INDIVIDUAL PROJECT

Identify someone with a disability who has made a note-worthy contribution to Trinidad and Tobago. Identify the factors which contribute to the success of the individual.

HAYDEN PAUL WILLIAMS

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This study is about Mr. Hayden Paul Williams whose life was altered by a disability about eleven years ago. He is thirty-three years of age and dwells at Parrylands Road, Gonzales Village, Guapo, a small village which lies in close proximity to the Borough of Point Fortin in South Trinidad. This village is Hayden's comfort zone and he has lived there for the majority of his life.

On the 29th November, 1995, Hayden was riding his prized motor-cycle at eighty miles per hour along the Parrylands Road. The motorcycle skidded into an oncoming vehicle, causing Hayden to literally fly off of his bike. He lay motionless under the vehicle that nearly took his life. Up to this day, Hayden has no memory of the accident. All the information that was divulged about the accident is what he was told about it. The accident resulted in Hayden being in a coma for five days. His injuries consisted of a collapsed lung, a leg that was broken in six places and an amputated right arm.

According to the doctors that attended to Hayden, he was clinically dead for twenty-seven seconds but through the keen efforts of the medical experts, they were able to stabilize him. Doctors diagnosed him as being ninety-five percent disabled, but according to Hayden, this diagnosis was highly exaggerated. His belief is that it was done solely for insurance purposes. When asked to describe the extent of his disability, he indicated that he does not have a disability. There is a complete sense of denial, as he is convinced that he is one hundred percent normal.
Hayden does not have complete use of his right arm, but has adapted the use of his remaining limb which extends from his shoulder to his elbow. Adapting to his new physical self was a challenge. However, there was a brief period of sadness. As Hayden lay on his hospital bed, he prayed and then decided that it was his responsibility to take control of his future. For therapy purposes, Hayden had scheduled appointments with a physiotherapist for two years. It was during this time that he strengthened the use of his partially mutilated limb. This was done through weight training and the application of heat pads to loosen the joints. On one occasion, Hayden was visited by a physical therapist for counselling. The therapist never returned as he was convinced that Hayden was in total control of his mental being. Hayden was given mental support through prayers said by his mother and loved ones. Relatives were supportive of him from the beginning. His friends were also supportive, but were in doubt of his full capability to take control of his disability. He was unconsciously pitied by his friends. Strangers on the other hand, viewed Hayden as being incompetent. He was shunned and felt like a mutant. In terms of modifications to his home and even his life, none were made.

He boasts of still being able to drive automobiles, tie his shoe laces and even clip his finger nails. He believed that if any modifications were made, it would change his positive outlook, thus convincing that he really had a disability. Before Hayden's accident, he was employed with a small business which was involved in wood-work and carpentry. In 1998 after the accident, Hayden's former employer re-hired him to carry out supervisory duties. Through the services of a lawyer, Hayden obtained compensatory
funds. On receiving his compensatory funds, Hayden pursued his life-long dream of establishing his own business. Hayden is now self-employed as the Managing Director and owner of Artistic Furnishings Limited. His business specializes in joinery, interior decorating and wood-works of any kind. The physical structure for the business was financed with his compensatory money and the Small Business Development Corporation financed the purchase of machinery for Hayden's business.

There has been growth in both clientele and demand for products which has resulted in the employment of three individuals within the business. Hayden describes his disability as being a blessing. He believed that it has not only affected the productivity of his business, it has also enhanced it. Hayden boasts of handling the more dangerous machinery at his shop, despite the fact that he only has the use of one arm. Although stated on the manual that the machinery was designed for two hands, Hayden demonstrates his altruism. He does not want to put his other employees at risk.

Hayden has many achievements to his name. His first achievement however, was of a personal nature. Self-fulfillment was his major accomplishment, knowing that whatever he put his mind to would be done. Another achievement is that Hayden has been able to use his disability to motivate others. He has hosted numerous motivational talks at churches and hospitals with persons with disabilities. He has also donated a trophy displaying his wood-work to the Stafford-Duncan Music School, a well renowned music school in Point Fortin. This trophy was presented to the most outstanding music student
in the year 2005. Hayden's most outstanding achievement to date was when he received a special award from Mr. Patrick Manning, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Prime Minister hosted an Innovation and Invention competition and Hayden, submitted his creation of a Telephone Security Module for this competition. It was Hayden's belief that he did not win first prize because the judges felt that he was incapable of producing fine work because he had a disability. Hayden's work however, was able to get the full attention of the Prime Minister. Mr. Manning was very impressed and deemed Hayden to be a true source of inspiration. As a result, Hayden received a special prize at the Prime Minister's award ceremony. Still inspired by Hayden, Prime Minister Patrick Manning set up a meeting with Hayden to hear the plights of the disabled businessman. With full confidence in Hayden, the Prime Minister passed on a very competent portfolio to Dr. Kenneth Julien who was affiliated with the National Housing Authority projects, and assured Hayden that he would secure furnishing contracts for him.

In terms of Hayden's perspective towards life, he has had a positive change towards spirituality. His personal credo is, “through God, all things are possible.” Socially, he simply enjoys doing the things that he loves. According to Hayden, the only major challenge that he faces is the non-support of some of his potential clients. They have no faith in the productive capacity of a disabled individual. Hayden claims that commercial businessmen have little belief in his work, and as a result, do not hire him. Private individuals on the other hand, are more supportive and request his services. In the
industrial sector, Hayden has managed to secure employment with Atlantic Liquified Natural Gas Limited, building cupboards for some of the company's offices and restrooms.

Hayden Williams is a true picture of inspiration. He has managed to own and direct his own business, while securing employment for three skilled and devoted workers. Ultimately, Hayden has been able to contribute to the enhancement of labour and productivity in Trinidad and Tobago. Hayden's success has partially been attributed to his ability to overcome his disability. Through inner motivation, Hayden's life could be compared to that of an individual who is not faced with a disability. His family has also been his prime support system throughout the entire experience. Hayden's closing words and words of inspiration were, "Let your mindset define you, not your disability."