



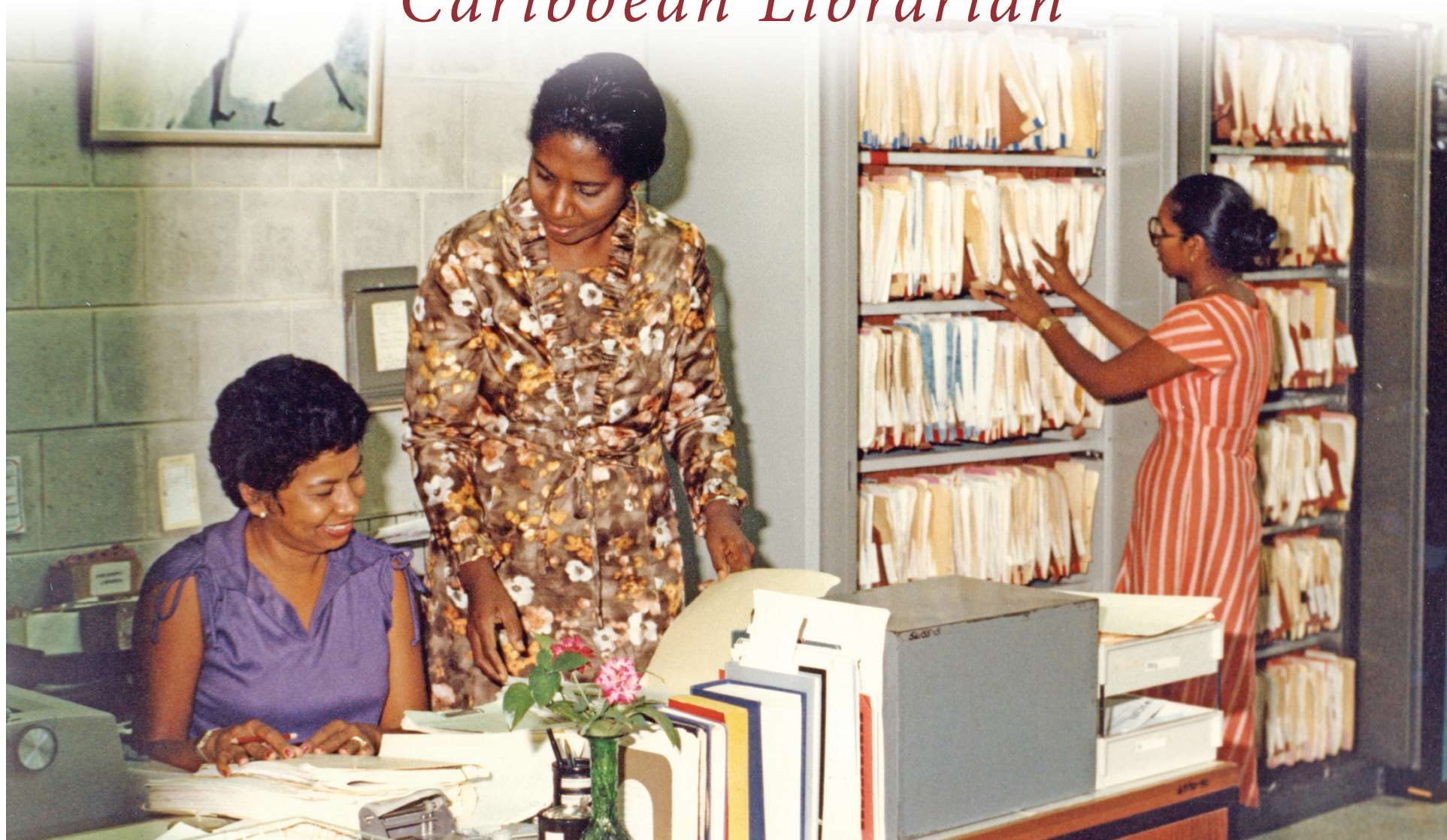
UWI TODAY

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES • ST AUGUSTINE CAMPUS

SUNDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2022

Dr Alma Jordan

Caribbean Librarian

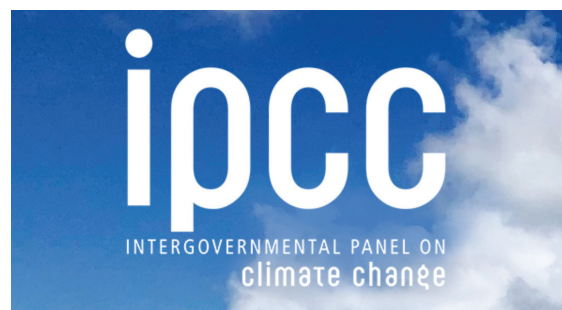


Dr Alma Jordan (standing, centre) speaks with administrative assistant Carol Pollonais while Ann Seepersad is at the shelves in this 1978 campus library photo from the archives. Dr Jordan served as Campus Librarian at UWI St Augustine from 1960 (the same year the campus began operations) to 1989, as well as University Librarian (for the entire region) from 1982 to 1989 (the year she retired). She was instrumental not only in the development of library and information services at The UWI, but also played an important role in their growth in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean. Today, the campus library at St Augustine is a regional resource for information as well as for the preservation of artifacts of historic and cultural significance. It was renamed the Alma Jordan Library in 2011 in recognition of her role in its establishment and growth. Dr Jordan passed away in January of this year. PHOTO: COURTESY THE WEST INDIAN AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DIVISION, ALMA JORDAN LIBRARY.

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Coming Home



Welcome to the first issue of UWI Today for 2022. Normally, this first year's message will be a call for introspection, mindfulness, and New Year's resolutions centred on personal and professional growth. This year, however, feels different, like 2022 is a year for movement and action.

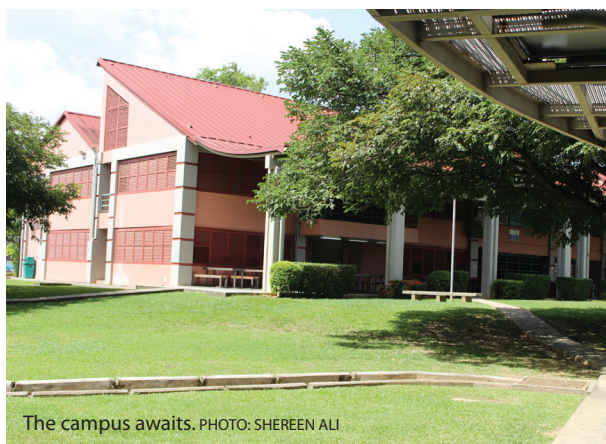
Since the rise of the pandemic, we have been operating in a kind of stasis, a holding pattern. Yes, we have worked very hard to adapt to this crisis to continue serving our students and the society. We have been integral to national and regional solutions to the pandemic and the development of the post-pandemic strategies for Trinidad and Tobago, and the Caribbean. Nevertheless, we have been operating under very challenging restrictions. We have been locked down both physically and in the domain of our deeper objectives, our goals and purposes. In 2022, it's time to power-up those turbines once more.

I am very pleased to announce that in March of this year, UWI St Augustine will open its physical gates to staff after many months of being closed. This decision was taken after a long and thorough consultative process that assessed the current state of the pandemic in Trinidad and Tobago, national rules on travel and other safety measures, our level of vaccinations, and the needs of this institution and its students. The campus will operate at limited capacity, with staff working in small, socially distant teams. This means that our faculty members and other employees will move from working remotely to a mixed schedule of remote and in-office work.

This change represents not only an assessment of the current environment, and the risks versus opportunities of reopening the campus, but is also of enormous symbolic significance. For years now, even before the pandemic, our society has been confronted by the need for change. This region, indeed the world, has been beset by chronic, seemingly ever-worsening issues such as climate change, over-exploitation of the natural environment, low economic growth, weathered infrastructure, aging and outdated institutions, civil unrest, tribalism and many others. Yet our collective response has been to avoid adapting to these challenges.



PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE



The campus awaits. PHOTO: SHEREEN ALI

From the outset, COVID-19 required an immediate response. For the most part, we have been effective in that response. Now, however, we must fully accept that there is no going back to the way things were. We live in a post-pandemic world, and its consequences for how we work will be lasting. It is time to stop waiting for things to return to normal and fully embrace this new reality.

The campus of UWI St Augustine is one of our greatest assets. Its green spaces, the architecture of the buildings, its role as an island within an island, a place of learning, where our students can partake in a communal space and build relationships that will last their entire lives – the campus is a vital part of the university experience. It is important that we reintroduce that experience within the boundaries of a well-enforced health and safety regime.

Returning to office is the first step in this process. We plan as well to eventually allow the campus grounds to be used for exercise activities for the wider community. This will culminate with a return to in-person teaching scheduled for September 2022 for the new academic year.

It should be stressed that these plans are not fixed. As always, the first priority is the safety of the campus community. Should the national situation change and risk factors increase, we will amend our plans. It should also be pointed out that this return-to-office process will follow strict health and safety guidelines. We are not new at this. In the first year of the pandemic, we maintained a successful mixed remote and on-campus work strategy for months. We also safely housed our international students who were unable to return home because of the lockdown, as well as quarantine and step-down facilities to support the national healthcare system. Our approach is one of planning and precaution combined with a bold determination to move forward.

In closing, I wish you all a year of positive momentum. There is much to be done. We at UWI St Augustine intend on making 2022 a year of great progress, bolstered by a renewed dynamism and recognising that the world has moved forward. So must we.

Brian Copeland

PROFESSOR BRIAN COPELAND

Campus Principal

A shot from the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex at St Augustine, home of the Faculty of Medical Sciences.



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CAMPUS NEWS

Three UWI Scientists among authors of upcoming UN CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT



“The UWI has prioritised climate action on its strategic agenda and its scientists and climate experts are highly sought after globally.”

Professor Michelle Mycoo is Coordinating Lead Author on chapter 15 of the IPCC report.

On February 28, 2022, the United Nations’ body for assessing the science related to climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), is expected to release its latest global report addressing impacts, adaptation and vulnerability related to climate change. Three scientists from The UWI are among the contributors to the chapters that comprise this critical international scientific report which comes on the heels of COP26 held in Glasgow in 2021.

The IPCC pools the top climate scientists around the globe to assess the state of the scientific literature on all aspects of climate change, its impacts, and society’s options for responding to it. Out of a total of 1,037 nominated experts, only 263 authors were selected to contribute to the report.

According to the IPCC, “this upcoming Sixth Assessment Report of Working Group II (AR6-WG2) assesses the impacts and risks of climate change, looking at ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities at global and regional levels. Compared to the previous Working Group’s assessments, AR6-WG2 will include new information on different types of risks under various warming levels.”

The output of Working Group II will be made public on February 28 when the report is expected to be launched following the approval session with governments from around the world.

Professor Michelle Mycoo, an urban and regional planner and Professor in the Department of Geomatics Engineering and Land Management at The UWI St Augustine, is a Coordinating Lead Author on chapter 15 of the upcoming report, which focuses on the impacts, adaptation and vulnerability of small islands. In addition to Professor Mycoo, two other UWI scientists are also contributors. Dr Donovan Campbell, Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Geography and Geology at the Mona Campus, served as a Lead Author of chapter 15, and Dr Aidan Farrell, Senior Lecturer in Plant Physiology in the Department of Life Sciences at the St Augustine Campus, served as Lead Author for

chapter 5, which addresses the impacts and risks of food, fibre, and other ecosystem products.

“Universities play a unique role in helping increase the scientific understanding of the changing climate and its impacts. Providing the best scientific research to tackle this challenge has long been a priority for The UWI,” said Professor Mycoo. “The UWI has prioritised climate action on its strategic agenda and its scientists and climate experts are highly sought after globally.”

The small islands of the Caribbean region face some of the most severe impacts of climate change. These include rising sea levels, increasingly intense precipitation, drought, a higher frequency of more intense storms and hurricanes, and destructive flooding.

AR6-WG2 chapter 15 covers small island states spanning the Caribbean, the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The peoples of these parts of the world have been impacted by devastating tropical cyclones which affect their livelihoods, health, and well-being. Fragile ecosystems such as coral reefs have suffered damage due to ocean warming and acidification. The impacts on fisheries and tourism account for a significant decline in economic revenue. Low-lying coastal settlements, including Caribbean cities, major infrastructure and economic assets are exposed and at risk to flooding. In Small Island Developing States, people are already taking action to cope with climate change.

The ceremony for the launch of the IPCC Working Group II Sixth Assessment Report on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability is scheduled for the end of February 2022.

■ The chapter outline of the Working Group II contribution to **The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report** can be accessed at www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/03/AR6_WGII_outlines_P46.pdf

IPCC Experts on the Sixth Assessment Report of Working Group II from The University of the West Indies

Authors



Professor Michelle Mycoo

Professor Michelle Mycoo, Urban and Regional Planning specialist at the Department of Geomatics Engineering and Land Management in the Faculty of Engineering at The UWI, St. Augustine Campus, is a Coordinating Lead Author on the upcoming report and Chapter 15 on Small Islands. She is the first Caribbean woman to be a Coordinating Lead Author in the IPCC’s Working Group II. Her work is dedicated to pivotal interrelated issues such as land use planning, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, water management and integrated coastal zone planning. Her expertise and contributions in addressing real world developmental challenges have been recognised by the European Union; the Canadian International Development Research Centre; and the UK Department for International Development. The multiple award winning Professor, is also a renowned author. In addition to her internationally acclaimed co-authored book, *A Blue Urban Agenda: Adapting to Climate Change in the Coastal Cities of Caribbean and Pacific Small Island Developing States* written in 2017, Professor Mycoo has over 100 research outputs. She is well recognised regionally and internationally for her technical expertise, and serves on global committees such as the International Science Council, Future Earth Coasts, UNESCO and UN-Habitat. She has delivered over 50 keynote addresses, invited presentations, lectures, and panel discussion contributions globally.



Dr Donovan Campbell

Dr Donovan Campbell is a Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Geography and Geology at The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus. His research is focused on climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and food systems in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). He has expertise in the use of interdisciplinary approaches to explore the conditions that shape vulnerability and the capacity of communities to adapt to climate change. He is currently a Coordinating Lead Author for the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES): global assessment of the interlinkages among biodiversity, water, food, and health (nexus assessment). He is one of 25 global experts selected by the United Nations to lead the third cycle of the World Oceans Assessment (2021-2025). He is a Lead Author for Chapter 15 of the IPCC’s Sixth Assessment Report, and served in a similar capacity for the Special Report on Climate Change and Land (published in 2019). He is actively involved in several large-scale collaborative and transdisciplinary research initiatives focused on climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development across the Caribbean.



Dr Aidan Farrell

Dr Aidan Farrell is a Senior Lecturer in Plant Physiology, Department of Life Sciences at the St Augustine Campus. His research examines the mechanisms used by plants to grow and survive in a changing environment, and applies this understanding to help improve the sustainability and resilience of natural and agricultural systems. He also has a particular interest in the response of plants to abiotic factors such as temperature, nutrients and water stress. Dr Farrell served as a Lead Author on Chapter 5 for the upcoming Sixth Assessment Report of Working Group II, which addresses the impacts and risks of food, fibre, and other ecosystem products. He is also co-author among a global network of researchers who, in 2021, published the Global Stocktake of evidence on human adaptation to climate change in *Nature Climate Change Journal* for COP26.

Review Editors



Dr Michael Sutherland, Head of the Department of Geomatics Engineering and Land Management in the Faculty of Engineering at the St Augustine Campus served as a Review Editor to chapter 1, which covers the point of departure and key concepts of the Report. Also from the St Augustine Campus, **Professor John Agard**, from the Department of Life Sciences, who currently co-chairs the UN’s 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report, added his expertise as a Review Editor for chapter 15.

■ CAMPUS NEWS



Kelsie Joseph of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) Ignite! is the recipient of the 2022 Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) Undergraduate Social Action Award.

The Undergraduate Social Action Award is given annually to recognise students making a substantial contribution to improving the lives of women in society through activism. The SWS honoured her at their virtual awards ceremony on February 7.

Kelsie is an undergraduate student currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology, with minors in Gender and Development Studies, and Criminology. She is the co-founder of Cat Calls of UWI, a social media project of the IGDS Ignite! that highlights street harassment and gender-

based violence (GBV) through chalking, consciousness-raising, and outreach. She is also a member of Chalkback, a global network of organisations and groups challenging street harassment. Kelsie defines herself as a feminist activist committed to creating a gender-just world.

“This award is not mine but a win for the entire IGDS family!” said Kelsie. “Congratulations to all the lecturers, mentors, and Ignite! I also congratulate everyone who supported the Cat Calls project by volunteering and sharing their stories. I feel grateful for all the mentorship, guidance, and support.”

The IGDS Ignite! is a student-led, undergraduate feminist activist group at The UWI. Their work focuses on education, outreach and advocacy for gender and rights-based issues. It is a mentorship programme, designed to train future generations of students in Caribbean social justice advocacy and organising. Students are supported by the staff, graduate students and partners to develop their knowledge and skills to bridge academia and activism. Over the years, students have engaged in organising marches and fora, creating online campaigns, conducting student surveys, initiating popular activities in public spaces in relation to issues of gender and sexual violence, securing representation of gendered perspectives on student governance committees, and much more.

Kelsie said, “I started UWI wanting to pursue law and never imagined I would become a feminist activist. The IGDS has provided me with a safe space and community of folks that have transformed me in ways words can’t describe. It has connected me with a community of feminist activists from Chalkback.”

She plans on initiating an IGDS Ignite project to draw on the activities undertaken, and the lessons learned by students, and to use them as the basis for a peer-led pedagogical, online approach to Caribbean feminist activism.



@CATCALLSOFUWI

■ For the official announcement and more information on SWS, visit <https://socwomen.org/congratulations-to-the-2022-sws-undergraduate-social-action-award-winner-kelsie-joseph/>

Kelsie Joseph of IGDS Ignite! Wins 2022 Sociologists for Women in Society Award



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LITERATURE

A 30-YEAR REFLECTION ON GENDER IN THE CARIBBEAN

“I have always been an avid reader, attracted to the power of the word,” says Professor Patricia Mohammed. “I have never felt comfortable in front of a microphone or a large group. From childhood, the written word has spoken to me across centuries and societies.”

Mohammed, Emerita Professor of Gender and Cultural Studies at UWI St Augustine and a celebrated Caribbean feminist, has had an academic career heavily influenced by her love of reading, writing, history, and the visual arts. Her latest book, *Writing Gender into the Caribbean: Selected Essays 1988 to 2020*, spans three decades of research and ideas.

Writing Gender, published by Hansib Publications, is a collection of 21 essays selected from Professor Mohammed's writing and publishing. Most, she says, “were to be found in disparate journals or as chapters in books”.

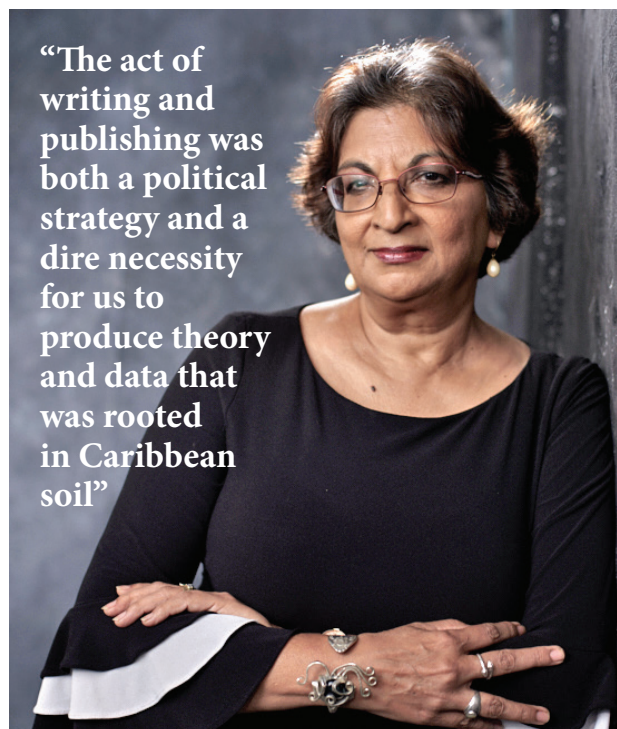
The book is very much a personal reflection on her work: “In 2019, I retired as Professor of Gender and Cultural Studies from The University of the West Indies, St Augustine. One of the first things one does after retirement is to evaluate what you have spent a lifetime doing – at least I did. The primary reason for bringing together this body of essays was to follow the trails of my own thoughts and to map the genealogy of my own writing on gender in the Caribbean.”

The essays selected are distributed over five different sections, each of which address a different theme. Section 1, “Originary Narratives and a Political Grammar for Caribbean Feminism”, progresses from early concerns with Caribbean feminism to a consideration of current questions that the movement and concepts now raise globally. Section 2, “Indo-Caribbean Feminist Intersections”, examines the symbolism of gender identities and performance of gender roles among the Indo-Caribbean descended populations, arguing that these establish different definitions of Caribbean womanhood and manhood.

“Section 3, ‘Inviting Masculinity,’” Professor Mohammed explains, “speaks to the ongoing dialogue with masculinity and men which Caribbean feminism engaged in from the outset of the second wave feminist moment. Two of the essays, ‘Sketches in a Biography of Eric Williams’, on the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, and ‘Drafting Gender Equality Frameworks’ a comparative reading of the films *The Harder They Come* and *Brokeback Mountain*, straddle disciplinary enquiry in order to allow a contemplation of the mind of the masculine rather than an attempt to prescribe masculinity.”

Section 4 includes essays that reflect on her fairly extensive work on gender policy in the Caribbean, including a chapter that provides a practical guide for those involved in creating gender equity policies or programmes. The final section, ‘Gender and Cultural Storytelling’, draws on music and the visual image, demonstrating, she says, “that our gender identities are inevitably and consistently bargained in and through culture”.

“The act of writing and publishing was both a political strategy and a dire necessity for us to produce theory and data that was rooted in Caribbean soil”



Professor Mohammed has been a feminist activist since 1979 and a professor since 2005. However, *Writing Gender* is more than a retrospective of her scholarly pursuits. It is also built on the interests that have driven her since childhood.

“I had a passion for history as a subject,” she recalls, “and had also read the novels of the Bronte sisters and Jane Austen for leisure and the earliest fiction writers from the Caribbean. I grew up devouring comic books before television took over from reading. Photography – writing with light – and the power of the visual to convey messages presented eloquent ways to generate ideas and information.”

For the book's cover she chose an 18th century painting by Agostino Brunias entitled *Free Women of Colour with Their Children and Servants in a Landscape*.

“The act of ‘writing’ for me has never been restricted to the alphabet. Starting from secondary education and continuing on to an academic career, writing and visual representation began to surface as a preferred method of communication. The academic space of knowledge-making and feminist activism were the prime gateways through which I would negotiate the politics of location, class, gender, ethnicity, and culture to find a voice,” she explains.

Writing and scholarship has been crucial to the rise of gender studies in the region, Prof Mohammed says. When she

began writing her masters’ thesis on Women and Education in Trinidad and Tobago for The UWI over four decades ago, the disciplinary area of gender studies did not exist. The last three decades of the 20th century, however, marked a founding moment for gender scholarship in the Caribbean.

“The act of writing and publishing was both a political strategy and a dire necessity for us to produce theory and data that was rooted in Caribbean soil,” she recounts. “My earliest colleagues in this fellowship, among them Jocelyn Massiah, Peggy Antrobus, Eudine Barribeau, Elsa Leo Rhynie, Rhoda Reddock, Barbara Bailey, Bridget Brereton, and many others, all knew that we had to lay claim to our home grown knowledge. We had been weaned on authors like Germaine Greer, Juliet Mitchell, Sheila Rowbotham, Simone De Beauvoir, bell hooks, Audrey Lorde, Toni Morrison – the list is long – who had inspired a generation of second wave feminists.”

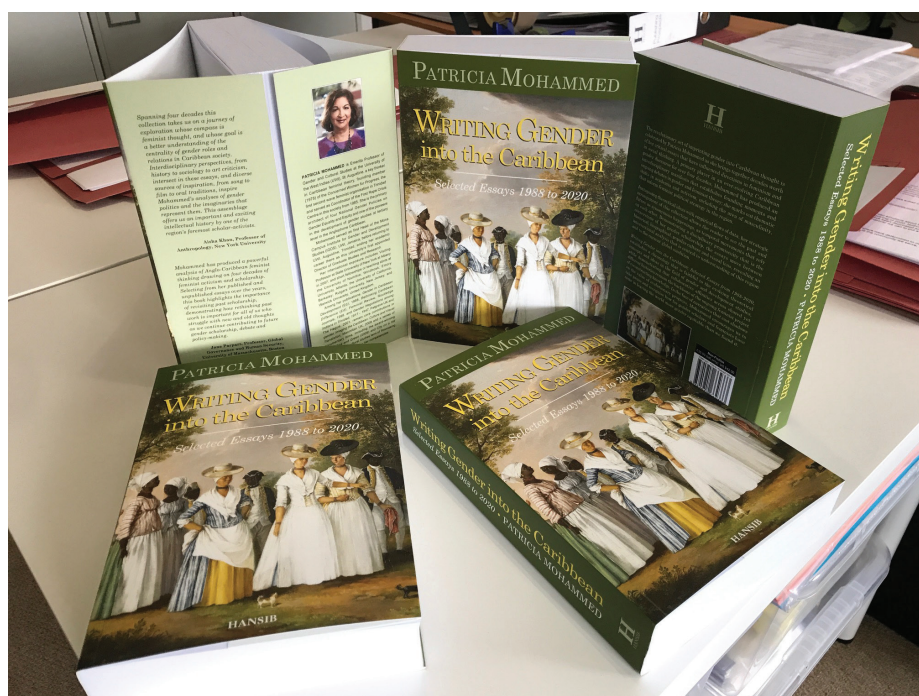
She recalls meeting British feminist Sheila Rowbotham while studying for her PhD in 1989 in the Netherlands and telling her that her book *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* had been inspirational and had encouraged her to process and write about the experience of the Caribbean women's movement from a first person perspective.

“She was a very approachable woman,” Professor Mohammed says. “She was delighted to find someone younger, from the other side of the world, who could relate to what she had written and said to me, ‘this is why I write, this makes my life and work worthwhile’. I have received such comments myself from many readers and it makes the often arduous act of writing an honourable one.”

Of her latest work, the Caribbean feminist says she wanted to produce an accessible text so that the interested reader throughout the region and the diaspora could easily grasp the etymology of concepts and ideas that shaped the discipline, and thus could continue to expand its scope.

Writing Gender has already received positive attention. In 2021, the Caribbean Studies Association conferred the Barbara T Christian Award to the book, describing it as a “masterpiece which will have lasting impact on Caribbean Studies” and “a pioneering book which centres both intersectionality and Caribbean American feminist/gender/queer analyses with extensive research, literary creativity and sensual intelligence”. “The book,” said the association, “possesses a respectful inclusivity of diversity, equity and advocacy for centring and grounding gender studies, development, affairs and spaces within the 21st century.”

Writing Gender into the Caribbean: Selected Essays 1988 to 2020 is available in Trinidad and Tobago at the UWI Bookshop and the Paper Based Bookshop at Normandie the Hotel, as well as online at <https://www.hansibpublications.com/> and as an eBook at Amazon.com



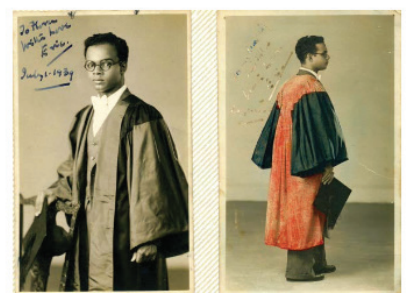
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The Williams clan, Eric third from left standing (circa 1939)



Oxford University Cricket Team (1933-1936) Eric Williams, second row at left with roommate L.A.V. Gobin, cross-legged at right



Eric Williams Graduation Photographs Oxford, 1939



Dr Eric Williams, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago 1962 - 1981

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Images of Dr Eric Williams in the new book.

PROFESSORIAL INAUGURAL LECTURE



Dynamic Tension

Professor Godfrey Steele reflects on 30 years of Human Communication at UWI St Augustine

BY KANISHA VINCENT

The study of Human Communication presents both opposing and complementary themes, identities, and processes.

In his Inaugural Professorial Lecture entitled “Human Communication Studies: What, Why, and How from a Caribbean Perspective”, Godfrey A. Steele, Professor of Human Communication Studies at UWI St Augustine, sought to explore this idea with his virtual audience on January 27, 2022.

Referencing several studies, Professor Steele defined human communication as “the study of the creation, exchange, and sharing of messages and meaning in human interactions”. The Human Communication discipline spans 49 sub-specialties some of which are now available for study at UWI St Augustine growing from four, of the possible two dozen, offered in 1999.

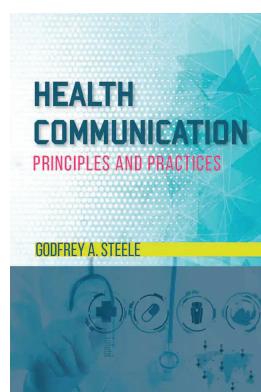
Human Communication courses and programmes were first established at UWI St Augustine in 1992. These were different from the programmes established at what he described as The UWI Mona School of Communication in their philosophical orientation and curriculum scope and design. Both programmes would go on to contribute to the Caribbean and global identity of communication studies, bridge the gap in Caribbean literature, and provide representation for Caribbean scholarship in the world literature on the subject.

Comparing Human Communication Studies to classical music, Professor Steele acknowledged that the local community has not yet accomplished what Mozart achieved. However, he said, “We are at a point that allows us to consider what has been accomplished, and how it might provide the creative momentum for our human communication field in the Caribbean to contribute to global scholarship.”

Having had seven tracks of human communication identified by the Association for Human Communication Studies in the Caribbean (AHCSC) at its second biennial conference in 2015, Professor Steele noted, “[W]e are beginning to make a modest contribution.”

Making his own contributions, Professor Steele has authored several books, book chapters, journal articles, conference papers, and teaching booklets and manuals. In these works, the theme of dynamic tension in telling the human communication story echoes the nature of Human Communication Studies itself.

Unfortunately, as Professor Steele pointed out, there is still some underlying tension within the discipline as it struggles with new dichotomies of where it should be philosophically located. Reminding his audience that the question, “Is it a humanities or social science discipline?” was long-settled, Steele pointed to newer questions relating to the discipline’s identity in the Anglophone Caribbean.



However, he also notes that there are more similarities than differences between these disciplines and other scientific disciplines. Reflecting on his career, which includes research, teaching and service in communication studies, human communication and health communication, Human Communication Studies is no stranger to combining ideas, often competing ones.

In this vein, he noted, “Trying to explore how Human Communication Studies is defined and developed can be challenging and even perplexing to the uninitiated. Theoretical opportunities for transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration are well documented, but the challenges of actual implementation are of equal, if not more, interest.”

Human Communication Studies continues to grow and expand. The programmes within it have since branched out to create other such programmes in various disciplines.

This is reflected in the views of the discipline endorsed by Professor Steele, particularly numbers 2 and 3: (1) communication can have a transformative impact on the social sciences; (2) the historical opposition between social sciences and humanities needs to be disrupted to allow for integration; and (3) interfaces between the humanities and social sciences could be mutually stimulating for both disciplines, as well as for the humanities and medical sciences.

In the past 30 years, Professor Steele has been integral to the introduction of various projects that have contributed to identification and development of communication study, teaching, and research, as well as the outreach needed.

Partnerships with institutions like the International Association for Business Communicators (IABC) Trinidad and Tobago Chapter, the formation of bodies such as the

Communication Studies Association (CSA) in 2005, and establishment of the Community Research Day (2007) at UWI St Augustine, just to name a few, are representations of the attempts to address the responsibility of and to Human Communication Studies in several forms.

Relatedly, Professor Steele brought attention to the fact that the triad of research, teaching and knowledge transfer to wider social partners in government, entrepreneurship, and non-governmental organisations is becoming more established.

From Student to Educator

In his lecture, Professor Steele emphasised that his early life – from his mother’s attentions to the contributions of his teachers in primary and Sunday School, all the way up to higher education – shaped him greatly and steered him through his later years.

Now a teacher himself, of his students he says, “I am very proud of them. They too are contributing to what we are doing, and this is part of the way [forward], because our eyes are on the future, and they will take us forward.”

Closing with a comparison of the Caribbean perspective then and now on the subject, he cited his most recent book, *Communication, Culture and Conflict* (2021), as well as the ongoing project the Human Communication Scholarship Database, Book and Documentary Film (2019-2022) as centralised hubs of information on Human Communication Studies within the Caribbean. For more on these, check out the article in our December issue at <https://sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/article6.asp>.

He stated, “The human communication tradition and legacy, which began in business communication (1992) and from health communication (1995), communication studies (1999) and human communication studies (2009) to now, is a reputable brand that we have nurtured and built that deserves to be sustained and resourced.” One possible way of doing so is through the formal establishment of a UWI St Augustine School of Communication and Media, he suggested.

Human Communication Studies is an amalgamation of many things, but probably most notably, it seeks to understand how people create, exchange and share messages and meaning in every context and how the study of human communication relates to our own humanity and as Steele noted, its work is far from finished.

■ To view Professor Steele’s lecture, visit The UWI St Augustine YouTube page at <https://youtu.be/N0Tksimo5DY>

■ OUR PEOPLE

“The university library is the most important intellectual resource of the academic community,” wrote **Dr Alma Jordan, Campus and University Librarian.**

Her words come from a contribution she made to a 1974 publication, *Overseas Universities: Special Issue on Libraries*. Titled, quite dryly, “Trinidad’s University Library”, she gives a comprehensive report of the rise of library and information services at The UWI. She gives the reader enormous detail on the library at UWI St Augustine – its development over the years, its total floor area (47,664 square feet on the modular plane), the layout of its collections, its seating in the study areas (over 400 seats), and even the colour of the walls (a natural grey finish).

She writes with great precision, remarkably free of emotion, and without self-promotion. The one detail Dr Jordan leaves out, however, is her own pivotal role in the library she describes. There is no way to overestimate how important Alma Jordan has been to the library system that The UWI enjoys today. Today, the “Trinidad University Library” she described so meticulously is the Alma Jordan Library (AJL).

Jordan, who passed away in late January, was a pioneer in Caribbean library science, and instrumental in the development of The Alma Jordan Library and The UWI library system, and the National Library and Information System (NALIS) Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

Friend and colleague, Dr Shamin Renwick said Jordan’s era spanned more than 40 years from the 1960s to early 2000s and noted that Jordan’s work remains relevant. “She influences all of our work [at UWI]. She generated the system; generated the building [main library] and fostered the appreciation of the libraries. Things have changed over the years, but she continued to be an influence even after retirement. Once you become a librarian in T&T or even in the Caribbean, you learn the name of Dr Jordan,” said Renwick, a senior librarian in the School of Education.

Always First

Born in Tunapuna in 1929, Jordan attended St Joseph’s Convent, Port-of-Spain where she has since been inducted into the Hall of Excellence. After completing her BA in Spanish at London University, Jordan continued on to Columbia University eventually earning a PhD in Library Science in 1966 – the first person in the English-speaking Caribbean to do so.

According to Renwick, Jordan was “always first”. Among Jordan’s firsts are serving a first Campus Librarian at St Augustine (from 1960 onwards); then as first University Librarian from 1982 until her retirement in 1989. She was also a founding member

of two important organisations, the Library Association of Trinidad and Tobago (LATT) and the Association of Caribbean University, Research and Institutional Libraries (ACURIL). Jordan was also an author who published numerous articles and books on librarianship. Moreover, she served on several boards and committees such as the Journal of Library History, and the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials. For these many accomplishments and her commitment to public service, Jordan was awarded the Hummingbird Medal (Gold) in 1989.

Namesake

Perhaps Jordan’s greatest career feat, however, was establishing the Main Library at St Augustine. Maureen Henry, former Deputy Campus Librarian and colleague of Jordan, noted that the library had very humble beginnings:

“When I started [in 1963], it was just a small library on one floor with a few hundred books. One of [Jordan’s] greatest accomplishments was moving the library from what it was – from just a few hundred books on one floor of a building – to four floors and subject subdivisions in the JFK compound. A lot of libraries in the Caribbean took an example from what she did there.”

The Alma Jordan Library was constructed using a grant from the US government through a process that Jordan was heavily involved in, overseeing construction, reclassification and acquisition of volumes. Completed in 1970, the Alma Jordan Library is now the central library in a network of over 10 satellite and affiliate libraries on the St Augustine Campus. The other libraries in the network include the Medical Sciences Library, the School of Education Library, the Norman Girvan Library at the Institute of International Relations, the library at the Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business, the Seismic Research Centre, and Centre for Language Learning libraries. There is also the Festival Library and Cultural Resource Centre, the library of the National Herbarium of Trinidad and Tobago, the Patience-Theunissen Memorial Library located at Mount Saint Benedict, and the library at the UWI-ROYTEC School of Business and Applied Studies.

The Alma Jordan Library is the largest in this network, housing more than 430,000 books and e-books, 57,000 e-journal subscriptions, and access to over 200 databases. Its subdivisions include Food and Agriculture, Law, Science and Technology, Engineering, Humanities and Education, Social Sciences and the prized possession, West Indiana and Special Collections. West Indiana is home to a wide-range of Caribbean raw, source materials with 150 special collections including the London Society of West India Planters and Merchants minutes and books, and three United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Memory of the World Registers – the private collections of Dr Eric Williams, CLR James and Derek Walcott.

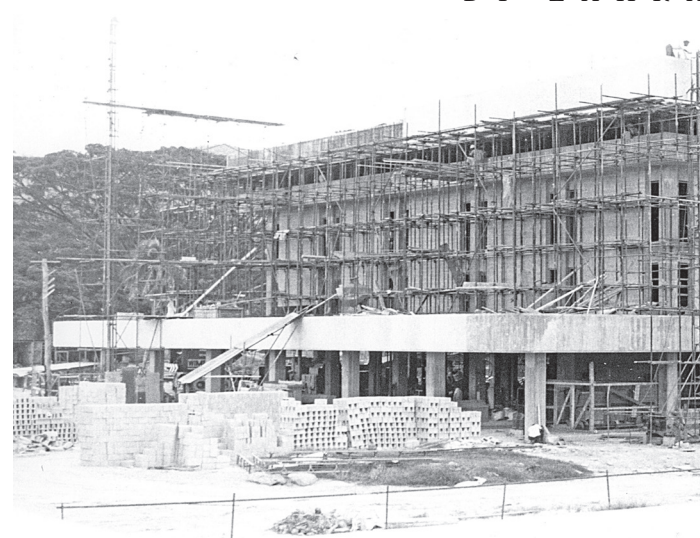
“[Dr Jordan] was instrumental in getting the Eric Williams collection of books, papers and memorabilia to be held on deposit in the St Augustine campus library because she had the



Keeper of

*Dr Alma Jordan, first UWI St Augustine
Caribbean pioneer in library and*

BY ZAHRA



confidence of Dr Williams’ daughter, Erica Williams-Connell, and that was a major achievement. His whole library is lodged at our campus library,” said Henry, who added that this acquisition was of particular importance. “He was our first prime minister and a globally respected scholar, and it’s important for anything related to him to be held at his home base rather than a foreign place.”

The Eric Williams collection was made available globally in March on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his death through the hosting of a virtual exhibit curated in partnership with the University of Texas. The push for continued technological advancement is yet another aspect of Jordan’s legacy as she introduced the first computerised library system to UWI shortly before retiring in 1989. Since then, many innovations have been made such as the introduction of the Digital Library Services Center in 2008 and the launch of UWILinC in 2011. UWILinC is



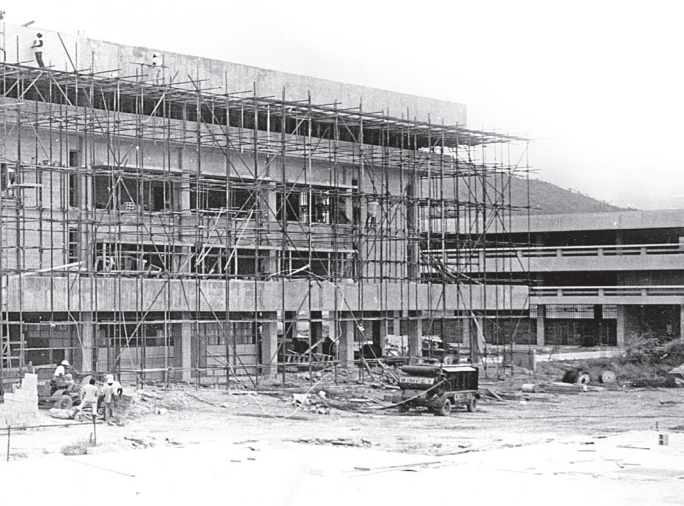
[Dr Jordan] was instrumental in getting the Eric Williams collection of books, papers and memorabilia to be held on deposit in the St Augustine campus library because she had the confidence of Dr Williams’ daughter, Erica Williams-Connell, and that was a major achievement.



the Trove

*Augustine and University Librarian,
and information services, passes on*

A G O R D O N



a digital platform that allows users to search for information in libraries throughout the region. It was also in 2011 that the library was named after Dr Jordan on The UWI's 50th anniversary.

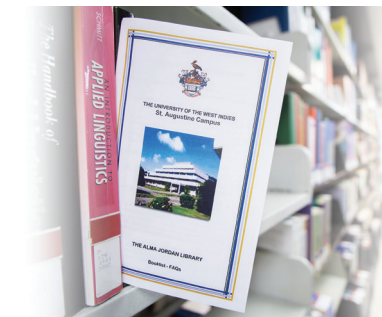
Studios and Strict

When speaking to Dr Jordan's former colleagues and friends, two things are bound to come up: her strictness, and her love for education. Though Jordan was described as uncompromising in her commitment to high standards in academia and customer service, she was similarly known for encouraging her staff, friends and family to push themselves to do and be their best.

As Henry put it, "She was very pleasant. Strict, but pleasant." Henry started at the library as a library assistant and moved her way up the ranks, becoming a Fellow of the Library Association



A little-known fact about Jordan is that in addition to librarianship, she was also an accomplished musician with a musical performance diploma from the Royal Academy of Music. Her instrument of choice was the piano.



(Great Britain) and head of the Technical Services Division with Jordan's support. "Working with her was quite interesting and I think I achieved quite a lot having worked with her. Her watchwords were discipline, production, and perfection. And she set an example and expected it of her staff. It was not always easy because you had to keep on the right path, do the right thing. She was very meticulous and expected you to be the same, especially if you were in charge of staff or a section or division. You had to live up to her expectations," added Henry.

Renwick, who attended ACURIL conferences with Jordan, fondly remembers the mentoring she received when planning conferences, applying for fellowship status, and even help with ideas for a PhD proposal. "She was someone you could run things by, get background from, a person you could go to learn how to handle and manage matters, or whom to speak with. She was very knowledgeable of protocol and, coming out of the colonial system, was very strict about protocol. But she was also charming, witty and graceful," said Renwick.

Renwick described Jordan as a brilliant scholar. "I've heard from campus people that when Dr Jordan stood up to speak, [campus] principals sat down and listened. That was the nature of the person."

Dr Simone Primus, Faculty Liaison Librarian of the Engineering division at the Alma Jordan Library, actually grew up at the library. Primus' mother worked at the library with Jordan, and Primus spent many afternoons reading in the stacks after school. Jordan was Primus' godmother who could be intimidating but also quite nurturing.

"She was always so very charming and hospitable. One of my favourite things growing up was to go and have tea with Nen [short for "nennen", a term for godmother]. She loved to bake and she always had a nice spread. I'll always remember the tea

and fine china. She had a lot of fruit trees and flowers, and was always sharing. She'd let you go outside and pick as much fruit as you wanted," shared Primus.

A little-known fact about Jordan is that in addition to librarianship, she was also an accomplished musician with a musical performance diploma from the Royal Academy of Music. Her instrument of choice was the piano. Primus remembers her expert playing vividly. "As a child, I was a bit afraid of my godmother. She was tall and had a powerful voice and presence, and she could be strict so I was a little fearful of her, a little apprehensive. She loved the piano, loved music and played the piano very well. And I used to take piano lessons, and every time I visited, she'd want me to play for her on her big, fancy grand piano, and I was just learning so that was very daunting but of course, she was very encouraging. She was serious, but she was also nurturing and always interested to hear what I had to say and my stories," said Primus.

After Primus completed her education, their relationship changed. "She always believed in studies and education and trying to better yourself. We would talk about things like that and what I wanted to do and become and, if I was dissatisfied with work, she would try to give me advice."

Although Primus is now a librarian, she doesn't see herself or anyone else soon, taking Jordan's place. "I don't think I'd ever be able to follow in her footsteps because her shoes are mighty big. The legacy of the Alma Jordan, her contribution to NALIS. The drive, the energy is really something to emulate and to be in awe of."

Zahra Gordon is a poet, freelance writer and communications lecturer.

The one detail Dr Jordan leaves out, however, is her own pivotal role in the library she describes. There is no way to overestimate how important Alma Jordan has been to the library system that The UWI enjoys today. Today, the "Trinidad University Library" she described so meticulously is the Alma Jordan Library (AJL).



GLOBAL AFFAIRS



A Reflection of Ourselves

Solar geoengineering can deflect from climate control efforts, say scientists

BY VANEISA BAKSH

Broadly speaking, geoengineering is a term used to describe a variety of technologies aimed at manipulating the Earth's natural systems on a large scale to counteract climate change.

Solar geoengineering controversially seeks to use a series of methods that essentially attempt to reflect some of the sun's rays back into the stratosphere, thus limiting its warming effect.

One proposal is to inject minuscule reflective particles into the stratosphere—like spraying an aerosol—using airplanes or balloon-type devices. It is based on the known cooling effect of volcanic eruptions on climate systems. Already, the recent eruption in Tonga has invoked predictions of a reduction in temperatures over the next few years.

Other ideas include marine cloud brightening to reflect more sunlight back into space; cirrus cloud thinning, thereby reducing their capacity to trap more heat; and space mirrors strategically placed to reflect sunlight away from the planet.

Sounds like science fiction, doesn't it? The difference is that there is no way to script the outcomes, and the probability of unintended consequences is remarkably high.

So high, that a group of scientists and other experts on the governance implications—political and environmental—have come together to call for an "International Non-Use Agreement on Solar Geoengineering."

The call, issued as part of an academic paper compiled by 19 members of this coalition, was published on January 17, 2022, as an open letter, and carried the signatures of 63

scientific supporters. The lead author of the paper is Professor of Global Sustainability Governance, Frank Biermann, of the Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development at Utrecht University in The Netherlands. It is a demand for "immediate political action from governments, the United Nations, and other actors to prevent the normalisation of solar geoengineering as a climate policy option".

It is a compelling document, raising what they consider to be three "fundamental concerns" regarding the increase in proposals for pursuing this fledgling technology.

Their first argument deals with the ambiguity surrounding the risks. "Impacts will vary across regions, and there are uncertainties about the effects on weather patterns, agriculture, and the provision of basic needs of food and water."

The second is perhaps the most sobering of the treatise, dealing not so much with the science, but the political implications. They warn that pinning hopes on the success and availability of these technologies threaten commitments to mitigation of global warming.

"The speculative possibility of future solar geoengineering risks becoming a powerful argument for industry lobbyists, climate denialists, and some governments to delay decarbonisation policies," they warn.

It is not an idle warning, nor is it an alarmist position. With the recent COP26 just a few months ago, the evidence of political manipulation and reluctance to implement pledges made over previous summits of that nature provide ample evidence that, given a chance to slide away from

actively pursuing carbon emission reduction policies, the majority of nations—especially the biggest offenders—will. Dr Hugh Sealy, an environmental scientist at Cave Hill, who has attended several of these summits, knows how politics influences outcomes, but he does not think the likelihood of investment into the technology is strong. "I sit on the CDR Forum, which is an informal international group looking at carbon dioxide removal (CDR) technologies. Solar geoengineering or solar radiation management is failing to gain credibility."

The coalition's third point is that "the current global governance system is unfit to develop and implement the far-reaching agreements needed to maintain fair, inclusive, and effective political control over solar geoengineering deployment. The United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Environment Programme or the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are all incapable of guaranteeing equitable and effective multilateral control over deployment of solar geoengineering technologies at planetary scale. The United Nations Security Council, dominated by only five countries with veto power, lacks the global legitimacy that would be required to effectively regulate solar geoengineering deployment."

Having laid out their concerns, they identified five core measures for which they would like governmental action.

1. The commitment to prohibit their national funding agencies from supporting the development of technologies for solar geoengineering, domestically and through international institutions.

Dr Michelle Scobie



"For me, it is particularly necessary that smaller, less-resourced states, like those of CARICOM, should be fully informed about the development and impacts of the technologies, and contribute to decisions on how these technologies should be developed and deployed."

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

2. The commitment to ban outdoor experiments of solar geoengineering technologies in areas under their jurisdiction.
3. The commitment to not grant patent rights for technologies for solar geoengineering, including supporting technologies such as for the retrofitting of airplanes for aerosol injections.
4. The commitment to not deploy technologies for solar geoengineering if developed by third parties.
5. The commitment to object to future institutionalisation of planetary solar geoengineering as a policy option in relevant international institutions, including assessments by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

They make it clear that the intent is not to “prohibit atmospheric or climate research as such,” neither would it place “broad limitations on academic freedom.” The focus would be “solely on a specific set of measures targeted purely at restricting the development of solar geoengineering technologies under the jurisdiction of the parties to the agreement.”

Their paper and their call has stimulated a fierce debate over several issues. Many of the arguments focused on labelling it as “undemocratic” and “illiberal”—echoing the tone of those complaining about pandemic restrictions and mandatory vaccines.

One voice that surfaced on January 26 was that of Holly Buck, writing an opinion piece for the online MIT Technology Review under the heading, “We can’t afford to stop solar geoengineering research”. Questioning the distinction between research and development or deployment, Buck seems to go along with the reasonable nature of the concerns, but points to the dangers of making “research unpalatable”, saying that the result of making it unattractive for “any serious research groups” to proceed given the “intense social pressure” might further increase the risks of unethical use. It won’t mean that such research will end, she said, but that “it means that researchers who care about openness and transparency might stop their activities, and the ones who continue might be less responsive to public concerns.”

Funding will continue from those who don’t care about public opinion, like “private actors or militaries—and we might not hear about all the findings. Autocratic regimes would be able to take the lead; we might have to rely on their expertise in the future if we’re not successful in phasing out fossil fuels. And scientists in developing countries—already disadvantaged in terms of participating in this research—may be even less able to do so if international institutions and philanthropies are not providing funds.”

But she falls back on one of the points the academics had raised as a source of concern: the question of regulation. She suggests that “national funding agencies can structure research programmes to examine the potential risks and benefits in a comprehensive way, making sure to give full



attention to everything that could go wrong”.

I contacted Professor Biermann for his comment on this opinion. He had already posted his response. Welcoming her more reasoned response, he countered that, “The key problem is not governance of research but governance of deployment. If one has no acceptable vision for the latter, even the most reflexive and well-considered research governance will not save the day. More than eighty percent of humanity live in the Global South; it follows that countries in the Global South would need to have effective control over any deployment of solar geoengineering. Would the US Senate agree to this?”

Noting that the real world of “capitalism and global power structures is different” from the scientific world, he raised the issue that one “group of powerful actors”, those heavily invested in fossil fuels, would benefit most from extra time to exploit coal, oil, and gas.

“As long as there is no clear scenario for sustained long-run global governance of solar geoengineering deployment in a fair and inclusive manner, research to develop solar geoengineering technologies is playing with fire. Solar geoengineering researchers are well-intentioned, and they deserve respect. They also declare themselves to be opposed to deployment at this stage. Yet their personal views on eventual deployment will become irrelevant once

the technology exists. They engage in a highly risky project that they will not be able to control and master. Eventually, other powerful actors will take over. At present, the genie is still in the bottle. Don’t let it out,” he ended.

Among the academics contributing to the initial article, was Dr Michelle Scobie, a senior lecturer in International Law at the Institute of International Relations at the St Augustine Campus of The UWI. Given the estimate that 80 percent of humanity lives in the geographical area known as the Global South, her knowledge was vital in the preparation of the document. Scobie is a global environmental governance scholar, one of a very few in the Caribbean, who has been researching and presenting “perspectives on international relations and environmental governance,” many of which, she says, “revolve around the intersection of small states, international affairs, environment, justice and development”. She has discussed this in her 2019 book, *Global Environmental Governance and Small States: Architectures and Agency in the Caribbean*.

“I am part of the writing team for this piece because of my concern that these new SRM [solar radiation management or modification] technologies—that have global repercussions well beyond the states wherein they are developed—should be done fairly and equitably. At present, the well-intentioned scientists and a small minority of states are moving forward with research and deployment plans without consulting with most of the planet. This cannot be fair. One of the key principles of environmental law and governance is that prior informed consent is needed from stakeholders before technologies or materials that may be potentially harmful are introduced into local spaces,” she said. “For me, it is particularly necessary that smaller, less-resourced states, like those of CARICOM, should be fully informed about the development and impacts of the technologies, and contribute to decisions on how these technologies should be developed and deployed.”

She hones in on the necessity for protection of the rights of those who have been traditionally most affected, but least consulted on global decisions.

“At present, there are no governance frameworks or forums for global oversight of SRM. The article we jointly prepared inter-alia throws light on this serious problem. It is a problem with the global governance of the environment that I have called attention to, also in other areas of my research over the years.”

The team believes that investments can be more usefully made in helping nations to reduce carbon emissions. It is a critical aspect of the planet’s quest for survival, and they say that solar geoengineering is not necessary at this point. Like the mirrors proposed to deflect the sun’s rays, it avoids treating the causes of global warming, and may simply mask the effect of greenhouse gas emissions until it is too late.

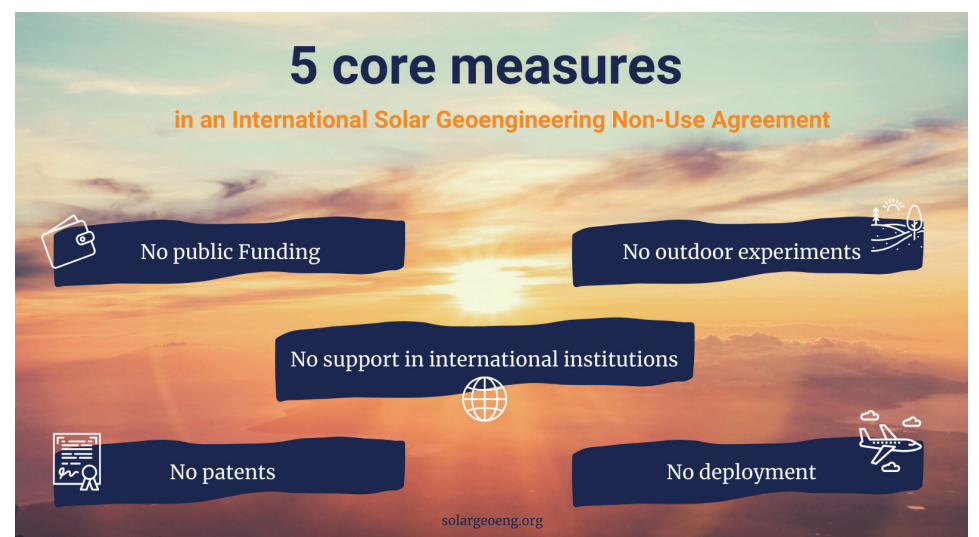
Vaneisa Baksh is an editor and writer.



Solar geoengineering is not necessary. Neither is it desirable, ethical, or politically governable. The normalization of solar geoengineering as a research topic and a speculative policy option must be stopped.

PROF. FRANK BIERMANN
PROFESSOR OF GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY
GOVERNANCE, COPERNICUS INSTITUTE OF
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,
UTRECHT UNIVERSITY
THE NETHERLANDS

Sign the Open Letter
solargeoeng.org



■ OUR CAMPUS



Dr LeRoy Hill

The Educator's Educator

Dr LeRoy, CETL's new director, has an ambitious plan to energise teaching and learning in higher education

BY SABRINA VAILLOO

In September 2021, Dr LeRoy Hill was appointed Director of the Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at The UWI St Augustine. It is an opportunity for which he is grateful – a chance to give back to The UWI and to the Caribbean.

"I pride myself in indigenous perspectives and approaches, and I think this is an opportunity for me to ensure I give my all," he says.

Dr LeRoy Hill was raised in Massacre, a village on the eastern coast of Dominica. At age 11, he moved with his family to Anguilla, and finally to East End Sea Feathers, which he calls home. His French first name and English surname, which together can be loosely translated as "the King of the Hill", belies his unassuming manner. Together with his wife, he has three adult children. The couple met in college and have been married for 26 years.

CETL, previously called the Instructional Development Unit (IDU), is an institution for inspired tertiary-level educators to grow in teaching excellence, and train in curriculum design and learning technologies. Established in 1996, its solely internal services were made available to The UWI lecturers and tutors, and imparts best practices of teaching and learning. Today, Dr LeRoy Hill serves as the Centre's fourth director and is preceded by Ms Betty Rohlehr, Dr Anna-May Edwards Henry and Dr Margo Burns in the same post.

Although the Centre has run strictly remote events for the last two years, this has not diminished the prestige of CETL's Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) programme, which consists of four courses and is now offered as a fully online programme.

The Centre also has three internal awards that acknowledge and incentivise educator accomplishment: CUTL Awards, the SECL Star Awards, and The UWI/Guardian Group Premium Teaching Awards.

Before Dr Hill's passion for learning design delivered him to Trinidad and Tobago, he served as the Dean of Studies and then Acting President at the Anguilla Community College in Anguilla. In 2003, he began work on his Master's in Instructional Design and Technology at Virginia Tech, and on completion of his PhD in Learning Design from the University



Wendel Abel, Professor of Mental Health Policy and Head of the Department of Community Health and Psychiatry, Faculty of Medical Sciences at UWI Mona gives his 2019 lecture at the UWI/Guardian Group Premium Open Lecture Series.

of Nottingham, Hill relocated to Trinidad to take up the post of Dean of Distance Education at the University of Southern Caribbean (USC).

After fulfilling a promise to give back four years at USC, Hill saw a vacancy ad and replied despite having already shipped personal belongings back to Anguilla in anticipation of a return home. "I didn't see myself as a Dean from an academic standpoint," he said, so he branched off into online teaching excellence, learning design, and instructional design, where he "gravitated much more to learner-centred approaches". Hill

knew he didn't want to leave the Caribbean. "I really wanted something that would value the area that I was interested in, which was in learning design, and something that would fit within that. CETL – the work from CETL – fits within that nicely in terms of excellence in teaching and learning."

That it was Hill's second choice of career did not dull his fascination with the field of education. Early on, availing himself of Holland's Self-Directed Search, (a career assessment and exploration tool that matches your aspirations, activities, and talents to the career choices and educational opportunities that fit best) helped inform his decision-making. "I have not regretted it. I never saw myself as an attorney anyway... When I started teaching in 1995, it really solidified it for me."

He reflected on the gateway moments advancing him through his discipline and found that he was drawn to a technology-enhanced mode. This was heavily influenced by *The Children's Machine: Rethinking School in the Age of the Computer* (1994) by Seymour Papert, which treats rethinking education in the information age.

Papert's scientific work in *Mindstorms: Children, Computers, And Powerful Ideas* (1980) also greatly influenced Hill's secondary-level teaching so much so that in 2003, he "experimented in designing a learning management system (LMS), which I eventually called Classnotes.ai, a port of Moodle," (an open-source LMS). "I installed a port of Moodle for the students, and I was amazed how well it was accepted. And because I love games, I found that was a way to draw persons in. Some students, who were not in my class, would actually come into the system to take part in the games and leave their scores." This was "quite an interesting revelation" for Hill, because it validated the theory of "distributed cognition" – simply put, "that teaching and learning did not have to be defined within the four walls of the classroom."

When it comes to students with different learning preferences and challenges, Hill has insider insight, as he candidly admitted to being a stammerer – an aspect, however, not immediately evident. Hill's work is nuanced with a sensitivity and an awareness that lends itself naturally to the field of teaching and learning science. It's foremost about putting oneself in the shoes of others, notably teaching staff

■ OUR CAMPUS

and students. And the approach to his work is a perfect juncture of community-mindedness and sociocultural theory in context. “You can’t just take something in one person’s context and put it in another’s, without giving it careful consideration of the sociocultural context, and that’s why I gravitate towards Activity Theory, which is really just a Vygotskian approach of looking at socio-cultural learning and how we interact with our community, how we interact with learning tools within a culturally mediated activity system.”

The UWI had practised blended learning since 2012, and when the pandemic arrived, teaching and learning wasn’t entirely sideswiped. The classroom has now evolved with “greater focus on deepening student engagement and rethinking the traditional assessment processes that may not necessarily be fitting for our context, and our context right now is remote teaching. It allows us to think carefully about what quality looks like in the remote teaching setting,” Hill said.

He’s noted that campus educators want to be impactful in their classroom, and many have reached out to CETL for guidance. A number of assessment workshops have been planned to meet the demand, and among them is training on the myeLearning online learning environment, specifically tailored for The UWI STA campus. Capacity-building activities will also include faculty development sessions and office hours sessions. On the agenda for CETL, Hill hopes to implement faculty-led sessions to showcase and evaluate particular tools or strategies within informal small group settings.

For Hill, it’s sacrosanct to continue the legacy of the work already accomplished at CETL, which includes that of the late Dr Margo Burns, the Centre’s previous director from 2016 to 2020. Dr Burns held a PhD in Instructional Design from Northern Illinois University. She received numerous awards for teaching, educational development and instructional design.

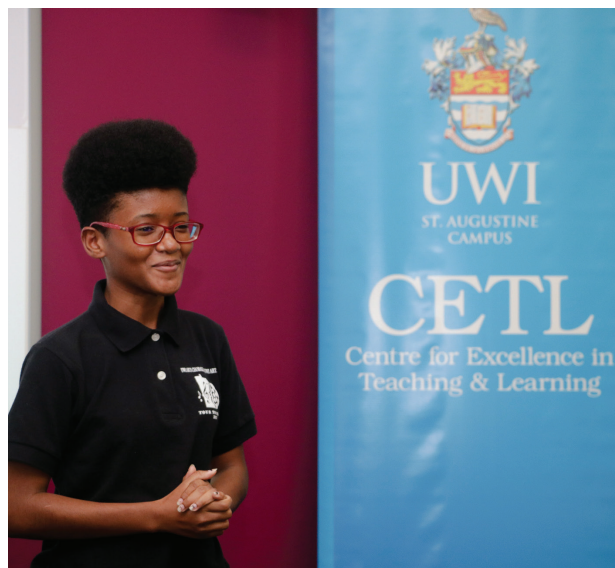
Hill’s vision for the CUTL programme is to offer it externally, which will include other tertiary-level educators. He also aims to strengthen CUTL’s international appeal.

“By mapping it to the internationally recognised Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowship programme, it means that when someone exits the CUTL programme, she would automatically be a fellow within the HEA. That is something that will deepen the value for CUTL, but at the same time create a level of awareness and a commitment to teaching excellence from an international standpoint.”

Moving beyond workshops and seminars, CETL will offer mentoring and coaching, as well as grow its online presence. He understands how crucial it is to remain connected with the people CETL serves, and offering multiple pathways of support is in the works. Additionally, he wants to improve efficiency, and plans to “collaborate with Campus Information Technology Services (CITS) on innovating an on-demand database” that can be shared with different internal stakeholders. He affirms that taking this data-driven approach will be more compelling evidence for the Centre’s success and for the necessity of teaching and learning excellence than what webinars could achieve alone.



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Part of the plan to improve student outcomes is to “form fit” myeLearning and to provide faculty members, who are not trained instructional designers, with a learning environment that suits the needs of their students. Educators will benefit from “a well-designed course space environment” instead of “an empty course shell and tell them go teach”. This environment will map the elements of a physical classroom and translate them accordingly to the virtual space in an intuitive way.

Because he values data-driven approaches, Dr Hill actively collects information and seeks out various stakeholders. In line with this, he will be meeting soon with the Student Guild “to

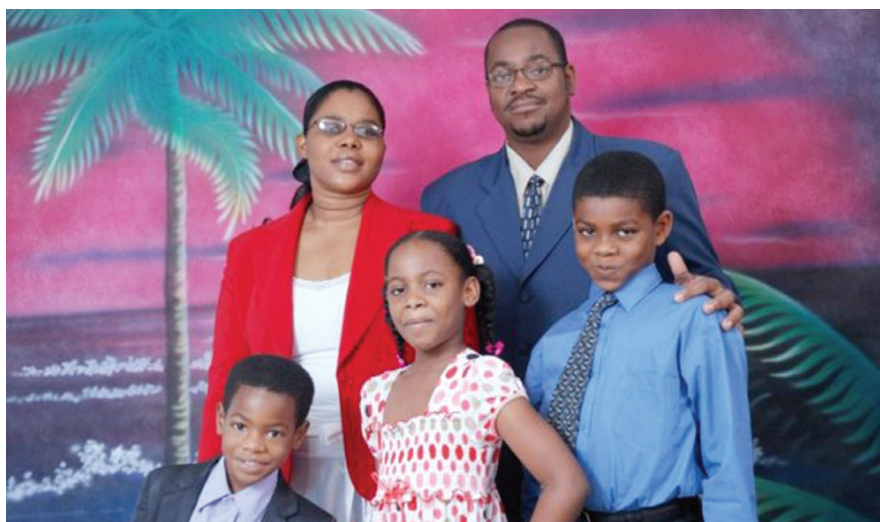
lead us towards having those conversations about what their experience has been like”.

Hill spoke about the redefinition that has taken place regarding the concept of work, that is which work is done, which methods are used to complete work, where work is done and when work is done. “I think I have a clear understanding of who digital nomads are,” he said, referring to the way people can be on the move due to near-ubiquitous access to internet-ready technological tools. “There are not just digital nomads in academia but also in the workplace.”

The new Director promotes an open-door policy, integral to his leadership practice. “This allows me the opportunity to build consensus, particularly in this setting where I’m learning the organisational culture.” Dr Hill’s openness extends to his colleagues, and he values using modern technological tools to keep him and his peers connected and up to date.

As Director of CETL, corporate social responsibility is not just another item on a checklist for Dr Hill – his community-mindedness is rooted in his identity as a small islander and a desire to give back. Dr Hill is always keen for a challenge and having the chance to solve problems on the job is a thrill. “The more challenges I have, the more opportunities I have to wake up in the morning and be excited about what I’m going to do that day.” While he might have elicited the title of “overachiever”, he prefers to think of himself as simply hardworking, and aiming for balance, even while he’s taking over the world, one problem at a time.

■ Dr Hill hosts “Let’s Talk eLearning”, a podcast series for tips on eLearning and distance education. To learn more, listen on Apple Podcasts or Audible, and visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/cetl/>



Dr Hill in an older photo with his family. From left are youngest son Orlando, wife Felicia, daughter Leeicia, and eldest son Odarie. “They are now all adults,” he laughs, speaking of his children.



Dr Hill at a second graduation exercise of the Anguilla Community College. Pictured as well are Ms Rhona Richardson-Roydon (centre), Chair of the college’s Board of Governors, and a student, Ms Sierre Richardson.

■ EDUCATION

When I was a child, my mother would often leave books strategically open on exciting pages for me to “stumble across” in an attempt to encourage me to read more fluently. Throughout my early school years, I sometimes struggled because of my mental health, but the love for reading that was nurtured by my parents was a solid foundation for me to build upon.

Science Digest described the remarkable human ability to read this way: “In an instant, your eyes and mind are playing hunches, cutting corners, filling gaps, and dealing with an information processing task that would challenge the most ingenious computer.”

Not all children have the privilege of experiencing such encounters with the written word in their early formative years. According to Dr Paulson Skerrit, who worked with the team that now serves as the Operating Committee to develop the Psychoeducational Diagnostic and Intervention Clinic (PEDIC), and who has been instrumental in the formation of the Reading Clinic at PEDIC; those who have had “positive pre-primary literacy experiences” (like being read to by parents with a positive attitude towards reading and a number of years of pre-primary school education) tend to have stronger literacy development.

With the COVID-19 pandemic widening the gap of social inequality, it has been stated that “more than 100 million children are falling behind the minimum proficiency level in reading, due to COVID-related school closures” (UNESCO, March 2021). In a world that is increasingly digital, students who have access to resources such as digital literacies, reliable devices, and steady internet are at an advantage. PEDIC has looked into the effect of “reading loss” during extended school closure, and found that lower income students are more affected by being out of school and not having the home resources to support their literacy development. In response to this, PEDIC, with its highly qualified lead interventionist, Dr Sabrina McMillan-Solomon, rolled out the university-based Reading Clinic to offer reading consultancy, assessment and intervention services.

Explaining the importance of supporting students with interventions such as the Reading Clinic, Dr Skerrit says, “My expertise lies in two areas. One has to do with reading and the teaching of literacy, and I’ve



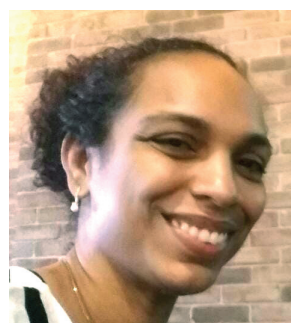
PEDIC Reading Clinic

Helping children develop their capabilities with the written word

BY AMY LIBAKSH



Dr Paulson Skerrit



Dr Sabrina McMillan-Solomon

also worked with Deaf students, particularly in the area of reading. This is because reading has been a crisis in Trinidad and Tobago, as in many other countries.”

He stresses that “literacy issues are not unique to Trinidad and Tobago”, and while we have introduced some evidence-based initiatives, our education system still has a way to go with how it manages students in unique situations.

“Students are unique social beings,” he explains, “so there are different factors that are going to influence their achievement.” And their instructional needs vary.

“Talking with teachers in the school system, they indicate that we have alarming levels of children who cannot read or who are struggling with reading,” he says.

Across the world, those who fall behind in literacy are predominantly from more marginalised communities, who tend to have less resources and support. This includes students with disabilities and those from low income households.

He says, “when we started PEDIC, we found that many of the underserved, many of the marginalised students who were struggling, did not have access to quality assessment. So PEDIC provides that at a lower cost than private institutions. We provide a range of assessments, for example for dyslexia screeners, as well as for cases involving neurodivergence like autism or ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).”

Dr Skerrit began his journey into the world of education with a Bachelor of Education in Primary Education — Special Needs Education, and went on to do a Master of Science in Teacher Education — Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. He followed this with a PhD in Education—Literacy Studies. His research agenda has taken him into the fields of reading education for struggling readers; education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; and professional sign language interpreting.

His community work also delves into the realm of training and advocating for the role of sign language interpreters; input into the design and implementation of an interpreting and information relay service through the CVAS (Communication Video Relay Service) platform for the Deaf and the Blind; and developing policy and programmes to improve the academic



More than 100 million children are falling behind the minimum proficiency level in reading, due to COVID-related school closures (UNESCO, March 2021)

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achievements of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. He has also partnered with non-governmental organisations such as the Dyslexia Association, the National Centre for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), the Deaf Empowerment and Advancement Foundation (DEAF) and The Trinidad and Tobago Association for the Hearing Impaired (TTAHI) to promote educational and career opportunities for at-risk youths.

PEDIC also provides training for teachers and parents. As Dr Skerrit explains, part of changing our children's relationship with reading is changing the mindset of parents and teachers when it comes to introducing them to the world of books and other text formats. The traditional hierarchy that declares what is considered good literature is outdated.

"In the past, people had limited views of what might be a more important aspect of literacy," he notes. "For example, if a young child was reading a comic book, parents or teachers might reprimand that child — but comic books are a genre that is amazing and supports visualising and reading between the lines, making inferences and predictions."

The educators at the PEDIC Reading Clinic are especially concerned with evidence-based literacy instruction. This is because some methods used to teach reading have produced readers who guess at words, are poor at pronouncing new words, and read inaccurately because they confuse similar-looking words. It is important, he says, to have high expectations of the learning capacity of all clients, whether they are "advantaged" or "disadvantaged".

"We are not into excuses for not teaching children to read," states Dr Skerrit.

Reading can be challenging

"People seem to make the assumption that reading is natural and easy, but it isn't. Reading is a complex linguistic achievement," says Dr Skerrit.

We sometimes underestimate how much is going



on inside of our brains when we look at a piece of text and are able to recognise and comprehend its meaning. In order to learn where a child, or even an adult, may need support, it is vital to identify where the issue is.

"One of the things that we need to provide, that is key for readers, is assessments," says Dr Skerrit. "That's one of the things that we do at PEDIC. In addition to comprehensive psychoeducational assessments that are used to estimate intellectual ability; general academic achievement; and adaptive, behavioural and emotional functioning of students; we also administer standardised reading assessments; screening to identify clients at a high risk for dyslexia; group reading assessments; and informal reading assessments; that allow us to identify what might be the child's specific problem with reading. You need assessment, diagnosis, and very specific interventions." There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Assessments at the Reading Clinic use standardised and informal instruments to get a better sense of the specific reading skill challenges and where they may need additional support. This helps the PEDIC team to come up with targeted reading interventions, made up of instructional sessions, to work on these challenges. With the emphasis on digital learning since the on-set of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Reading Clinic utilises a digital platform that has activities and resources for students, their parents and teachers. They also have access to a multidisciplinary team that includes clinical psychologists, reading and learner intervention specialists, as well as partnerships with speech and language pathologists, and behavioural and occupational therapists.

The goal of PEDIC has been to provide accessible, low cost and high quality services to the community, in assessment and intervention, as well as research, training, teaching and advocacy for policy change. The PEDIC Reading Clinic hopes to bridge the inequality gap for student learning specific to literacy and help those who may have previously fallen through the cracks of the academic system.

■ To contact the **PEDIC Reading Clinic**, email PEDICReadingClinic@sta.uwi.edu or call **662-2002, extension 84511 or 84512**

Amy Li Baksh is a Trinidadian writer, artist and activist.

UWI Calendar of Events | March – April 2022

Dreadness – The Mystical Power, Philosophy, and Performance of Shadow

March 3 and 4

ONLINE

In celebration of the 80th birthday of Calypso legend Winston Bailey, The Mighty Shadow, UWI St Augustine's Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies (DLCC) is hosting this two-day virtual symposium to honour his body of work. Shadow, who passed away in 2018, is recognised as one of Trinidad and Tobago's greatest musical artists and creative cultural forces.

To register for *Dreadness*, visit <https://bit.ly/Dreadness>. For more information, email tout.moun@sta.uwi.edu



Virtual Research Days – The Balancing Act: Leveraging Strength and Agility Towards a Steady Future

9am to 3pm | April 5 and 6

ONLINE

Listen and learn about some of the research from staff and graduate students taking place at UWI St Augustine's School of Education. The two-day event includes 20-minute research paper presentations, workshops, and panel discussions. It is open to teachers, school administrators, parents of school-age children, tertiary level educators and students, Ministry of Education officials, and anyone with an interest in education research.

Attendance is free of charge.

To register, visit <https://tinyurl.com/SOEResearchDays2022>



Department of Behavioural Sciences
4th Biennial Postgraduate Research Conference

DECONSTRUCTING THE 'NEW NORMAL': Prospects and Challenges for Caribbean Societies



7th & 8th April, 2022

9:00am - 1:00pm

FREE, REGISTER TODAY

Presenters

- Dr. David R Williams
- Hon. Madame Justice of Appeal Charmaine A. Joy Pemberton
- Dr. Stewart D Smith

Deconstructing the New Normal: Prospects and Challenges for Caribbean Societies

ONLINE

The Department of Behavioural Sciences within the Faculty of Social Sciences hosts its 4th Biennial Postgraduate Conference to showcase students' projects and research. Attendees will be exposed to discourse on a range of important topics pertinent to the Caribbean and its diasporas during a global pandemic. Featured speakers include Dr David R. Williams, Professor of African and African American Studies, and Sociology at Harvard University; Justice of Appeal Charmaine A. Joy Pemberton of the Supreme Court of Trinidad and Tobago; and Dr Stewart D. Smith, Senior Health Systems Advisor at the Ministry of Health of Trinidad and Tobago.

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/DBSUWI>

