

# Ready to Shake the World

By ARIEL CHITAN



Ariel Chitan, at right, high-fives the Campus Principal, Professor Brian Copeland.

**Ms Ariel Sabrina Chitan (Bachelor of Science in Physics and Maths, First Class Honours, Faculty of Science and Technology) gave the valediction at The University of the West Indies 10:00am Graduation Ceremony of Thursday, October 25, 2018. This is her speech."**

---

**It is an honour that I stand before you today with a heart full of congratulations and respect for each and every one of you graduating alongside me.**

Today you, I, we embark on the journey that is the rest of our lives. I stand before you to tell you that we are not the future of our society. We are the present, we are the here and the now and every step that we take, every choice that we make – we do so with pride and humility. We do so with strength and courage and with love for the places from where we have come.

We are no longer the children who awkwardly stumbled into this semi-adult life we call university. We are grown, we are strong and we are ready to shake this world in the best of ways possible. I look out before me and I am in amazement. I see leaders, I see educators, I see doctors, but what I see upon every single face is a glimmer that is as bright as the stars in the night sky; a glimmer that conveys hope and passion and dreams that promise such great things for our home, our country and our region.

These past three years have been quite a ride. Whether it was spending more time than was healthy in the library, or let's be honest, spending more time than was healthy at KFC, we have learnt a lot. We have sat in these classrooms and absorbed like sponges the words of our textbooks and advice from the wise. We have laughed, we have loved and we have become even if a small part, the people we are meant to become. Martin Luther King Junior told us that Intelligence plus Character, now that is the goal of Education. Let our graduation certificates signal to us our sacred duty and not add to any notions of ego.

In my last year here, I was privileged to be the president of our Astronomy Club here at The University of the West Indies. It was amazing to be a part of such a dedicated team. I obtained front row seats to Guild Fest where the true joy wasn't in the beautiful decorations nor the free food (though that was good too!) – it was in interacting with all of you. It was in meeting my fellow students and sharing a passion of mine, if only for a few minutes.

We also organised a massive event for the Solar Eclipse in 2017. I remember the morning of that event, I got a call from the Deputy Principal's office to come in immediately. Boy, I was scared. I don't care how old you are, even if you're not part of a school anymore... getting called into a Principal's office is no man's land.

It was Professor Indar Ramnarine. There was some miscommunication regarding our event. Instead of telling us to scrap it like I thought he might, he encouraged our event with a gentle suggestion that our cupcakes were overpriced. They were. We hosted the event which made it onto the papers and saw hundreds of people in attendance.

While this was a huge success for us as a club, on some deeper level, looking back I feel as if it was our duty to give back to this university that educated us – we were given a chance to highlight The University of The West Indies. I felt pride, not just for myself and my club but for our university. I do not believe it is our sole purpose just to grow within these walls, but we must also help *to grow* these walls.

It would be a shame to dismiss where we grew. It would be a shame to forget our roots. So, I remind you as we leave here today, to look back every once and again. Keep in mind and heart the good, and let us play some role in diminishing the bad that we experience. Let us channel our energies into making this place better and being the change we wish to see.

For some of us, the past years have been tough. I applaud you for making it to where you are today. During my first year here I lost my mother, in the second my father became very ill and my grandmother left us this year. I share this with those of you who must have lived through something similar. We can enjoy today in a bittersweet way, together.

Be strong, we made it. And to those we have lost along the way, we could not have possibly gotten to where we are without you.

We start our lives as blank, empty canvasses and every person we encounter, every experience that we have, paints us in vivid, bold colours. Let's show the world how colourful we are. Let's show the world how bright and amazing we are. Let us show the world that we come proudly from the University of the West Indies with not just a degree in hand, but with character and intelligence engraved on our hearts.

I'd like to share one of my favourite quotes from Professor Stephen Hawking. He said:

“Let us look up at the stars and not down at our feet. Let us try to make sense of what we see, and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Let us always, always, be curious.”

Class of 2018, Graduates of the Faculty of Science and Technology, of Food and Agriculture, it is our duty and our privilege to be curious, to think about the whys and the hows , to question everything which we see, and truly wonder about what makes *this* exist. With those questions in mind, with our curiosity never fulfilled, we are on an adventure for the rest of our lifetimes. Congratulations.