



## THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

### Angela Cropper

Chancellor,

A native American proverb declares: "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children." Mrs. Angela Cropper models visionary leadership in conservation, sustainable development and social justice.

A national of Trinidad and Tobago and graduate of UWI in Economics, and Law, Angela Cropper has urged prize winners in our university to make conscious choices as custodians of their world. She operates on strongly felt connections to community, to family, to the earth itself. From an impoverished family raised by a valiant mother who taught that no amount was too small to be shared, Angela Cropper seems driven by what she can give back.

Even as she cherishes closeness with her siblings, she communicates profound social consciousness early expressed in political activism. Nationally, she has served both as an Independent Senator and as Co-Founder and President of the Cropper Foundation, a non-profit organization that focuses on sustainable development. Abroad, she has been recognized as Visiting Distinguished Fellow at the Woods Hole Research Centre and at Yale University.

As Chair, Member or Trustee, she has worked with local organizations like the EMA but also in the World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, and centers for forestry research from Guyana to Indonesia. Her gift for conceptualizing and networking issues on both minute and global scales places her on advisory boards in CARICOM, Japan, the European Union and Canada, and to institutions ranging from the UN Global Environment Facility to the World Bank. As a recipient of the

prestigious Zayed Prize, she was applauded for catalyzing “numerous activities for equity, peace and sustainable development”, achievements that contributed to her appointment as Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Her concern extends to the Arts. In honour of her son, a writer who died prematurely during his programme at the London School of Economics, she founded a Creative Writers’ Workshop to nurture promising Caribbean writers, and not only attended the sessions but cooked for an array of diets. Additionally, she established a scholarship for LSE students excelling in public service. A pronouncement of its first recipient, “There’s more to life than personal advantage,” became a slogan on the Cropper Foundation jersey.

Angela Cropper upholds respect for life, clinging tenaciously to principle even in the tumult of repeated personal disaster. Even following the trial in which Pitman and Agard were convicted for the murder of her husband, her sister and her mother, she maintained her opposition to the death penalty. Acknowledging current levels of crime and ensuing fear, she urged that toleration of capital punishment inures us to violence. “I know that John and my sister were against the death penalty,” she argued. “I can speak for them with confidence because ... like me, they felt any killing, whether it is committed by an individual or by the State itself, is a step too far.”

Her private self complements the public figure. Among her close acquaintances she is caring, respectful, artistic, a joyful gardener. She contrives an exquisite centerpiece for the dining table from ordinary and randomly gathered leaves. On the international stage, through leadership in green-building and job creation for a low-carbon world, she promotes social and ecological transformation.

In driving down deep roots in family, nation and the wider global community, in her ability to withstand the storm while maintaining impassioned advocacy for natural and human development, this uniquely brave, generous and brilliant woman gives life to one of her favorite quotations – a statement by Cultural Anthropologist, Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

Chancellor, I present Mrs. Angela Cropper, and ask that by the authority vested in you by the Council and Senate of The University of the West Indies, you confer on her the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.

St. Augustin Campus  
Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2009