

Dean's Remarks, Faculty Prize Giving Ceremony, Faculty of Humanities and Education, UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago; October 26, 2009.

Let me start by thanking you for choosing the Faculty of Humanities and Education as the host faculty for your degrees. I join you this evening in celebrating your achievement as prize winners. But in doing so, I would like to remind you that, great though your achievements are, you are only as great as the society which has produced you as well as the society that you are going to reproduce. It is against this background that I would like to acknowledge those of you here this evening as the representatives of all the students of this faculty. In congratulating you, therefore, I wish to, through you, congratulate all the students of the Faculty of Humanities and Education.

As the faculty which houses the School of Education, it is our hope that your stay here has empowered you enough to become the new generation of teachers capable of deploying technology to get our children to excel in all fields of endeavour, not just in academics. Remember too that in life, it is not only about what you know but also about knowing how to know what you need to know. We hope that your UWI education has equipped you with the mental capability to source whatever knowledge you need to become the best that you can be.

In this last year, the first year of my deanship, we have, as a faculty, continued to build on all the good things that the deans before me had done and to introduce new things to ensure that we remain relevant to our enabling community. Our driving impulse has been the recognition of the danger in stagnation. We are well aware of the fact that people who delight in standing still for too long are merely inviting termites to build anthills around their feet or dogs to mistake them for something else. Hence, we have been actively engaged in reviewing our course offerings and in introducing new courses and programmes to meet the demands of a dynamically changing world.

Some years ago, we introduced Communication Studies. That programme has become the most popular programme in the faculty. This year, we are ecstatic about the graduation of the first batch of our BA in Film Studies. Our film students have produced some wonderful works which have garnered national and

international awards. We are now in full partnership with the Film Company of Trinidad and Tobago and the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival to ensure that the future of the film industry in this country is in very capable local hands. Any society which abdicates the creation of its self-image to others is inviting such others to cast it in their own image. The cardinal hope of the Film Programme is to facilitate our telling of our own stories through our own images, using our own languages and idioms, and anchoring them in our multi-cultural, astonishingly vibrant and complex society.

In the past year, we approved 12 new programmes and 10 new courses. Among the new programmes are BA Dance, Diploma in Caribbean Sign Language Interpreting, Minor in Film, a graduate programme in Communication Studies, and a Masters of Education in Reading. There are now 90 courses in the faculty with on-line e-learning components. We have mandated, as part of a university-wide initiative, those lecturers without teaching qualifications to register for teaching certificate programmes to ensure that our students are exposed to intellectual guides who are conversant with the latest pedagogical principles in their disciplines.

We can boast of a community of excellent scholars and researchers, dedicated teachers and public-spirited and socially engaged citizens. In this past year, seven (7) books and one (1) book of conference proceedings were published by members of the faculty. In addition, the publication profile of the faculty includes 23 book chapters, 27 journal articles, 1 (one) bibliography, 2 major visual arts exhibitions, 104 conference and symposium presentations, 14 items of book reviews, video, encyclopaedia entries, databases, journal editorship, etc, and several outstanding theatrical and musical productions.

Members of the faculty continue to serve on various national and international boards and to contribute to national debates as evidenced in the case of the School of Education's weekly column on educational issues in *The Trinidad and Tobago Express* which ran for many years. We continue to host local and international conferences which attract scholars from far and wide to engage with our faculty and students. We also had the good fortune of having Rachel Manley,

the pre-eminent Caribbean memoirist as our Writer in Residence. Our student assistants' programme has grown over the years. Last year, we employed 99 student assistants, mainly as support staff in the faculty office and to man our classroom equipment.

The faculty, especially through the work of the Department of Creative and Festival Arts, continues to lead the way in affirming culture as an important lubricant in our society. We were at the vanguard of the UWI Book Fair and Cultural Festival, one of the events which marked the 60th Anniversary of the University. That event showcased the talent of past and present students and staff of the St Augustine campus as well as the publication output of its staff. Similarly, our faculty is driving the campus-wide celebration of Derek Walcott, the third and final in our Nobel Laureates series. The Year of Derek Walcott was officially launched with the Department of Creative and Festival Arts' production of *Fragments*, a collage of excerpts from the works of Derek Walcott, in March 2009. In creating a coherent piece out of the fragments from the works of Walcott, this production, at a meta-literary level, affirms that the Caribbean, although comprised of many historical and cultural fragments, can be re-fashioned into a philosophically and ideologically rational entity. Later this academic year, an international conference spearheaded by the Department of Liberal Arts and coinciding with Walcott's 80th birthday, will bring the Year of Derek Walcott to a close.

I have already indicated how proud we are of our film students and their achievements, but they are not the only ones who have made us happy this last year. As many of you are aware, at the combined Cacique Awards Ceremony for 2007 and 2008, the Department of Creative and Festival Arts came away with 11 awards. I overheard someone saying that the only awards they didn't win were those not available to be won! This is a testimony to the excellent quality of the productions coming out of that department. Tonight, in this audience, are some of the students who made that achievement possible. To them, I say, Thank You. Congratulations.

In closing, I would like to remind you all that an institution is only as great as the combined quality of its products. It is our hope that, as you leave our gates for the wider world, you are leaving with a vision richer than the one you entered with. As a faculty which prides itself in the study of history and culture, we hope that you are leaving this institution with a better appreciation of your culture and history than you brought with you some three or so years ago. We hope that your UWI experience has been positive, in the main. But for those whose experiences might have been negative, there is no better gift that you can give to the future than to help us identify the sources of your negative experiences and to work with us, as alumni, to remedy them. On the whole, we need you to become active members of the Alumni Association, willing to contribute to our endowment funds so we can continue to sustain the UWI as an ideal academic institution. But it is not only in terms of monetary donations that we require your help. Become one of our active lobbyists. Encourage your governments and your industries to think of doing something for the UWI. Stay close to us; be our moral guide, be the future that will call us back to our source vision whenever we stray.

This week, we shall be graduating 415 undergraduate degrees, of which 350 are honours degrees. 40 of those are First Class Honours degrees. When we handover your certificates to you on Friday, October 31st, 2009, know that we shall be doing more than certifying you as educated and ready to excel in your chosen disciplines. I invite you to see your certificates as shareholding certificates. We shall be certifying that you have become life-long shareholders in the UWI enterprise. If you don't want the institution to crash like the global financial institutions of current memory, you cannot afford to look away and/or ignore what we do.

Welcome on board; we look forward to your partnership as we consolidate our position as the leading institution of higher learning in the region.

I thank you for your attention.

Professor Funso Aiyejina