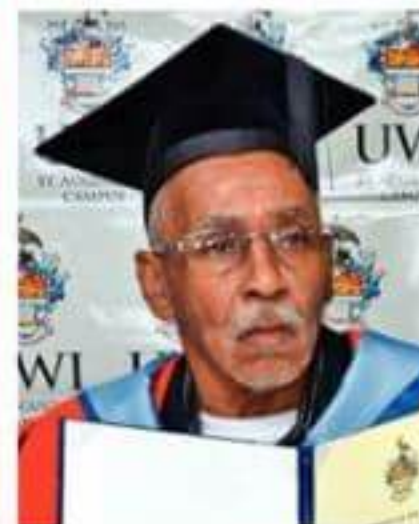


Mr. Andrew Marciano, "Lord Superior"
Honorary Doctor of Letters (DLitt)

Originally from Rio Claro, Mr. Andrew Marciano made his calypso debut at the Victory tent in Port of Spain. As the "Boy Wonder" he shared the stage with some of the biggest names in the business: Spoiler, Spitfire, Cypher, Pretender, Lord Blakie and Lord Melody. The year was 1954 and he was just 16 years old - the youngest calypsonian to perform locally. He was an advocate for calypso through action and in song. At the age of 19 he helped to organize a boycott of the 1957 Calypso King Competition. His calypso Brass Crown outlined the main points of contention: the racial and class discrimination that saw the Calypso King receive just \$40, while the Jaycees (Junior Chamber) Carnival Queen winner received significantly more. The following year, the Calypso King's prize was \$1,000.

Lord Superior was the first calypsonian to protest against the practice of radio stations and the society of refraining from playing and singing calypso during the Lenten season.

In 2004, Lord Superior was honored by UNESCO for his 50 years in calypso and the Trinbago Unified Calypsonians Organization's (TUCO) counted him among the Top 50 Calypsonians of all time. In 2012 he was honored by the National Carnival Commission (NCC) and by the Trinidad and Tobago Publishers and Broadcasters Association's for his role in the liberalization of local broadcasting in Trinidad and Tobago. He was awarded the Hummingbird Medal (Silver) in 2015.



Mr. Winsford "Joker" Devine,
Honorary Doctor of Letters (DLitt)

Mr. Devine grew up in Morne Diablo in South Trinidad where he played the steelpan with his cousin's band and learned the basics of reading and writing music notation. Apart from that however, he is a self-taught musician. He attended the Morne Diablo R.C. School, then the San Fernando Technical College. In his mid-twenties he moved to Port of Spain where he continued to play pan and began to write songs.

Mr. Devine would write his songs and pass them to artists who came to him if he thought it was a good fit. He read widely from different genres and has always had a keen interest in current affairs: class issues, environmental destruction, history, culture, and politics.

He gave himself the sobriquet "Joker" because he originally intended to sing his songs himself. He recorded a few; the prophetic Progress, was originally written for himself but eventually he passed it on to King Austin and the rest is history. That masterpiece continues to resonate with audiences decades later and was hailed by the Trinbago Unified Calypsonians' Organisation (TUCO) as the song of the last millennium.

Although ill health prevents Mr. Devine from writing as much as he used to, in 2016 he shared his talents with young songwriters as part of the Culture Division's Mentoring by the Masters programme. He received the Hummingbird Medal (Silver) in 1998 for his contributions to music and the arts.



Ms. Hazel Brown
Honorary Doctor of Laws (LLD)

Ms. Brown's activism began in Diego Martin in the late 1960s, when she formed a neighbourhood group. Curiosity led her to join the Housewives Association of Trinidad and Tobago (HATT), which educated consumers and advocated for their rights. She became a founding member of the Telephone Users Group, which represented consumers at the hearings for telephone rates in 1971. She took part in similar hearings on electricity rates, bringing about changes to the rate structures for both utilities.

Ms. Brown was a founding member of the Network of NGOs of Trinidad & Tobago for the Advancement of Women. The Network was created in 1985 to coordinate a national position for the End of Decade Conference in Nairobi. Thirty years later, the Network represents more than 100 non-profit groups focused on women's and family issues.

She is a former Secretary General of the Commonwealth Women's Network. She co-founded TIBS - The Informative Breastfeeding Society. Her own health challenges led her to form a network of medical, immigration and other officials to help cancer patients in Guyana have access to care in Trinidad. She spearheaded the rejuvenation of the East-Side Plaza in Port of Spain, which provides entrepreneurship opportunities for lower-income women.

Her publications include A Study of Diabetes and Hypertension in Women 25 years and over in Trinidad and Tobago and she co-authored the Role of Working Women in Early Childhood Education in Trinidad and Tobago.



Professor Emeritus Clem Seecharan
Honorary Doctor of Letters (DLitt)

Born at Palmyra Village, Berbice, Guyana, Professor Seecharan attended the Sheet Anchor Anglican School, the Berbice Educational Institute, and Queen's College. He received his BA (Social Anthropology) and MA (Social Anthropology/History) from McMaster University in Canada, and then taught Caribbean Studies at the University of Guyana. He attained his PhD at the University of Warwick, where he was the first doctoral graduate of the Yesu Persaud Centre for Caribbean Studies. He was the Head of Caribbean Studies at London Metropolitan University from 1993 to 2012 and also lectured on the History of West Indies Cricket. In 2003 he was awarded a Certificate of Distinction by the Guyana High Commission (London). In 2002, he was awarded a Professorship in History at the London Metropolitan University, where he is now Emeritus Professor of History.

Professor Seecharan's publications include 'Tiger in the Stars': The Anatomy of Indian Achievement in British Guiana, 1919-29; Bechu: 'Bound Coolie' Radical in British Guiana, 1894-1901; Muscular Learning: Cricket and Education in the Making of the British West Indies at the End of the 19th Century; From Ranji to Rohan: Cricket and Indian Identity in Colonial Guyana, 1890s-1960s; Mother India's Shadow over El Dorado: Indo-Guyanese Politics and Identity, 1890s-1930s; Finding Myself: Essays on Race, Politics and Culture.

His Sweetening 'Bitter Sugar': Jock Campbell, the Booker Reformer in British Guiana, 1934-66, was awarded the prestigious Elsa Govcia Prize by the Association of Caribbean Historians in 2005.