



# UWI TODAY

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES • ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS

SUNDAY 10 SEPTEMBER, 2017



## Cain CAN

Since she began track and field competitively in 2014, Nyoshia Cain has run seven races, six of them classifying as international competitions – her first, the Mexico Championships in Mexico City, was just a “meet”, she says (although she won her first two gold medals there) – and she has come away with eight gold medals (the Mexico Championships in 2014, the Arizona Desert Challenge in 2016 and 2017, and the USA National Championships in Los Angeles in 2017), one silver medal (the Arizona Desert Challenge in 2017), and four bronze medals (the World Para Athletics Championships in 2015 and 2017, the Paralympics in Rio in 2016, and the USA National Championships in 2017). Nyosha, a UWI student, was interviewed by Serah Acham and you can read the story on Page 6.

PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE



### EDUCATION – 04

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■ Turning around the classroom



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# FYE

First Year Experience  
2017-2018



First Year Experience is a year-long programme consisting of a series of orientation and transition activities aimed at helping you adapt to UWI Life. All first year and first time students are required to attend the relevant activities

## SAVE THESE DATES

### Meet & Greet

Airport greeting for regional and international students

21 Aug - 28 Aug

### UWI Clicks

Introduction to the UWI website and student portal

21 - 25 & 28 - 30 Aug

### Check-In

Weekend orientation activities for regional and international students

26 - 27 Aug

### Campus Tours

Faculty specific tours

14 Aug - 8 Sept

### Welcome Home

Orientation events for students residing on Halls of Residence

25 Aug & 14 Sept

### Know Your Faculty

Orientation events for Faculties

28 Aug - 6 Sept

### UWI Life Student

UWI Administration forum for first year students

1 Sept

### UWI Life Support

UWI Administration forum for parents and families

1 Sept

### Information Village

UWI Administration orientation

1 Sept

### UWI Guild Fest

The Guild of Students orientation activities

4 - 8 Sept

### Know Your Library

Library orientation sessions

4 - 23 Sept

### MY SAC

An orientation session for our commuting students

7 Sept

### The Postgraduate Experience

Post Graduate Orientation Workshops

8 Sept

### Orientation for Students with Disabilities

An introduction to the support services available for students with disabilities

14 Sept

### Matriculation

Official ceremony to formally recognize new students as members of the University

21 Sept

### Career Advice Programme (CAP)

Guide to career planning and development

28 Sept & 12 Oct

### Study Skills Workshop

Workshops for developing practical study habits

5 Oct & 9 Nov

### Co-curricular Seminar

An introductory seminar on co-curricular course options

12 Oct

### Health & Wellbeing Workshops

Health Workshops for mind and body

15 & 28 Sept & 26 Oct



**UWI**  
ST. AUGUSTINE  
CAMPUS

## FROM THE PRINCIPAL

# Our entry requirements have not changed



I thought I should use this issue of UWI TODAY to bring more clarity to the matter of entry requirements for programmes at the St. Augustine Campus of The UWI. Some of the comments I have observed suggest that the underlying system and process are not generally well understood.

Part of the confusion arises from the use of the word “matriculation.”

This is further compounded by the fact that its definition varies from one university to another. At Oxford University in England for example, matriculation is a formal ceremony that heralds the student’s membership of the University. Attendance is mandatory, so much so that students cannot sit University exams unless they matriculate. In those US universities where the term is referenced, matriculation refers to the process used to help new students adjust to university life and to plan their educational programme.

At The UWI, matriculation refers to a set of criteria that establishes the lowest possible educational requirements for entry into any programme offered by its Faculties. Applicants who have been accepted to a programme of study at The UWI would have exceeded the matriculation criteria and are therefore said to have “matriculated” into The University of the West Indies.

Matriculation, as described above, should not be confused with the *matriculation ceremony*, which in true Caribbean style is often abbreviated to just “matriculation.” This is held every year at The UWI and, unlike its Oxford counterpart, is not mandatory.

The educational requirements for entry into a Faculty programme can exceed the matriculation criteria outlined above, as they often do. Indeed, regulations at The UWI stipulate that Faculty entry requirements cannot fall short of the matriculation criteria in any way.

As an example, the entry requirement into the Certificate of Public Administration (CPA) programme has traditionally been set at five CSEC passes, inclusive of English and Mathematics. However, for close to 20 years, the *university-wide matriculation* criteria always allowed for three CSEC passes, plus relevant experience for mature students. The criteria, codified in The UWI matriculation regulations, also define a mature student as an adult who is 21 years or older. In such cases, the University conducts a variety of assessments to determine the level of experience and verify the ability of the applicant to successfully complete the relevant programme. These assessments may include interviews, portfolio reviews and prior learning assessments.

The upshot of all of this is that the UWI CPA Programme that received a lot of a attention in the media a few weeks ago, has not lowered its entry requirements, but has expanded them by activating a long-standing mode of entry that was not well-known, so much so that people either thought it was a new criterion or, worse yet, one that reflected a lowering of the standards. None of that is true.

The public discourse that followed the unauthorised access to confidential Academic Board documents highlighted two underlying shortcomings in the public perception of what education entails.

The first shortcoming has to do with the public understanding of academic standards and quality. The second, and most unsavoury, is what seemed to me to be a condescending view of the value of prior learning. Implicit in this condescension, was what I saw as a reflection of the traditional stigma against vocational (trade) qualifications and, perhaps even worse, a bit of contempt against those who have not done well academically. Given space limitations, these matters will be addressed at another time.

The conversation in the public on the Faculty of Social Sciences news report incorrectly focused on entry qualifications as an indicator of academic programme quality. However, while entry qualifications are indeed important they are not, by themselves, a good measure of academic quality. In fact, employers, governments and educators have long recognised that programme quality is best measured by the quality of its graduates.

Measurement of educational quality is quite challenging, and despite the fact that education is almost as old as humanity,

*“As a society, we are inordinately attached to academic certificates. For whatever reason, and I could suggest a few, we believe that certification creates our identity. However, this overdependence on certification as a major contributor to identity misses the real point of learning and development.”*

education experts are still musing over the best approaches to do this. Over time, however, “output quality” has been assessed on the basis of institutional reputation à la Oxford and Cambridge, perceived or measured graduate success in the society and through employers’ feedback.

In more recent times, formal accreditation and quality control processes have been used for this purpose. Even more recently, a best practice has emerged, whereby educational institutions explicitly define the output standards that detail the knowledge and competencies of their graduates in the respective disciplines. This is then used as a basis for the design and delivery of programmes, inclusive of entry qualifications, to ensure that any candidate so qualified would have a good chance of achieving the output standards upon successful completion of the programme.

As an example, for a BSc Degree programme in Electrical Engineering, the output standards are expected to establish the level of learning to be achieved in, say, analysing and designing electrical circuits, or generating software – thus addressing competencies in the technical areas associated with this field. In addition, accrediting agencies today insist that these standards should also address life skills such as teamwork and awareness of the impact of technology on the environment and society.

Let’s now look at prior learning and prior learning assessment (PLA). As a society, we are inordinately attached to academic certificates. For whatever reason, and I could suggest a few, we believe that certification creates our identity. However, this overdependence on certification as a major contributor to identity misses the real point of learning and development. I am sure that many could recount at least one situation where someone with little or no academic qualification but loads of experience has done exceedingly well in the workplace or achieved high standing in society.

The most quoted example is that of the renowned inventor Thomas Edison who was reportedly a poor student, described by his school master as “addled,” and who ended up being home-schooled by his mother, and grew to be a self-learner. But even right here, steelpan tuners Dr. Anthony Williams and Dr. Ellie Mannette, both recipients of UWI honorary degrees in recognition of their tremendous contributions to the steelpan, fell a bit short of their formal education but went on to contribute to and innovate in an area that science is only now truly beginning to understand. It is clear that classroom education, at least in its current form, is not enough to create the kind of citizen and, by extension, society, that we want.

Prior learning is a term used to represent the breadth and depth of knowledge, competence and skills acquired outside the classroom. PLA is the formal name applied to any process used to evaluate the degree of prior learning, and how it matches up against a set of agreed academic or occupational standards or

learning outcomes. It is used, for example, to assess vocational or trade qualifications, academic achievement, professional status, suitability for recruitment, and in performance management. The assessment itself can take the form of traditional tests, interviews, which may include live demonstrations, and portfolio evaluation, as is done in many professional registration exercises. When used to represent a formal qualification consequent to an acceptable PLA performance, we use the term Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for which an appropriate certificate may be awarded.

There are excellent local examples of PLAR locally. The best I have seen is at the National Training Agency of Trinidad and Tobago (NTA) where a meticulously detailed PLAR system has been designed and applied to a range of vocational areas in Trinidad and Tobago. The NTA awards Caribbean or National Vocational Qualifications (CVQs or NVQs) based on this assessment. Although traditionally heavily dependent on formal academic qualifications, The UWI has, as stated above, always included PLAR in its matriculation criteria but has only recently actually adopted the PLAR nomenclature.

PLAR touches on an extremely important goal for our national and regional education—the forging of a seamless education system. By definition, such a system recognizes the need for different levels of certification and recognition from primary, through secondary, technical vocational, associate degrees and diplomas and university degrees. However, it also recognises the need to infuse a high degree of mobility by creating mechanisms that would allow any citizen to move up and across from any level of certification to another. In a seamless education system, someone who was not successful at the SEA could eventually make it all the way to a PhD with a lot less effort than is currently required.

The discussion above is consistent with the new strategic plan for The UWI, which includes a mandate to increase access to the under-served and to contribute to the revitalizing of Caribbean society and economy. A seamless education system, or at least one that is more open than it is now, would optimize the training and education of the critical mass of citizens required for the revitalization process. The UWI intends to play its role in the march to this revitalized ‘Caribbea’ and looks forward to the understanding and support of all Caribbean citizens in this regard.

*Brian Copeland*

**PROFESSOR BRIAN COPELAND**  
Campus Principal

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# TEACHER TEACHER

*The man who flips the classroom*

BY JOEL HENRY



**The greatest classroom** I have ever witnessed was a garage.

At the mechanic's in Cunupia, waiting for the car, I saw outstanding students. Young, male, from low-income backgrounds; they fit the type. The type that underperforms, drifts into delinquency, fades out of the school system. But here they were, eyes fixed under the hood or beneath the body of an elevated vehicle, following the commands of the senior mechanic (a young man himself), accepting his teaching and good-natured scolding.

Best of all they had that look of quiet confidence. Why shouldn't they? They were being taught a subject they enjoyed, in a method that worked, for a career-ready skill, by a teacher they respected.

How different from the conventional school experience.

"I believe it's time to teach efficiently," says Dr. Lodge McCammon in one of his keynote addresses to a room full of educators. It's a very different type of address. The actual Dr. McCammon is in the audience while his virtual self, recorded by smartphone, speaks to the attendees. He's simultaneously teaching and supervising. He's in two places at once.

How efficient is that?

On September 29, Dr. McCammon will speak on his innovative teaching methods at the Daaga Auditorium at the St. Augustine Campus for the UWI/Guardian Group Premium Open Lecture. Titled "Ignite the Brain: Is Flipping the Answer?", the lecture will look at the "Flipped Classroom" teaching method, which uses tools such as video lessons to increase student engagement and learning.

The UWI/Guardian Group Premium Open Lecture is a collaborative event of the St. Augustine Campus and the Guardian Group. Starting in 1998, the partnership was formed to promote and support teacher excellence.

Reforming the educational system has been a concern of policymakers, educators and citizens for several decades.

Progress has been uneven. In early 2016, Trinidad and Tobago's Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley, stated that "our education system is failing, in so far as what we are really achieving is putting our children through school and not educating them." He said the mindset was one of valuing "certification" over education.

Another major problem identified in the system is low morale and performance among teachers. Earlier this year it was reported that in 2015, over 480,000 "minutes of lateness" by teachers were recorded in schools in Port of Spain and environs. Officials point to teacher tardiness and absenteeism as a major contributor to poor academic performance and even violence in schools.

One of the major aspects of the flipped classroom method is that it engages teachers as well as students.

"Teaching is a noble pursuit that provides a citizen the chance to make a significant and lasting contribution to society. It's sometimes difficult to find purpose on a planet with seven billion souls but every minute in the classroom presents an opportunity to inspire a love of learning. This inspiration is the primary element needed for building our future," says McCammon.

Developed in the 1990s, the flipped classroom strategy switches the traditional paradigm of teaching in class and homework at home. Through recorded or online teaching, students receive instruction outside of the classroom and use class time for more proactive and engaging work.

The "McCammon Method" of "flipped teacher training" has three components. Firstly, all lectures are recorded and made available online, allowing students to watch them any time, as many times as they want. Secondly, students are required to form groups and teach the content themselves. Thirdly, students are made to move around during class, not remain stationary at their desks.

"These three strategies create an efficient and active

learning environment," Dr. McCammon says.

The method, he says, saves valuable class time, captures the attention of students and teaches them more effectively, and provides greater accountability for teachers, who now have easily accessible video records of their work.

His method has been well-received. McCammon works with school districts, universities, non-profits and businesses, in areas such as curriculum development and training, in the US. These include Rutgers University, Microsoft Inc., and Discovery Education, the digital education division of the same company as the Discovery Channel. He is also a classically trained musician and uses music as a component of his teaching methods.

But can this approach be used to improve our education system with its deeply embedded cultural inertia and colonial-era practices?

"I certainly hope so," he says. "I look forward to meeting with a variety of educators in T&T to have rich discussions about how they may be able to modify the instructional strategies to address these challenges."

Apart from his lecture, Dr. McCammon's visit to Trinidad and Tobago will also include a workshop with local educators. Of the lecture itself he says: "My workshops and speeches are quite active. I frequently ask the audience/educators to discuss the teaching methods so they can generate a better understanding about what modifications need to be in place for the innovation to be used in their classrooms. This also gives me a chance to participate in their conversations."

Perhaps, working together, and with the necessary social and political will, they can find solutions. Children, despite their circumstances, can be educated. They can enjoy the process of learning. They can find a career and lead productive lives. But you have to fix the educational system. What's needed is the right mechanics.

*Officials point to teacher tardiness and absenteeism as a major contributor to poor academic performance and even violence in schools.*

## ■ CAMPUS NEWS

## A Hidden History at the Returned Exile Book Launch

*A Biography of George James Christian and the Gold Coast, 1869-1940*

On August 17, The UWI St. Augustine's Alma Jordan Library in collaboration with The UWI Press and Republic Bank Limited launched the book *Returned Exile: A Biography of George James Christian of Dominica and the Gold Coast, 1869-1940* authored by Margaret D. Rouse-Jones and Estelle M. Appiah.

Dr. John Campbell, Senior Lecturer, History Department, The UWI St. Augustine gave an instructive and insightful review of the book, which illuminated a dimension of the African experience not adequately captured – the story of returnees from the British West Indies to Africa.

Specifically, the book tells the story of the life of pan-Africanist George James Christian who retained his Caribbean roots as he fulfilled his desire to make Africa his home. From relatively humble beginnings in Dominica in the Eastern Caribbean, Christian travelled to London in 1898 to train as a Barrister-at-law at Gray's Inn, after which he migrated to the Gold Coast where he made his home until his death in 1940.

Rouse-Jones became interested when Appiah mentioned at their first meeting that "she was from Ghana but had West Indian roots." This chance meeting set the stage for the authors' decision in 1991 to write the book together – they then began to do research in London, Dominica and Ghana. In 2005, The George James Christian Papers, constituting more than 5,000 items, were donated to The University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus by Mrs. Essi Matilda Forster, Estelle Appiah's mother and they are housed in the West Indiana and Special Collections Division of the Main Library. The collection was closed for ten years and opened to the public in 2016.

The launch was chaired by Karen Lequay, University and Campus Librarian of Open Campus Libraries and Information Services. Afterwards, the authors signed copies of the book.



Margaret Rouse-Jones signs a copy of the book for her long-time friend, Madame Justice Margot Warner, retired Justice of Appeal. PHOTOS: GABRIEL CHAN WING

## Making Households Matter

With the national budget looming on the horizon, the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the St. Augustine Campus is hosting a pre-budget forum to raise some awareness of its latest project of gender integration.

The Forum is free and open to the public and it takes place on Wednesday September 13, at the Main Auditorium of the Learning Resource Centre at the St. Augustine Campus, UWI.

The panelists will be Dr. Marlene Attzs, Lecturer at the Department of Economics, The UWI; Dr. Keron King, Lecturer in Criminology at COSTATT; Dr. Oscar Noel Ocho, Director of The UWI School of Nursing, and Mrs. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan, former Minister of Public Administration.

The theme of the forum is Budget for Gender Justice: Make households matter to the House.

The IGDS has undertaken a project to develop a tool to comprehensively integrate a gender perspective into deliberations on the national budget. One of the main objectives of this project is to engage in sector-specific research, to make evident the ways in which the budget is translated into people's lived realities at the level of the household.



Authors Margaret Rouse-Jones and Estelle Appiah launching the book.



UWI



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## REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE VENEZUELA CRISIS

Tuesday 12 September, 2017 | 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Lecture Room 1, Institute of International Relations, The UWI, St. Augustine

Two Panels moderated by:

- Professor Jessica Byron, Director, The Institute of International Relations
- Professor Patrick Watson, Director, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies

To RSVP and for more information E: [iirt@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:iirt@sta.uwi.edu) | T: 868-662-2002 ext. 85362 | Livestream at [www.uwitv.org](http://www.uwitv.org)

# *Finding her* **BALANCE**

BY SERAH ACHAM

*Nyoshia Cain  
tells how she  
overcomes  
the odds*



**What strikes you most** when you meet Nyoshia Cain, is her confidence. At 22, she has an astonishing understanding of who she is and what she wants out of life. There's no hesitation, no pausing to consider her answer; she simply knows herself and speaks her mind.

We're sitting inside UWI's Sports and Physical Education Centre, chatting on the sidelines, amid the sounds of a netball slamming against the floor, a whistle blowing intermittently, and voices calling out to one another as a team practices.

Trinidad and Tobago's much celebrated track and field star, and Bachelor's degree candidate at the Faculty of Social Sciences, stepped onto the competitive running path while she was at The UWI, she reveals.

It was 2013. She had just graduated from the Business Management and Technology programme at the Open Campus and was a facilitator at an on-campus vacation sporting camp, run by the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, when she began her training.

She'd been interested in sports, "since I know myself," she says. She did track in primary school, took up volleyball and netball in secondary school – dropping out of the latter, she admits, because she couldn't do both sports at the same time – and continued volleyball till she left UWI's Open Campus. "Then I got back into track."

Why, I ask, having spent so many years playing volleyball, would she leave the sport for another? She was actually contemplating quitting sports completely. Her life-long desire to represent T&T in volleyball had not yet been met and she felt far from achieving her dream. She wanted out. "But," she says, "when I went to the sports camp, I found the love for track."

So, in 2013, 19-year-old Nyoshia joined the Cougars, a track and field club in Arima. "Training was very tedious at that point in time. I had a job," she says, and living in Laventille, it was difficult "having to drive from so far in the traffic." She stopped track and field training and resumed volleyball. Sports had a hold on her that she couldn't escape.

At that point, Nyoshia had no set plans, save for completing her programme at UWI's Open Campus and then beginning her Bachelor's degree. She applied to UWI but wasn't accepted for the 2013 intake, so she applied for jobs and began working at the Ministry of Health.

"I was just going with the flow," she says.

In early 2014, about three months after leaving the Cougars, her former coach called with a prospect. Would she like to give it a try? She agreed to learn more and joined the coach for a meeting with the former president of the T&T Paralympic Committee, Kenneth McKell. "[McKell] told me about the opportunities to travel and just encouraged me to come on board." Once more, she acceded, "because I want to give this a shot."

Nyoshia was born with Hemihyperatrophy Syndrome, also called Hemihyperplasia, a congenital condition, where one side of her body develops faster than the other. "With me," she explains, "the left side of my body develops faster than my right," so the left side of her body is bigger than her right.

Google it, she says, "you wouldn't really see it unless you literally examine the person, so plenty people see me as being 'normal.' But when they actually look, they will see that I stand on one of my feet, and on the other, I stand on my toe."

"The day-to-day standing or walking," is painful if she's on her feet for too long, but she has no difficulty running.

## ■ CAMPUS HERO

Nyoshia doesn't know why her Cougars' coach singled her out for the opportunity to participate in the Paralympics – she'd never run competitively before – but, whatever the reason, he was right.

Had she not been propelled to participate in the Paralympics, Nyoshia says, she would have continued with volleyball and “seen how far I would have reached.” If she didn't get very far, she would have been happy to “be an average person and just do normal things.”

As fate would have it, Nyoshia was not meant to be average. And she's happy she took the leap. “At least I wouldn't have any regrets in life, in terms of ‘I should have, and if I could have’ ... I know that I would have gone into this and not regret that I didn't.”

Since she began track and field competitively in 2014, Nyoshia has run seven races, six of them classifying as international competitions – her first, the Mexico Championships in Mexico City, was just a “meet”, she says (although she won her first two gold medals there) – and she has come away with eight gold medals (the Mexico Championships in 2014, the Arizona Desert Challenge in 2016 and 2017, and the USA National Championships in Los Angeles in 2017), one silver medal (the Arizona Desert Challenge in 2017), and four bronze medals (the World Para Athletics Championships in 2015 and 2017, the Paralympics in Rio in 2016, and the USA National Championships in 2017). Nyoshia competes in 100m and 200m races and runs in the T44 category, which means, she explains, “that one of your legs, either right or left, has a deficiency below the knee.” Some people may wear prostheses, others, like her, may not.

Of her professional track and field career so far, Nyoshia says, “it worked out ... I have no regrets,” although she will admit to a couple ... disappointments. She acknowledges that she's had an “opportunity”, and talent, we might add, that “not many people would have gotten,” and she's happy that she placed in the top three at the 2016 Paralympics. Yet, “getting bronze last year was, to me, disappointing,” she explains. “I know that I could have done better.”

An athlete truly passionate about her sport, Nyoshia has watched the video of her performance in the 100m race “over and over and over and over,” and knows exactly what happened and when. She was in the lead, pulled her hamstring and fell back. “I felt as if something pulled and I thought, ‘gosh! I just need to finish this race!’” she recalls. And that she did, placing third, despite her injury.

She remembers another, more recent disappointment, at this year's World Para Athletics Championships in London. “I got another bronze in the same 100m, which was yet another disappointment,” she says, laughing. “One would know their potential ... and there's always a disappointing moment when you don't get that goal.”

There was a “false start in the finals, and they only called back the race when we reached almost 50 metres down the straight.” She thought, “I just used up so much energy, to have to come back to try to get more energy to finish this race.” But she was game. She went back to the starting line and began again. Nyoshia was in second place as she approached the finish line, “and after a while, my legs just started to give up and my competitor came and crossed me on the line.” She came in third once more – not what she imagined for herself, but she took it in stride. “All is not lost, because I know that if I can consistently come third, three



*“taking negative words out of your vocabulary and out of your system, will help you to achieve anything that you want.” It doesn't just apply to athletics, she adds. “It goes for your job, your goals and aspirations.”*

years consecutively, there is a lot of room for improvement, but I'm not far from that improvement. It's just being able to execute a better race next time.”

As Nyoshia knows right now, she doesn't “have any big international meets next year,” but she's working hard to “push myself, because in 2019 there will be two major championships, which are ParaPan (the ParaPan American Games) and Worlds (the World Para Athletics Championships).”

Where Nyoshia sees disappointment for herself, the average Trinbagonian recognises her huge accomplishments and is proud to call her our own. She has come home to a lot of attention and, although she's happy for the praise, she admits that it can be overwhelming. “It puts a lot of pressure on you. You can make mistakes, but nothing drastic, because somebody is always watching you. Somebody's always looking up to you, so you have to be very careful because what you do in life may affect other people's lives.”

She reveals that, with all the media attention, “people expect so much from you and there'll be a moment where you think, ‘could I fulfil what everybody wants me to fulfil?’” Track and field, she explains, is not a team sport. She competes as an individual so there's extra pressure. “There will be a lot of negative remarks if you don't bring home a medal,” for example. Ever-confident, however, she shares that “at the end of the day, I am satisfied with any result that I get, and I believe that, once you put your best foot forward, you don't have to listen to the negative remarks ... it's for you to find something within you to propel you even further.”

Her family's support helps her to cope with the pressure that has come with being such a talented athlete. Her parents, sister and brothers are, undoubtedly, her biggest fans. “They support me in any and everything that I do,” she says.

And Nyoshia has quite a bit on her plate. In addition to completing her Bachelor's degree in Sports Management at UWI's Faculty of Social Sciences (she's in her second year), she is busy preparing for the 2019 Paralympics. With gym training three times a week, track training four times, physical therapy sessions and, of course, school, she must ensure she sets aside time for rest. “Hard work takes a toll on your body.”

How does she manage it all? Excellence requires determination, Nyoshia advises. “If you're not determined, or focus-driven ... then you may not [perform at] the best of your ability.” But, once you focus, she says, you will succeed.

“What I am learning, is that sometimes we say we ‘can't. Actually, you can. But, when you say you can't do something, you're programming your mind and your body to function as if you can't do it.” Anytime you're faced with an obstacle or difficult situation, she says, “taking negative words out of your vocabulary and out of your system, will help you to achieve anything that you want.” It doesn't just apply to athletics, she adds. “It goes for your job, your goals and aspirations.”

Her dreams of representing T&T internationally achieved, Nyoshia now has other aspirations, many of which will be affected by her degree. Long term, “I want to help develop Paralympics in T&T and, by extension, the Caribbean.” She'd like to become a coach and encourage more people to become involved in track and field. Her more immediate focus, however, is finishing her degree and winning gold in the 2019 Paralympics.

## ■ INCOMING

**“I never attended university,” he says.**

It is a statement that might alarm those academics who have grumbled about the selection of Robert Bermudez as sixth Chancellor of The UWI as he is not one of them.

It is true that he is not an academic, but spend a little time in conversation with this Chancellor and you will conclude that he is an intellectual.

People often use the words ‘academic’ and ‘intellectual’ interchangeably, but they are not quite the same.

The Oxford Dictionary defines an academic as “a teacher or scholar in a university or college,” and one of its descriptions (I mischievously add) is: “not related to a real or practical situation and therefore irrelevant.”

It also defines the intellect as the “faculty of reasoning and understanding objectively,” and an intellectual as “a person with a highly developed intellect.” It follows that an academic may not necessarily be an intellectual, just as an intellectual may not be an academic.

Either way, Mr. Bermudez, a businessman, has entered the UWI world of academia at a time when it has declared its intention to think differently, and his selection as Chancellor is an indication of where it wants to go.

He is aware of the consternation, but is not fazed.

“People equate education with attending a university,” he says, acknowledging the value of mass education, “but some people are privileged to get educated one-on-one by people who are experts in the field, and that was the opportunity I had.”

He credits his achievements to the lessons he had from members of the business community.

“Those guys taught me stuff, and by the time Tony Sabga was finished with me, I always said I had a PhD because he was the best that I ever had the good fortune to know.”

He says those periods of mentorship provided him with multiple perspectives and that “gave me a huge advantage.” He points out that the support of staff, “who come out to work every day and do extraordinary things,” was an important part of the Bermudez success story.

He refers to the concept of apprenticeship, which he says is part of the Costa Rican culture, so that people say “I was made by,” to indicate who had been their mentor. It had seemed an odd segue into the Costa Rican university system, but later, I realized he would have been fairly familiar with the country because more than a decade ago, he started the company, Alimentos Bermudez S.A., which is based there. It explains why he favours their delicious coffee.

While Chancellor Bermudez expressed many views on The UWI’s culture and where he thinks the institution should go, he is actually very reticent about his personal side. He doesn’t talk about himself, nor does he offer details on his range of business relationships. He has never been interviewed.

“I am a private person,” he says repeatedly, and it took some doing for him to be persuaded that people should know something about the man who would be Chancellor.

*So, who is Robert Bermudez?*

He is the son of Margot and Alfredo Bermudez; delivered by a midwife at a maternity house on Dere Street in Port of Spain on April 21, 1953. His family lived in St. Ann’s then, but he has spent most of his years living in and around Port of Spain.

“All my life, even to this day, I can hear the Queen’s Royal College bells ringing,” he says. “So I think I’ve spent most of my life within earshot of that.”

After attending the primary school run by a “lady named Mrs. Bodkins on Oxford Street,” he went to St. Mary’s College, where they also had a prep school.

He insists he was a terrible, hard-headed student. (I get the impression that he was probably another bright, bored child afflicted by an education system that had not yet learned how to teach them.)

“I was not a good student. I did not enjoy my school years. I didn’t enjoy the academic part of it. I sure enjoyed being at St. Mary’s. It was fun. You had lots of friends. You had a lot of things to do.”

He said he played sports but was “useless.”

“I was not a sportsman of any quality. I played cricket, terribly. I played tennis; something I thoroughly enjoyed. I played a lot of tennis in my life. I played it poorly, but I had a lot of fun,” he says laughingly. “But the academic part... my whole ambition in life was not to come last, because my mother quarreled so much. I kept my mother as quiet as possible by staying away from last place.”

His mother was very strict, he says, a disciplinarian, who kept an eagle eye on his hard-headedness. His only brother, Bernardo, is nine years older, “so effectively, we were two only children,” and it meant he was often caught in his mother’s crosshairs.

At 16, after St. Mary’s College, he was sent to St. George’s College in Surrey, England, a boarding school founded in 1869 by a Belgium Catholic order of priests called the Josephites. He does not talk about that period; but in 1973, he returned to Trinidad and began working at the Bermudez Biscuit Company.

The company had been started by Venezuelan brothers, Jose Rafael and Jose Angel nearly a century ago, opposite St. Mary’s College on Park Street. His father, Alfredo, along with his brother joined their uncle, Jose Rafael, in making the salt biscuits (known as water crackers), that would become the famous Crix brand.

The building burned in the 1950s and this was when the company moved to Mt Lambert where it has grown and flourished.

He started off as a route supervisor, visiting customers in his assigned sector to ensure they were being serviced and eventually learning his way around the country. “There is no place in Trinidad that I do not know,” he says. “I cannot get lost anywhere because our customers are everywhere. As far as we are concerned, once you open your door to do business, we will come and supply you. It is part of the values of our business.”

He did a bit of everything in those days, learning the business thoroughly (he particularly likes the manufacturing process) and in 1982, when his father died, he assumed full responsibility for the business.

The Bermudez name was already in every household locally; but it wasn’t so much what he got, as what he made of it. In no time it had gone international: its website says the Group has “more than 3000 employees spread across the Americas.”

The Group comprises Kiss Baking Company, Jamaica Biscuit Company Limited, Holiday Snacks Limited, West India Biscuit Company Limited, Bermudez Biscuit Company and Alimentos Bermudez S.A. These six companies are located in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados and Costa Rica, but their distribution is regional and includes the USA, Canada and the UK.

# In the Season

## Chancellor Robert Bermudez points to UWI

BY VANEI



Robert Bermudez will be officially installed as Chancellor at the UWI St. Augustine Campus on September 10, 2017.

*“The reality is that the University is a business that could be useful for the country. The University cannot be approached as a means to make a profit, it is here to serve the community.”*



# n of Change

bert Bermudez  
s new direction

S A B A K S H



Chancellor of The University of the West Indies at a ceremony  
September 16, 2017. PHOTO: MARIA NUNES

is not a business and that although  
university and there are things about  
the University to think about, the  
as a business, because it is not here  
ere as a common good.”

He is also Board Chairman at Massy Holdings Limited.

After 44 years, he is a reputable and respected figure within the business community. He has been a director on the board of 18 different organizations throughout the region – banking, brewing, insurance, tourism, packaging, distribution, retailing, air travel, even matches – quite the gamut; and if you consider his latest portfolio, you can add education to the list.

Does this make Chancellor Bermudez a mogul, a tycoon... a magnate? They are words that invoke power, wealth and influence, but even if he has all of these, somehow those descriptions do not sit immaculately on his neat frame. Those words cast a decadent, maybe even ruthless, shadow; and there is something too light about him for them to fit snugly. He has a clear distaste for trappings and fanfare, and an unobtrusive manner that suggests he prefers to observe than to be seen.

He likes walking, hiking and riding his bicycle, and spending time with friends. “I think my favourite pastime might be having nothing to do,” he says with a laugh.

Throughout our conversations some words come up repeatedly – values, service, mentoring, collaboration, equity, opportunity, balance, commitment, fun, optimism... When he articulates his views on the University, on the region’s development, on the young people in our midst, each idea is rooted inside one of those words. He is not spouting platitudes; he is earnest, and has done his homework with the care of a man who believes in the importance of attention to detail.

His manner is informal – a spectrum away from the preponderance of protocols that define the University – but he seems thorough, keen to understand things, and interested in learning. He might be a breath of fresh air to the many intellectual academics at the University.

When asked what challenges he sees for the University, he goes right back to its first incarnation as the University College of the West Indies in 1948 and the hurdles it faced.

The rate of change now will test the University’s agility, because the changes are so great that they are “disrupting the structures that we have come to depend on and understand,” he says, and “it is a problem it will have to grapple with for the rest of its existence.” The strategic plan has to be dynamic, “because it is a five-year plan and before the five years are over, the changing environment is going to force adjustment as things we don’t foresee begin to happen.”

It used to be straightforward, he says, “you went to a university and you got a set of tools, and basically, for the rest of your life, you used those tools.” With technology rendering everything obsolete in no time at all, today’s world requires lifelong learning and universities must be prepared to provide programmes that upgrade skills continuously, he says, and that creates an opportunity for them to earn revenue as well.

But even as he identifies several kinds of collaborations the University can build – with States, students, the private sector – for income generation, he believes it must not forget its main responsibility.

“The reality is that the University is not a business and that although there are business aspects to the University and there are things about business that could be useful for the University to think about, the University cannot be approached as a business, because it is not here to make a profit, it is here as a common good.”

That places a special burden of care on the University

in the way it manages its resources. “Every contributing country has scrimped and saved to meet its obligations, and we have to make sure that we use the funds wisely,” he says.

Equity is important, he says. “The University must be focused on creating an equitable environment. The history of these islands – slavery, indentureship, colonialism, – this is a University that, more than most, must be focused on providing an equitable environment. The University has only just adopted a gender policy in the year 2017, and a gender policy is only the beginning of an equitable environment.”

He thinks the University should create a forum for debates; that faculty members should share their expert opinions on matters of public importance, and that they should encourage students to do the same.

“The UWI must have a balanced view, showing different arguments, so people can draw their conclusions. You don’t want to have a politicized university; it should provide a forum for discussion and the students must be an important part of that,” he says.

“We have to serve the community; that is the basic purpose of the University in all the things it does, whether it is research, teaching... the University has to become more and more integrated into the community.”

This is one of the ways he sees the collaborations working.

“We have a responsibility to ensure that once we educate our people that we provide them with opportunities, otherwise we are going to create a cadre of dissatisfied, unhappy young people who cannot fulfill their potential,” he says. The “we” he is referring to is “the community, the West Indies,” he says.

“That requires collaboration on every front and it something that is happening already. People are leaving university and can’t find the kind of employment they expected to find with a university degree.”

He focuses very heavily on the quality of a student’s experience, and I wonder if, because his own experience was unpleasant, he has greater empathy for the nature of the learning environment. To him, it should not simply be a matter of certification, but that the University has to help nurture their sense of belonging and pride in being West Indian.

“The more the University can be integrated, the more West Indians can come on the campuses and get to know each other, the stronger the glue that holds Caricom together,” he says.

Does he think the regional movement is failing?

“I don’t think so. I think that over the years we’ve had our quarrels, but this is not unique to Caricom. We’ve had our disagreements but all in all, I think there is a genuine understanding that we are stronger together. There is no doubt of it. Even our largest islands are relatively small and if we don’t stick together and try to achieve some size in unity, then I think we will be the worse off for it.”

He talks about how his travels throughout the islands have made him appreciate the beauty of each.

“I like all of them. Every country in the West Indies is fun. I can’t say that there is anything in any of them that I don’t enjoy. And they are so different. You would think we are homogeneous. We are not, in that we have our own quirks and you just have to appreciate them for what they are,” he says.

True of the islands. True of the people.

Vaneisa Baksh is Editor of UWI TODAY.

## THEATRE OF LIFE

“I heard a quote once from somebody,” Amir tells me. “You don’t see the art on the screen. You only see the ashes.”

He is conveying to me the level of research and planning that went into the creation of his documentary film “Who I Say I Am.”

“Ninety percent of the work that you do is before you actually film,” he tells me. But in going back over the interview, in transcribing the notes, it seems clear that the quote works just as well as a description of the young filmmaker himself.

Amir Aether Valen Ali, age 22, a student of The UWI St. Augustine Film Programme, gave a powerful introduction to his work at the 2016 Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival. He won awards for both Best T&T Short Film – Documentary and the United Nations T&T Award for Best Emerging Documentary Filmmaker (see [http://sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/archive/october\\_2016/article8.asp](http://sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/archive/october_2016/article8.asp)).

It was an impressive victory but not as impressive as Amir’s true creative endeavor – himself.

“People need to be more self-aware,” he says. And he practices what he preaches.

Writer’s cheat. And a writer with a word limit is a massive cheater. For a story like this, in the limited space and time provided, you have to pretend you have the essence of an individual. You construct your own narrative about the subject, you take short cuts and hope it’s accurate enough. But how can you attempt to capture in brief what someone has worked so hard to create? All I can say with certainty is that I have encountered few people so focused on understanding themselves and doing the work to become a better person.

“In secondary school I heard a quote from Chuck Palahniuk,” he says. “The first step for any young person with drive and talent but no money to change their world is to change their culture. To write the books, paint the art, make the music, shoot the films.”

He says, “I always wanted to change my world. After I heard that quote I made the decision to go into film to do so.”

The most immediate display of what Amir calls “his workaholic self” is in the short documentary. Beautifully shot, “Who I Say I Am” is made up primarily of interviews with a cross-section of people, asking them about their names and their names’ connection to their identity. Its 30-minute length is just a fraction of the time spent on the project – especially the research component, the 90%. Academic papers on identity and the effects of naming, books on globalization, and even the Orisha tradition, all form the references for the film.

Identity is his grand theme. Like Hemingway’s Old Man with his fish, he has developed a universe around it, one that is simultaneously personal to his life and experiences but also universal in what he views as its capacity to improve people, and by extension, society.

“Film is more communication and behavioural science than art to me,” he says. “From what I’ve seen online and among my peers who don’t know about film they think of it just as individualism and personal expression. If the person on the other end doesn’t relate to what you put before them then it’s just for you. It’s not changing anybody.”

And change is the goal. Film is just the medium.

Every topic we discuss – from film techniques to superheroes (Superman is his favourite because of his adherence to his moral code) – it’s clear he has given great thought to the things that interest him. The influences he cites, while including filmmakers such as Terrence Malick, comprise an unorthodox mix of writers (Neil Gaiman), psychologists (Jordan Peterson) and billionaire motivational speakers (Gary Vaynerchuk). If anything connects them, it’s a muscular doctrine of self-development.



# The Personal Work, The Public Worker

*Filmmaker reinvents himself*

BY JOEL HENRY

“That’s what drives me, trying to make people better,” he says.

From his appearance in “Who I say I Am” or in photos following his film festival win, Amir looks like the conventional depiction of a film student – waves of green dye in his hair, close-cropped beard and bright, smiling eyes. But his life experience has not been conventional.

Initially he had no intention of even being a filmmaker. As a student of Presentation College in Chaguanas, he was required to work consistently towards academic excellence with a goal of getting into a professional field.

“Most people there were into medicine, engineering or law. You had to fall into one of those categories,” he says.

Amir started making short films in Form 4 “just for fun”. It became his mode of self-expression.

“I never really acted up in school,” he says. “I just didn’t follow the trend. I didn’t follow the path they wanted me to take. Teachers used to tell me all the time I could get a scholarship in engineering or something else, but I found I didn’t really care about that. Making short films did more for me personally.”

If there were oppositional forces at Presentation College, the forces at home were much worse. Amir grew up in rough economic circumstances in Warrentville, Cunupia and there was anger and violence in the home.

“My mother had to go through a lot and when things started to get really bad and she decided enough was enough and that she was going to leave, they made it extremely hard on her. During the height of the family breakdown I saw the worst sides of everyone in my family. Some things people did were unforgivable,” he says. “I think I learned more from seeing their mistakes. More of who I am is based on not wanting to have certain qualities that they have.”

It was this urge to distance himself from family that partially prompted him to change his name.

“In 2015 I started reevaluating my identity and my life, and what I wanted out of the rest of my life. I felt like the name Amir Ali represented me, but didn’t fully represent who I was anymore, and certainly wasn’t going to represent who I wanted to be later in life. So I decided at the end of 2015 to add the names ‘Aether’ and ‘Valen’ and make the documentary film throughout 2016 about the impact that a person’s name has on their identity, and how it influences their sense of self,” he says.

“Aether” has several meanings but the one Amir likes best comes from Ancient Greece – both the personification of light and the air that the Gods breathe. “Valen” is a Latin root word meaning “strong.”

“I treat each of my names as a different entity. Sometimes I talk to myself as Amir, sometimes I talk to myself as Aether, sometimes I talk to myself as Valen. To me, a name is not merely a conglomeration of letters put together as a convenient way for someone to refer to me. I treat them as part of my identity,” he says.

Of all the labour beneath the surface of “Who I Say I Am” this is the most crucial, the personal work. But in the film he is only one of several people asked to grapple with the topic. Amir asked them the same questions he asked himself. It’s a striking blueprint for life and art: self-examination, personal development and creative expression that uses the personal for communal benefit.

“I think if everybody knew themselves better they would be the best version of themselves. And if everybody is the best version of themselves then the world would be better. As they say, ‘fix yourself, fix the world.’”

## FILM STUDIES IN CUBA

By the time you are reading this, Amir will most likely be in Cuba, attending the International Film and TV School in San Antonio de Los Banos. He will be undertaking a three-year Master’s programme in Documentary Direction, all costs covered thanks to a scholarship from the Cuomo Foundation, an Italy-based organisation that funds health and educational projects in the developing world. It was an unexpected gift in what has already been an incredible season of success.

“I didn’t even consider leaving the country before,” he laughs. “The first time I was ever in a plane was earlier this year. One of the prizes when I won the film festival was a trip to the Rotterdam Film Festival in Curacao.”

Amir received the scholarship through the assistance of author Anna Levi, who met him while working with the UWI Film Programme.

“The Directing class was given chapters of my MFA

## THEATRE OF LIFE

novel in progress to adapt my stories to film. Amir's adaptation of (my story) "The Nowarian" was impressive," she says. "Amir has a sense of humility and he is passionate about film. He is a star."

Anna, a graduate research assistant at the Film Programme, helps deserving students find scholarship and graduate-level opportunities. She was contacted by the Cuban Embassy about the Cuomo Foundation scholarship and encouraged Amir and others to apply. They are currently working on a documentary called "Super Freak" about legendary fashion designer, Yoko Fung.

At Rotterdam, Amir met members of the industry and festival coordinators from around the world. He attended workshops held by Academy Award-nominated filmmakers. A new world of potential has opened for him.

"My big goal is to affect as large an audience as possible," he says. "I had the ambitions but I knew I didn't have the money to go abroad and do anything. Now the opportunities have come."

He is quick to point out that even without the developments that have come from his winning film he was determined to create with whatever resources he had.

"I'm perfectly fine with using the tools I currently have. But if new tools come I will take it."

If there is one lesson to be learned from the young filmmaker, especially by other aspiring artists, is that the success he has achieved in his short career was paid for with one ultimate currency – resilience.

"I've seen so many people who are better than me, who are more talented than me, who have way more skill. But under pressure they crack. Sometimes it's only a little pressure and they crack," he says.

"I have been broken down so much that nothing can break me lower. Because of that I can persevere. It gave me a thicker skin to deal with the world. Somehow I do better when I'm under pressure. Too many artists complain about what they don't have rather than using what they actually have and making it work."

Most tellingly, he's also a martial artist. Amir trained with a group of martial artists and soldiers, including well-known self-defense expert Major Sarwan Boodram, from a very young age. This wasn't the typical karate training that tends to emphasize proper form and light contact sparring. The training was reality-based and with military discipline.



*I didn't follow the path they wanted me to take. Teachers used to tell me all the time I could get a scholarship in engineering or something else, but I found I didn't really care about that. Making short films did more for me personally.*

Amir recalls, "my first year in primary school I was the smallest person. There was one student who used to bully me. The next time he came to bully me he couldn't do it anymore."

He was five years old at the time but he had already learned an enormously valuable life lesson. Bullies can be defeated once you are willing to do the work of defeating them. The work was brutal.

"Back then we used to get blows," he says. "They put us in real fight scenarios. People got busted up and stitched up. I lost a tooth. I was 11."

It sounds rough but it's clear he remembers those days fondly, as well as his instructors, who he credits with training them with military-style discipline. Training which in turn gifted him with military-style endurance.

"We used to train at the barracks sometimes. Sometimes we had to wake up at 11 pm, train until 3 am and then sleep until 4 am. That is why I don't sleep much. I can go on just a couple hours for a couple days. That training gave me some of the traits that I need to survive in the world."

"The focus wasn't really on winning. It was on survival. That mentality is what permeates throughout my lifestyle. Film is more my profession but martial arts is more my way of life," he says.

It's funny, because we tend to think of art as a frivolous pursuit and creatives as indisciplined dreamers. Many artists themselves rely on their innate talent and inspiration to fuel them and when those are not enough they collapse. The truth is that to thrive, to succeed in a profession that is naturally devalued, you have to be more focused. You have to self-generate whatever it takes to continue the work.

Author Steven Pressfield, writer of "The War of Art" says artists must be like soldiers because creativity is an act of war against the numerous forces of resistance. There's one striking scene in "Who I say I Am" where the young filmmaker sits on an outdoor couch next to a little girl. Smiling, relaxed, with a Nescafe cup in hand he asks her, "Do you think that your name is a crucial factor in the development of self and your individualistic identity?" Occupied with her drawing she responds "yeah!" He tilts back his head and laughs. It's the laugh of a soldier during a lull in the fighting. It's a laugh of someone who is winning the war.



Amir (right) with Anna Levi (left) music icon Machel Montano and legendary designer Yoko Fung at the UWI Film Programme for a biopic on her life and work.



Amir teaches combat readiness to youngsters at Presentation College. He credits his martial arts training as a major source of his resilience and ability to succeed.

## ■ FILM

# HISTORY REVISITED

*What happened after the fateful Ninth Floor occupation in Montreal*

BY JEANNETTE G. AWAI

“I hope you enjoy this movie and it speaks to you, but I want you to pay attention to the credits.” Trinidad-born, Canadian-based producer, Selwyn Jacob cautioned the packed Centre for Language Learning (CLL) Auditorium’s audience before the screening of the documentary, *Ninth Floor* on July 20. The atmosphere in the auditorium buzzed with anticipation as unceasing rows of patrons flowed into the auditorium, forcing hosts, the Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies (LCCS) and the trinidad+tobago film festival (ttff) to create makeshift seating and additional accommodation.

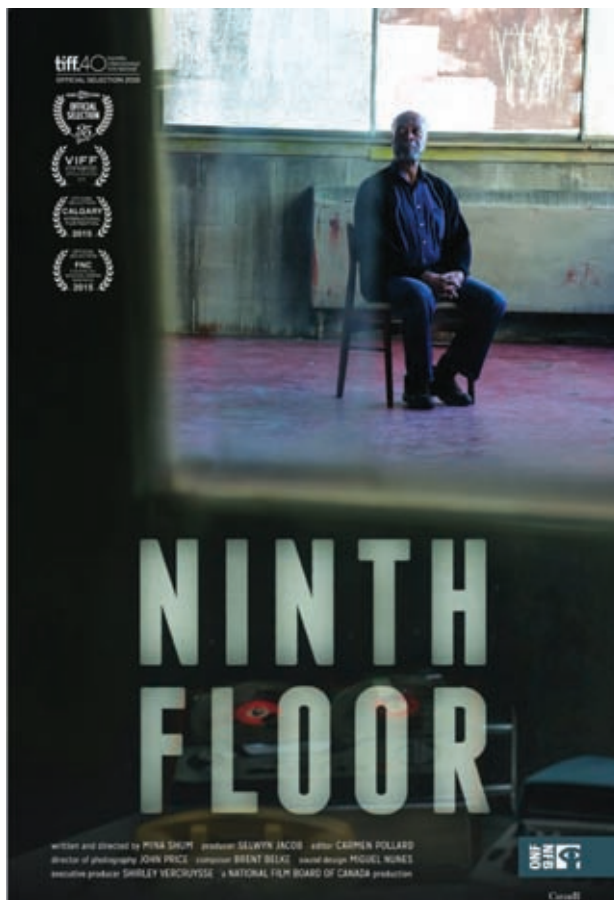
The event’s large turnout was unsurprising, given the unfortunate relevance of the 50-year-old subject matter – the violent racial conflict surrounding the then, Sir George Williams University (now Concordia University) student-led protests in 1969 Montreal. The film recounts this watershed moment in Canadian history, dubbed the Sir George Williams affair, where more than 100 students peacefully occupied the ninth floor of the Henry F. Hall Building in an act of civil disobedience against the university administration’s decision regarding a complaint of racism that had been filed months earlier by six Black students from the Caribbean. The “undersigned six” charged white biology professor Perry Anderson with racial discrimination and biased treatment as compared with their white counterparts.

Under the direction of Mina Shum, the film reveals how the Caribbean students came into black consciousness through their racist experience. Jacob uses archival footage to highlight the institutional racism within the University as white professors came up with a rubric for differentiating between West Indians and Afro-Canadians with stereotypes such as, “West Indians laugh immoderately, are frequently obscene and don’t take much at face value.” The crowd laughed in response to this comical description – a rare moment of levity in the 82-minute film which hammers home how traumatic the ninth floor occupation was to the Caribbean students involved. The students locked themselves in the Computer Centre located on the ninth floor as an act of peaceful protest against the Administration’s mild punitive suspension of Perry Anderson. This went on for a few days and on February 11, everything escalated. A fire broke out in the data centre resulting the students hurtling hundreds of computer cards and other documents through the windows, “like snow out of heaven onto the brains of society scattered in the wind,” according to one of the survivors in the film. The students’ cries for help were met with police and riot squad officers who stormed the computer room, arresting 97 people, whites as well as blacks.

The importance of Jacob’s mandate to focus on the names mentioned throughout the documentary becomes evident as their lives after the incident becomes the real focal point of the film. He admits, it has been his life’s work to tell this story ever since he was a young man considering going to university in Canada, “I always knew that I would tell this story – I had been saddled with the good-for-nothing perspective; these good-for-nothing students came up here and destroyed the people computer. Don’t be like them.” The audience got to see “them,” not as a static names in a newspaper report, but as three-dimensional people who



Selwyn Jacob, Lynne Murray and Terrance Ballantyne at the screening of *Ninth Floor*. DIGIMEDIA PHOTO & CINEMA, COURTESY TTFF



survived. Names like Terrance Ballantyne and Hugo Ford – two of the original six students whose complaint led to the riot. The West Indian students who would later be involved, include Valerie Belgrave, Bukka Rennie, Rosie Douglas, who was imprisoned and then deported and later became Prime Minister of Dominica. Anne Cools, originally from Barbados, who went on to become the first Black Canadian to be appointed to the Senate, and Rodney John has had a distinguished career as a psychologist and several others.

Persons like Kennedy Frederick – who was shown only through his clips of his incendiary younger self as a fearless catalyst for the occupation. Sadly, he never recovered from the events of 1969 and was forced to go into hiding and throughout the years since, he suffered a host of mental illnesses. He is the film’s reminder of the hidden price one pays for being on the right side of history. In 2017, it’s easy to forget that the social activism had a negative connotation. Jacobs stressed that although, he wanted to have more voices in his film, “some people didn’t want to be found because of the stigma attached. People changed their names, moved to the US...some disappeared.”

The film night ended on a more optimistic note with Jacobs encouraging the audience to applaud the courageous students involved in the incident some that were present that night like Terrance Ballantyne. Like a teacher addressing his students, Jacobs advised, “The film is really about these people – they made a decision at a certain point in life and were stigmatized, but they overcame.”

# The Power of Student Solidarity

*Meet Guild President Jonathan St. Louis Nahous*

BY SHYVONNE WILLIAMS

**Jonathan St. Louis Nahous** is serious about leadership. He looks the part, talks the part and when we met past 4.30 on a Thursday afternoon, he was neatly dressed in business attire – tie pin and all – working diligently at his desk in the Guild Office on campus. It seemed real. He's articulate and formal, but engaging. After a string of career-related questions, I had to remind him that he wasn't supposed to be interviewing me.

Maybe it's because he is a Psychology graduate, but the questioning signaled that he's a good listener and is genuinely interested in people.

In 2014, while doing pre-qualification courses at the Open Campus for his Bachelor's degree in Psychology, Jonathan led his class in protesting an exam. They won. That showed him the power students have by standing together and speaking up on issues, but he assured me that it's not always about fighting with the administration.

Following the protest, his friends encouraged him to run for the Student Guild Council, so he nominated himself. "I ran for the Faculty of Social Sciences Representative and lost." He laughed, telling me that in hindsight he sees that he needed time to develop his leadership skills and understand the workings of the Guild Council and the University system.

When Jonathan moved to the St. Augustine Campus he joined the Peer Counseling Association and in a twist of fate, was selected President. He built relationships at the Campus and the experience piqued his interest in student representation. It gave him insight into the challenges students face; the most common being family, financial and relationships.

"There are so many students going through the university system who need people to recognise that they need assistance and many students don't realise the University actually invests in trying to build strong support systems for them."

He was President of the Peer Counseling Association for two years; during the second year, he ran again for a position on the Guild Council and became the Evening and Part-time Students' Representative, straddling both roles. Following those stints, he contested a position on the Guild Council again and was voted Treasurer. Now he's President, after being appointed in March this year.

This is Jonathan's third year on the Guild Council. He believes the experiences from the previous positions prepared him for being President and it was important to work his way up. He felt he had paid his dues. He has interacted with almost all the student groups and key administrative offices at the St. Augustine Campus and is well known.

"Campaigning for Guild President was focused on reminding people: if you want to see things go a certain way and if you want me to be there, then vote for me," he said.

The 2017 campaign for the Student Guild Council President saw him and his colleagues and friends – the former President and Vice President – competing against each other; each thinking he was the best person for the job.

The outcome of the campaign: Jonathan won 1155



votes, which was 30% more than his nearest competitor and 60% more than the previous President. They are still friends, he says.

As a Psychology graduate, he said he's using himself as a study subject for what a good leader is. He identifies his mother as his moral compass, adding that he had strong role models in both parents, but his mom's influence stands out, as he spent more time with her during his life.

"She has always been someone who tries to do things the right way and encourage my sister and me to make decisions that can be held up to scrutiny. Even getting into childhood mischief, she would always remind us that what you do in the dark always comes to light." It's his personal credo.

Despite his experience, the magnitude of being President weighs on him: how much is at stake and how many students depend on him to give them a voice. "It's definitely humbling." Also now more apparent to him is how bureaucratic the University system is, which he likens to the local public sector. He said even at the Guild level, there are many departments and offices to collaborate with and so many approvals to seek. He's aware that most students don't appreciate why so many initiatives or decisions take so long to come to fruition. A lot of his time is spent attending meetings with campus administration or students.

It does not daunt him.

"My team is amazing," he says. He believes that the chemistry on the current Guild Council is the most impressive that he's seen, noting that he can make this observation comparatively without suggesting anything

about previous Councils. "We're all very lucky that we're on the Council with each other. We have so many different strengths and so many different personalities and I really feel like we have a complete, properly functioning Guild machine... We're all working together to help each other to help the students."

He adds that The UWI staff support is also very strong.

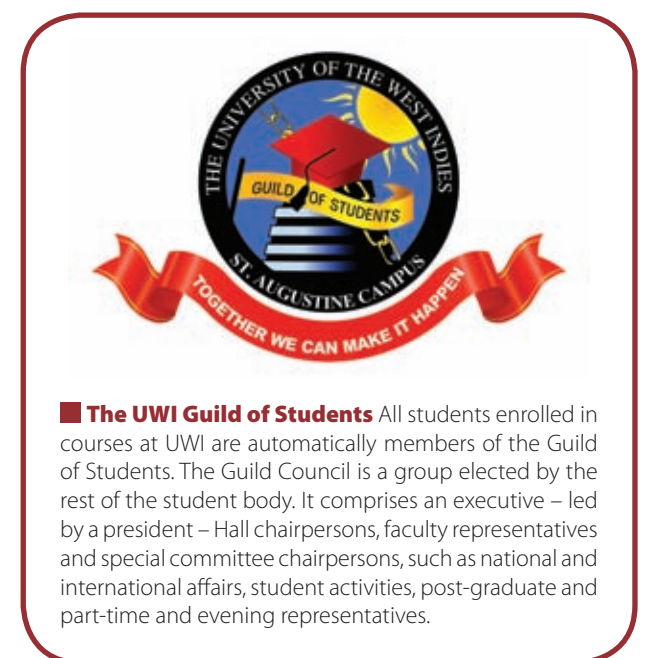
"My vision for the Guild Council is to be a group of students who understands what other students need and apply the resources we have to helping them become what they want to be."

He says because of this, the Guild Council members have a responsibility as role models. Within this year as President, he hopes to see the students have a higher level of confidence in the purpose of the Guild Council and motivate students to be more engaged and to hold the university to higher standards.

He stays accessible. Responding to students' concerns and managing issues on weekends is the norm. He believes keeping the lines of communication open is important for any elected representative. But he says he's a homebody and "a bit reclusive." The 25-year-old who was raised in Arima said he enjoys quiet time, watching comedies, horrors or psych thrillers and reading or spending time with his family, admitting to enjoying his family more as he's growing older. He also works out and recently found joy in running around the Queen's Park Savannah – even in the rain.

In this new academic year, he begins an MSc in Strategic Leadership. In addition to leadership, he's passionate about helping those who are unable to help themselves, so plans after University include some type of community service. He established a service project more than a year ago, called Hands for Hope which has been adopted by the current Guild Council.

When asked whether he sees himself in politics in the future, he paused, "It's something to consider."



■ **The UWI Guild of Students** All students enrolled in courses at UWI are automatically members of the Guild of Students. The Guild Council is a group elected by the rest of the student body. It comprises an executive – led by a president – Hall chairpersons, faculty representatives and special committee chairpersons, such as national and international affairs, student activities, post-graduate and part-time and evening representatives.



# FYE

First Year Experience  
2017-2018



**First Year Experience** is a year-long programme of orientation activities, all aimed at helping our brand new students transition to university life. We kicked off our 2017/2018 orientation on September 1st with **UWI Life** for first year Undergraduates and Postgraduates and **UWI Life Support** for parents, guardians, and spouses.



### Acknowledgements

Thank you to the many individuals, on and off Campus, who made this happen! In particular, we remember corporate partners **UP Shop** and **Republic Bank**.



Our thanks also to:

**Break Chocolates, Brut, Café Barista, Gillette, Lifestyle Motors, Malta Carib, Secret, and U by Kotex.**



# Early Childhood MatheMagic

BY DR. SABEERAH ABDUL-MAJIED



“This is my Mother’s Day gift,” some participants said when they attended the MatheMagic Workshop at The UWI School of Education on May 13, the day before Mother’s Day. Now where in the world do you hear teachers going to study mathematics and considering it a treat for Mother’s Day? It happened when 95 participants attended the second workshop hosted by the Early Childhood Caravan earlier this year. The Early Childhood Caravan is a group of professionals dedicated to supporting children’s development and learning through activities that promote developmentally appropriate early childhood practices throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The MatheMagic workshop facilitated the study of current understandings and strategies for teaching mathematics to young children. Participants engaged in activities that introduced teaching pre-algebra, statistics and geometry as well as numbers, measurement and other topics to 3-8 year-old students.

The workshop accommodated both pre-school and primary school teachers from across the country. In keeping with high quality, early childhood practices, parents and school administrators also attended. Participants shared

their experiences and exchanged ideas for improving mathematics teaching locally. Facilitators listened and took notes even as they shared strategies that work.

The workshop opened with a feature explaining that math is more than counting and numbers. For example, the importance of providing opportunities for young students to think logically, spot patterns and problem solve was discussed. Teachers and parents were encouraged to examine their own math biases, especially since to succeed, children need knowledgeable teachers and adults who believe that all children can learn. Participants got new hope when they were introduced to brain research that explained how the adult brain can be rewired to make new neural connections and think new thoughts which could lead to new math successes.

Participants left with certificates of participation, handouts, and links to online resources. Guided by survey responses, the Caravan’s science workshop is next. “Early Science for 21st Century Success”, is planned for October 14, 2017 at The UWI School of Education.

## THE POWER OF WOMEN IN FILM

The Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS), UWI St. Augustine Campus, is partnering with the trinidad+tobago film festival (ttff) and UN Women to present The Power of Women in Film, on September 22, from 9am to 4pm, at the Hyatt Regency Trinidad. The day of panels and presentations will include speakers from across the region who explore depictions of women and girls and how film can be used to address issues of violence against women, objectification, gender inequality and female empowerment. Short films will be incorporated into the programme to help illustrate some of the issues being discussed. The Power of Women in Film will be followed by three days of feminist cinema, from September 22-24, also at the Hyatt.



**IXCANUL:** Sunday 24 Sept 8.30pm. *María, a 17-year-old Mayan girl, dreams of going to the big city. An indigenous woman, trapped by an imminent arranged marriage, she has no opportunity to change her destiny. Then, in a life-threatening twist, she is forced to go to the city, at great cost.*



Join in the moment as The University of the West Indies installs its sixth Chancellor

## ROBERT BERMUDEZ

Chancellor Bermudez will lead our regional University during yet another challenging - but exciting - period in the history of our Caribbean.

Witness the formal academic ceremony at the St. Augustine Campus in Trinidad and Tobago on Saturday September 16, 2017 at 6.00 p.m. (5.00 p.m., Jamaica).

View the live stream via the link: [www.uwitv.org](http://www.uwitv.org) or [www.sta.uwi.edu/streams](http://www.sta.uwi.edu/streams)



# UWI CALENDAR of EVENTS

## SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2017

**COTE 2017 –  
YOUTH DEBATE  
COMPETITIONS**  
1pm to 4pm  
September 28  
Teaching and  
Learning Complex  
The UWI St. Augustine

**COTE  
2017**

The UWI St. Augustine, Department of Economics' annual Conference on the Economy (COTE 2017) honours Sir Alister McIntyre, a former Vice-Chancellor. The conference takes place October 11 to 12 at the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) Auditorium. There will be youth competitions prior to the conference: COTE Essay Competition for CAPE students and the COTE Debate Competitions for Undergraduate and Secondary School students. The COTE Debate competitions take place on September 28 from 1 to 4pm at the Teaching and Learning Complex (TLC). The COTE CAPE Essay Competition is open to all CAPE students and will be on the topic: Discuss the challenges an economy might face in recovering from a period of recession. The deadline to enter is September 22 at midnight.

For more information,  
please visit the Campus Events Calendar at  
[www.sta.uwi.edu/news/ecalendar](http://www.sta.uwi.edu/news/ecalendar).

**THE UWI DEF GOLF CHALLENGE**  
September 24  
Millennium Lakes Golf and Country Club  
Trinity

The UWI Development and Endowment Fund (The UWI DEF) presents its Golf Challenge. This fundraising tournament takes place at Millennium Lakes Golf and Country Club. Teams can compete for the top three places and be eligible to win an engraved Challenge Trophy. The tournament fee is \$4,500 per team.

For more information,  
please visit the Campus Events Calendar at  
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**CONFUCIUS  
INSTITUTE DAY**  
10am to 2.30pm  
September 29  
JFK Quadrangle  
The UWI St. Augustine

The Confucius Institute at The University of the West Indies St. Augustine joins in the international celebration of Confucius Institute Day commemorating their role as one of over 400 of these unique non-profit public institutions established by the Office of Chinese Language Council International (HANBAN) for the promotion of Chinese language and culture. The theme for 2017 is China Kaleidoscope. Enjoy a day experiencing Chinese culture, learning about travel and study in China and enjoying performances such as Tai Chi, lion dance and more.

For more information,  
please visit the Campus Events Calendar at  
[www.sta.uwi.edu/news/ecalendar](http://www.sta.uwi.edu/news/ecalendar).



**IGNITE THE BRAIN:  
IS FLIPPING THE ANSWER?**  
5.30pm  
September 29  
Daaga Auditorium  
The UWI St. Augustine

The UWI/Guardian Group Premium Open Lecture will cover the topic, Ignite the Brain: Is Flipping the Answer? with Dr. Lodge McCammon. Those interested in attending can contact CETL (Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning) at [cetl@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:cetl@sta.uwi.edu).

For more information,  
please visit the Campus Events Calendar at  
[www.sta.uwi.edu/news/ecalendar](http://www.sta.uwi.edu/news/ecalendar).

**MAINTENANCE PLANNING AND SCHEDULING –  
DOC PALMER WORKSHOP**

9am to 4.30pm  
September 22  
Engineering Institute Training Room  
3rd Floor, Block 2, IDC Imbert Building  
Faculty of Engineering,  
The UWI St. Augustine

The UWI Engineering Institute and the Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering of the Faculty of Engineering, The UWI St. Augustine present a One-Day Workshop on Maintenance Planning and Scheduling – Doc Palmer.

For more information,  
please visit the Campus Events Calendar  
at [www.sta.uwi.edu/news/ecalendar](http://www.sta.uwi.edu/news/ecalendar).



**#FORTHELOVEOFCHOCOLATE**  
October 6 to 7  
JFK Auditorium, The UWI St. Augustine

World Cocoa and Chocolate Day will be celebrated with a two-day public expo involving cocoa stakeholders and well-wishers. Hosted by the Cocoa Research Centre, this sixth annual celebration of cocoa and chocolate seeks to excite the public about the untapped opportunities in the local marketplace for cocoa and chocolate. The event is a celebration of chocolate – displays, contests, cosmetics, crafts and more! Be there at the JFK Auditorium on October 6 from 11am to 6pm and October 7 from 9.30am to 5pm.

For more information, please visit  
<http://sta.uwi.edu/cru/CocoaChocolateFest.asp>.

**NANOMEDICINE SYMPOSIUM**

October 15  
Amphitheatre A  
Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex  
Mt. Hope

The Faculty of Medical Sciences presents their Inaugural Symposium on Nanomedicine under the theme, Nanomedicines purpose, potential & passion in the Caribbean context. The symposium takes place at The Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, Amphitheatre A. Persons will present on original work related to the following Nano-related topics: Diagnostic Therapeutics, Vaccines, Nutraceuticals, Drug Delivery Services and more.

For more information,  
please visit the Campus Events Calendar at  
[www.sta.uwi.edu/news/ecalendar](http://www.sta.uwi.edu/news/ecalendar).

**GRADUATION CEREMONIES**

October 26 to 28  
The UWI St. Augustine

Celebrate the graduating Class of 2017 at this year's Graduation Ceremonies are scheduled to take place at The UWI Sport and Physical Education Centre (SPEC). The UWI St. Augustine will confer the following honorary degrees on the following persons: Hazel Brown – LL.D.; Winsford Devine – DLitt; Andrew Marcano – DLitt; Professor Emeritus Clem Seecharan – DLitt.

For more information and updates,  
please visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/graduation/>.

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TO HEAR FROM YOU**

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