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UWI TODAY

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES • ST AUGUSTINE CAMPUS

SUNDAY 10 JULY 2022



The Right Direction

“To achieve success,” says Rayshawn Pierre-Kerr, “we must honour that which has been taught to us. Adding value to human existence is greater than simply making money.” A graduate (and educator) of UWI St Augustine’s Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA), Rayshawn knows quite a bit about success. She’s an award winning director, the 2017 Ms La Reine Rivé, Artistic Director of the Tobago Performing Arts Company, and the 2018 UWI St Augustine Valedictorian. Her latest achievement is as director of the 2022 run of *Bitter Cassava*, an impactful dramatic work set in the 1970s that looks at love, loss, and consequences. First produced at UWI in 2009, and written by Dr Lester Efebo Wilkinson decades earlier, *Bitter Cassava* is a perfect vehicle of expression for a creative and cultural force like Rayshawn and the talented team that brought it to life for audiences. PHOTO: PHILBERT WILLIAMS



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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

A Season of Service

Academic year 2021/2022 has come to a close, and with it my tenure as Campus Principal at this magnificent institution. These six years as leader of the St Augustine Campus have been rewarding, enlightening, but challenging. I expected no less. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the well-being and growth of the society and the university.

The UWI is inextricably of, for and by Caribbean society. It is one of our best and most dependable assets in the quest for regional development and prosperity. Its role, enshrined in the letters of the institution's birth nearly 75 years ago, is our great purpose and responsibility. We must never lose sight of it, strive to maintain it, and rely on our creativity, knowledge and capacity for persistent effort to advance it.

My tenure as Principal has been guided by the following principles that were fine-tuned over the past six years:

1. If a society crumbles for whatever reason, the first question to be asked should be on the adequacy of the National Education System (NES) to prepare citizens to treat with crisis. *Education for Crisis* – a phrase attributed to our own Professor Paula Morgan – is an absolute necessity for any NES. It is all too often overlooked by governments. It will not necessarily protect us when faced a cataclysmic event. However, it will equip survivors with the best possible tools to consolidate and rebuild post-crisis. Given our experience over the past two years, the importance of education for crisis cannot be overstated.
2. Our NES must equip us with the skills required for gainful employment in the workspace while meaningfully contributing to society. It must also provide for a holistic understanding of the many factors – economic, historical, societal, legal and ecological – that impact our lives and influence our futures. This will improve the population's ability to effectively respond to changing circumstances.
3. Our NES must nurture the creative and innovative abilities of citizens to make meaningful contributions to future society. They must have the ability to discover, master and apply knowledge to empower society to navigate to the future it envisages and to defend against the unforeseen. Embodied in this is the opportunity to make that future a sustainable one.

I must make mention of my view that a necessary condition for educational success at the national level, is the need to ensure that citizens are guided and educated to optimally develop their primary assets – their mental and physical abilities.

The NES that I speak of comprises all institutions of formal education from ECCE, primary, secondary, and tertiary – community colleges, vocational institutions and universities. The role of universities spans, in part, the teaching and learning activities required to sustain society as described in Principle 1, a responsibility that is shared by the other NES players, albeit generally at a lower level. However, universities are at the forefront in the research, development and innovation activities required to grow society as elucidated in Principle 3. No institution can be called a university unless it has the capacity to seriously address Principle 3. Of significance is the fact that its staff must include those who have mastered the requisite research abilities and who are expected to nurture and influence the growth of new talent in the student population.

It has been a difficult journey at times, more so as, given the momentum consequent to our colonial past, these



Professor Copeland speaking at his induction ceremony in July, 2017.

guiding principles have been tough to communicate. Still, I have confidence that we can get to the point where we have a Caribbean NES that is specifically tuned to our real needs.

In messages such as this, and frankly at a time when a certain measure of cynicism is a rational and justified response, I am always concerned that these statements will be seen as platitudes. However, the difference between platitudes and the achievement of success is what comes after the words have been written. In this regard, I am proud to say that UWI St Augustine has embarked on a journey that will see it becoming the university of the future that more fully embraces its societal leadership role. Although I will no longer be directing that path, I am completely invested in its continuation and dedicated to its success.

There are some reasons to be optimistic. The region has made it through the worst of the pandemic; and while it is still with us, we are now able to recover some of our lost productivity and social engagement. Last month, we reopened the campus to staff. This coming September, we will welcome our new and returning students to UWI St Augustine for in-person classes.

I am extremely satisfied as well with how the campus community dealt with the pandemic. We saw a remarkable burst of activity to transition to virtual learning. There was enormous outreach from our student services to support students in need, whether those needs were material (such as devices for online learning) or health-related (such as vaccinations and counselling).

Our UWI experts provided their knowledge to the nation that helped T&T understand the crisis and take precautions to protect themselves. We supported the government's national response. We even branched out with home-grown initiatives that engaged governmental organisations and the private sector to help our country through this perilous moment.

However, I feel it is vital that we recognise the many very serious challenges we face, as a university and a society. The world is still dealing with the economic and political fallout of the pandemic. Several geopolitical crises are in full effect, most notably the Russia/Ukraine conflict, which is already having a detrimental effect on the global food supply.

Many countries are dealing with serious economic threats due to inflation. The climate-related risks that scientists have predicted for years are now every-day reality. I dare say that the convulsion we are experiencing may be evidence of the world reshaping itself. Trinidad and Tobago also has its own chronic challenges that have been with us even before the pandemic.

We are in difficult times. That is not an inherently optimistic message, but it is far from a pessimistic one. Some of the greatest human achievements were the result of people solving problems, under dire circumstances. As I have often repeated, it takes a lot of pressure and heat to form a diamond. Also, a reminder to the scientists among us that Newton's law applies in all aspects of life – force is required to effect a change in motion.

I have been a part of this institution for most of my life as a student, lecturer, administrator, researcher, and inventor. This campus is my home. I have seen it expand over many decades to the powerhouse it has become, the heart of intellectualism, the arts, the sciences, professional training at the highest level, and scholarship. I've seen many of its graduates go forth and become the leaders of society.

Now, I look forward to witnessing what happens next. I wish greatest success to Campus Principal Designate Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine. I have every confidence in her leadership skills and her vision for the campus. She is a proven leader with a strong will and an outspoken voice on many of the most important topics of our time.

To the entire campus community, I know you have what it takes for this campus to thrive, even in tough circumstances. Give your best. Demand the best from your colleagues and peers to work for continued success of the institution. Remember, that beneath all the pomp and ceremony, we are here to serve, our students and a society that will fully understand over the course of time that "the efficient growth of this university is almost their only path to prosperity" (Prime Minister Errol Barrow 1968).

Brian Copeland

PROFESSOR BRIAN COPELAND

Campus Principal

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■ CAMPUS NEWS

Professor Christine Carrington, Professor of Molecular Genetics and Virology in the Faculty of Medical Sciences at the St Augustine Campus, has officially been presented with her award as the 2022 Anthony N Sabga Caribbean Excellence Laureate for Science and Technology. She received the award from President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Paula Mae Weekes in a ceremony on June 14, 2022 at President's House in Port of Spain.

Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal Professor Brian Copeland warmly congratulated her, saying that she has played a pivotal role nationally and regionally in the fight against COVID-19. Prof Carrington is a member of The UWI COVID-19 Task Force and leads a team that has been carrying out whole genome sequencing for genomic surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 variants for Trinidad and Tobago and 16 other Caribbean territories.

In selecting Professor Carrington, who heads the Department of Preclinical Sciences, the ANSA McAl Foundation noted that she is perhaps the foremost regional authority on virus evolution and molecular epidemiology, respected in the scientific community regionally and globally, with an impressive record of publication and international collaboration.

"Professor Carrington", the Foundation said, "has been instrumental in developing the human and infrastructural capacity of Trinidad and Tobago and the region to deal with the threat of viruses to public health. Her expertise is routinely sought by Caribbean government institutions, the Caribbean Public Health Agency and the Pan American Health Organisation for addressing viral outbreaks which have a major impact on people's lives all over the world."

"Not everyone gets the opportunity to pursue their passion as their profession," responded Professor Carrington. "I feel truly honoured to have been selected as the 2022 Laureate in Science and Technology. Knowing that what I do makes a difference is icing on the cake, but science is a collaborative pursuit, so I thank all the research students, colleagues, and collaborators who contributed to my career achievements, as well as my friends, family and mentors who supported and encouraged me along the way".

Professor Carrington is no stranger to awards and accolades. Among those that she has received are The UWI Research Award for Outstanding Research Mentorship (2012) and selection as one of UWI's "60 under 60" leading academics (2008). She was also awarded the Commonwealth Research Fellowship in 2004.

Regional Award for UWI's virologist hero Professor Christine Carrington



FROM LEFT: Ms. Maria Superville-Neilson, Programme Director of the Anthony N Sabga Awards; Professor Compton Bourne, Chairman of the Eminent Persons Panel; Professor Christine Carrington; and Mr Andrew Sabga, Chairman of the Ansa McAl Foundation.

The UWI Seismic Research Centre (UWI SRC) has won the 2022 Volcanic Surveillance and Crisis Management Award presented by the International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth's Interior (IAVCEI) on Thursday, June 16. Director of the UWI SRC Dr Erouscilla Joseph accepted the award in Heraklion, Greece during the association's 11th Cities on Volcanoes Conference (COV11).

The prestigious, peer-nominated award, given biennially, recognised the Caribbean team of experts at the UWI SRC for its outstanding management of the 2020-2021 eruption of La Soufrière in St Vincent and the Grenadines. The nomination was based primarily on the UWI SRC's response, made particularly challenging within the context of the global pandemic. Due to UWI SRC's monitoring techniques, partnerships and timely communication with stakeholders, approximately 16,000 people were evacuated ahead of the volcano's explosive phase with no reported serious injuries or casualties.

President of the IAVCEI, Dr Patrick Allard, said, "This Award, previously attributed to volcano Institutes in Indonesia (2018), then Ecuador (2020), recognises and honours the remarkable role UWI SRC has played for almost 70 years in monitoring active volcanoes in the Caribbean island arc and in responding to volcano-seismic crises that occurred in this region, especially the Soufrière Hills eruption on Montserrat (1995-present) then the Plinian eruptive events at La Soufrière of St Vincent in 2020-2021."

He added, "The successes achieved by the UWI SRC during these events—in terms of scientific monitoring, hazard assessment and even co-management of emergency response, in a context of limited resources available, are fully acknowledged by the international volcanological community and well deserve this 2022 awarding."

Dr Joseph and other UWI SRC staff members convened and participated in scientific sessions and workshops at the COV11 conference in Greece. Speaking at the ceremony, she said, "The response to the eruption of La Soufrière is a reflection of the hard work, expertise and commitment of all staff who worked tirelessly throughout the eruption, some of whom often put their own lives at risk because we were conscious that people's lives and livelihoods would be affected.

"The successful management of the eruption stemmed from the UWI SRC's longstanding partnership with regional authorities and its commitment to serving the region as part of the broader mandate of The University of the West Indies," stated Dr Joseph.

The UWI Seismic Research Centre receives global award for La Soufrière response



FROM LEFT: President of the IAVCEI Dr Patrick Allard, Director of the UWI SRC Dr Erouscilla Joseph, UWI SRC-Montserrat Volcano Observatory volcanologist Dr Karen Pascal, US Geological Survey research geologist Dr Jacob Lowernstern, and Professor of Volcanology from the University of East Anglia Jenni Barclay during the award presentation.

Congratulating the UWI SRC, Vice-Chancellor of The UWI, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles noted that he was particularly proud of the "ONE UWI" scientific capacity and response strategy of the Centre, which is funded and supported through the University's Regional Headquarters.

The UWI SRC also received congratulatory messages from members of the volcanological community around the world. Dr Nicolas Fournier, Volcanology Team Leader at GNS Science (New Zealand) and member of the peer-nomination panel stated, "What UWI SRC achieved with its available resources as the eruption rapidly transitioned from dome building to explosive phases is nothing short of extraordinary. This award is an opportunity to recognise not only the fantastic work that UWI SRC did during the eruption at Soufrière but also the level of respect it gathered from around the world."

CAMPUS NEWS

“I invite you to bring your energy, your creativity, and innovative thinking to the university table,” said UWI St Augustine Campus Principal Brian Copeland to a gathering of professionals and graduates.

He was speaking on the evening of Tuesday, June 14 at an event hosted by the campus to engage and excite attendees with the possibilities available to further their education at UWI St Augustine. Titled the “The Postgraduate Experience”, this information session/cocktail event, the campus’s first in-person event in two years, gave attendees a chance for face-to-face interaction with its educators, scholars, student services providers, administrators, and graduate students.

“Your presence here today shows that you are interested in taking that next step in advancing your education and your career,” said Ms Kristy Smith, Manager of Financial Advisory Services at UWI St Augustine and master of ceremonies for the event. “Your presence here tells us that you are ready to make yourself stand out in the job market.”

The Postgraduate Experience was held at the Trinidad Hilton and Conference Centre and gave attendees opportunities to visit faculty booths, take part in question and answer sessions, and enjoy direct engagement with members of the campus community. A special highlight of the event was the testimonials by several graduate students, who spoke on their experience and the personnel and professional benefits that attending The UWI has brought to their lives.

Ronald Francis, a graduate student and part-time lecturer at the Department of Language and Linguistics described his time at The UWI by saying, “I realised as soon as I got to the St Augustine Campus that it was a place to grow not just academically but holistically as a person as well.”

Apart from the students, deans, deputy deans, Campus Executive Management, Graduate Studies staff, members of the Student Guild, and researchers that were on hand, Republic Bank, the campus’s financial partner was also present to inform the prospective students about options for financing their education.

Recognising the importance of reassuring students about the affordability of their graduate programmes and the urgency of the investment, Professor Copeland said, “we have brought a power team here to guide you on financing, as well as on the bursaries and scholarships available to full-time registered postgraduate students – locally, regionally, and internationally.”

He added, “Don’t allow finance to be a stumbling block for your progress. Look at this as an investment in the next you!”

The Postgraduate Experience is one of several events hosted to expose potential students to the benefits of pursuing their education at UWI St Augustine. In May, the campus held its Virtual Open Day. On July 8 to today, Sunday July 10, they are hosting UWI Open Days on campus.

Postgraduate Experience brings prospective students face-to-face with the campus community



Members of the campus community engaged prospective students in one-to-one conversations. PHOTOS: ATIBA CUDJOE



Representatives from Republic Bank shared information on options for financing graduate education.



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UNIVERSITY NEWS

Six fellows graduate from the UWI's Climate Change and Health programme

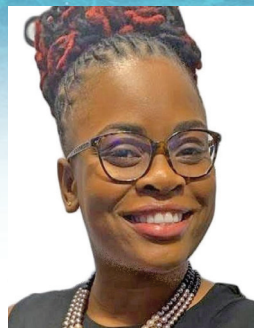
BY TYRELL GITTENS

Professor Christopher Oura
Team Leader

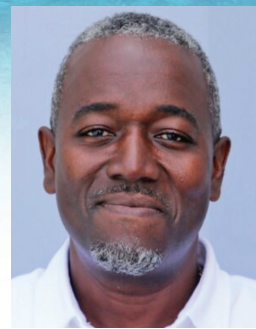
Dr Kim Newton-James



Dr Kenzy Jean-Pierre



Ms Shanika John



Mr Steve Daniel



Ms Stephanie Cheuk-Alam



Dr William Hamilton

While conversations about the effects of climate change may often focus on rising sea levels, increases in sea surface temperatures and extreme weather patterns, Professor Christopher Oura wants more discourse on how the global phenomenon affects the health of people in the Caribbean and the region's healthcare systems.

A professor in Veterinary Virology at The UWI's School of Veterinary Medicine, Oura is the team leader of the university's recent inaugural Climate Change and Health Leaders Fellowship Programme.

With small island developing states (SIDs) like those in the Caribbean grappling with the effects of climate change and on the frontline of the climate fight, Oura stated that the programme follows through on the university's commitment to foster greater action to make the Caribbean more climate-resilient by empowering change-makers with a drive to do so.

On May 31, Dr William Hamilton (The Bahamas), Mr Steve Daniel (Barbados), Dr Kim Newton-James (St Lucia), Ms Shanika John (St Vincent and the Grenadines), Ms Stephanie Cheuk-Alam (Suriname) and Dr Kenzy Jean-Pierre (Haiti) became the first cohort of fellows to graduate from the programme during a ceremony at the Trinidad Hilton and Conference Centre in Port-of-Spain.

Oura said each fellow is a working professional in different aspects of their respective country's healthcare system, and can shape and implement policies to make their populations and systems more climate-resilient.

In bringing the fellows together, the goal is to create a network of working professionals with a common goal of strengthening resilience, guided by a "One Health, One Caribbean" approach which recognises the shared challenges across the region and the intricate interconnections between the health of people, animals, and their shared environment.

He explained, "These fellows are so strong together because they bring in that multidisciplinary factor that is critical when you're dealing with a complex problem like climate change. When we're thinking about climate change and health, we're not just thinking about diseases, but we're also thinking about all the indirect effects that climate

change will have on things like food and water security and safety which are going to affect our health and well-being."

Coordinated by the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and funded by the European Union, the 12-month part-time fellowship is being led by The UWI in partnership with other supporting organisations including the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC), The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CMIH), the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Windward Islands Research and Education Foundation (WINDREF) and the NGO EarthMedic/EarthNurse.

During the programme, fellows are trained to become agents of change, so they can support their countries to integrate a health component into their national climate change adaptation plan.

Satisfied with their performance, Oura is optimistic that the newly graduated cohort has gained the competencies and skills that are necessary to aid in the development and implementation of climate change and health plans and policies in their countries.

"As we build this fellowship going forward, we will get more fellows trained every year, so we will develop a network of climate change and health leaders with different areas of expertise from across our region working together to lead the process of change both regionally and nationally.

"The UWI is bringing in expertise to support the fellowship from across the whole of the Caribbean and from all of The UWI's five campuses, very much a One-UWI approach.

But even as The UWI and fellows do their part in strengthening regional climate resiliency, Oura wants people to take personal responsibility and think of ways they can join the fight against climate change.

He urged, "Everyone must think individually of what they can do, because it's not too late, and we can all do things individually to reduce the impacts."

Speaking during his graduation, Dr William Hamilton recalled that his drive to become a climate activist was fueled when he witnessed the devastating effects Hurricane

Dorian had on the Bahamas in 2019.

A medical physician with the Bahamas's Department of Public Health, Hamilton explained, "I thought applying for this fellowship would provide me with the knowledge I needed to solidify my experience (as a climate activist). However, I am happy to say that this fellowship has done far more than that. The fellowship has given me a greater appreciation for the interconnectedness of climate change."

An environmental health specialist with Barbados's Ministry of Health, Steve Daniel described the programme as an enriching experience.

He said it provided an opportunity for working professionals like himself to establish networks throughout the Caribbean, and ensure there is regional collaboration amongst projects to develop climate resiliency, which can ensure a unified approach to building climate resilience.

While navigating the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 volcanic eruption in St Vincent had Shanika John questioning her abilities to complete the programme, she said she handled the uncertainties with the support of friends, family, peers and the programme's coordinators.

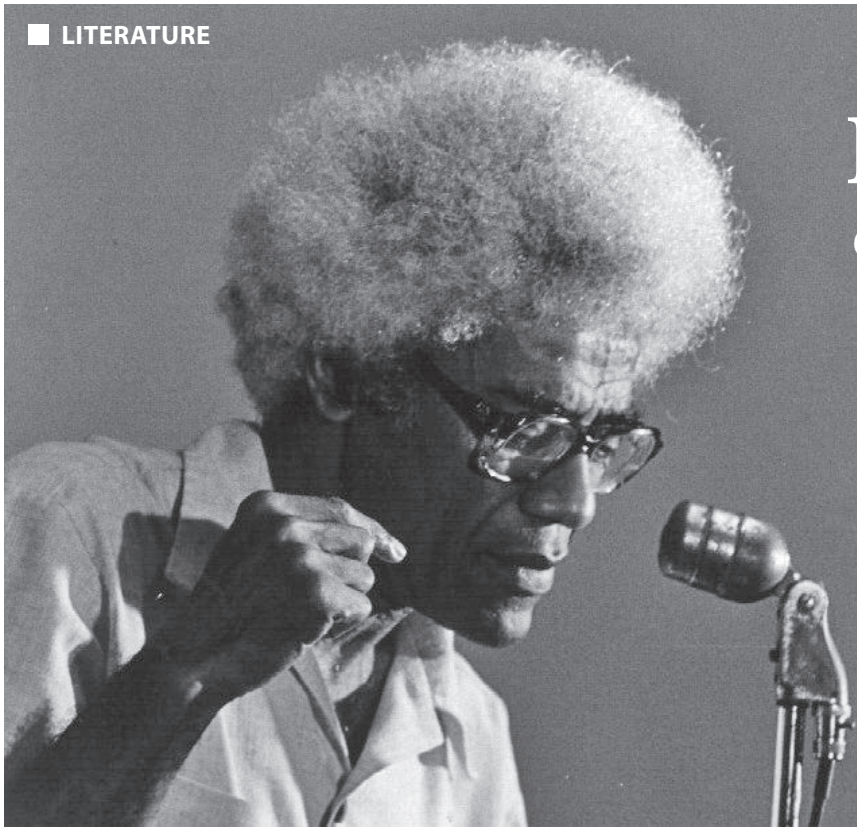
The programme not only widened her scope as a health promotion officer in the island's Ministry of Health, but also gave her the opportunity to be promoted to acting Chief Health Promotion Officer.

Addressing the fellows, the EU's regional manager for environmental projects Jose Legarra said he is optimistic the union's investment in the project will help build regional climate resiliency.

Legarra said, "The University of the West Indies has once again highlighted that it continues to be an important partner in designing regional programmes that can effectively address regional challenges. We [at the EU] are pleased to support efforts that encourage this approach which is key to sustainable and impactful development."

The programme's second cohort of fellows started training in early June while applications for the third cohort will open in November.

■ LITERATURE



From Castle to Kingdom

Caribbean literary legend George Lamming passes on

BY ALFRENA JAMIE PIERRE

On June 4, 2022, George Lamming, son of the Caribbean and one of its greatest literary figures, died on his home island of Barbados at the age of 94. The impact of his work, particularly his debut novel *In the Castle of My Skin*, was immense, particularly in the colonial world. Kenyan writer and academic Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o said "I felt Lamming's narrative power speak to me and my Kenya situation so directly, that it influenced the theme and the writing of my second novel, *Weep Not Child*." UWI TODAY is pleased to share a profile on this Caribbean icon by a PhD Candidate **Alfrena Jamie Pierre**, whose doctoral research focuses on George Lamming.

George William Lamming was born on the eighth day of June 1927 in Carrington Village, Barbados. He was the child of a Black Barbadian mother and a White English father. While Lamming's mother fulfilled a principal role in his life, his relationship with his biological father was estranged. This severance from his father, perhaps, was the psychological source from which Lamming coined the phrase "my mother who fathered me".

Lamming's childhood home was defined by a strong Christian ethos and an acute consciousness of the socio-economic potentiality which a formal education possessed. Lamming was a notably intelligent child. He attended Roebuck's Boys School and then won a scholarship to Combermere High School.

In 1946, Lamming immigrated to Trinidad from Barbados to be an English teacher at El Colegio de Venezuela, a boarding school for Latin American boys, adolescent males and young men aged seven to 20 years old. In 1950, He would depart Trinidad for England, fortuitously, aboard the same vessel as renowned Trinidadian literary artist, Samuel Selvon.

In 1953, when Lamming was just a young immigrant in England in his 20s, he wrote and published his first novel, *In the Castle of My Skin*. *In the Castle of My Skin*, which is regarded by many as the quintessential Caribbean novel, was the harbinger to literary enquiries into the psychological effects of colonialism on the colonised. His second novel, *The Emigrants* (1954), considers the Caribbean New World individual in transit to England as "mother country". *Of Age and Innocence* (1958) prophetically extrapolates a tripartite governmental system to a Caribbean New World with enormous consequences for the society. These novels, along with those of Selvon, VS Naipaul and Andrew Salkey, were instrumental to the formation of the Anglophone Caribbean literary canon in the 1950s.

Subsequently, Lamming would publish *Season of Adventure* (1960), a work which employs a female protagonist to explore different ways of being for Caribbean peoples in the outworking of their own identity. *Water with Berries* (1971) engages William Shakespeare's 1623 work, *The Tempest*, to unearth the complexities in the relationship between the British colonial mother and the colonised; and *Natives of My Person* (1972) extensively probes the reality of the European coloniser, showing the reader that our understanding of self is linked to our understanding of those who colonised us. All of Lamming's novels treat with facets of the colonial experience.

In the Castle of My Skin, which is regarded by many as the quintessential Caribbean novel, was the harbinger to literary enquiries into the psychological effects of colonialism on the colonised.

His six esteemed novels, along with his cleverly written poems, such as "Swans", "Image", "Recollection", "Birthday Poem for Clifford Sealy", "February 1949", "The Sculptor", and his artful short stories, such as "A Wedding in Spring", "Of Thorns and Thistles", "Birds of a Feather" and "Birthday Weather" – which were all published throughout the 1940s to 1970s – established Lamming as a consummate literary talent in the Caribbean, England, France, Africa, Canada, the United States of America, and the rest of the world. The sustainability of his work and its contribution to Caribbean and postcolonial letters are irrefutable.

This acclaimed Caribbean writer has received numerous accolades. In 1958, Lamming received the Somerset Maugham Prize for literature; in 1980, he was conferred an Honorary Doctor of Letters from The University of the West Indies. In 2011, the Association of Cuban Writers and Artists bestowed him with the Caribbean Hibiscus Prize for his lifetime contribution to the arts as the first beneficiary of this award. In 2013, he received the Clement Payne Appreciation Award. In 2014, he was awarded the Anisfield-Wolf Book Lifetime Achievement Award for his work.

Lamming was also a perspicacious and prolific Caribbean thinker. His writing has been, and continues to be, valuable to Caribbean intellectual thought, as it probes notions of identity in the aftermath of the region's colonial past. Noted Lamming scholar Sandra Pouchet Paquet in *Twentieth-Century Caribbean and Black African Writers* wrote of Lamming, "His work is seminal. He is foremost among those Caribbean writers who first articulated the symbolic systems

that make up modern Caribbean writing. In each of his novels and his collection of essays... Lamming conceptualises core facets of the Caribbean experience in language and forms that continue to exercise a shaping influence over the literature of the region."

The Barbadian novelist produced a plethora of pioneering essays which significantly expanded academic resources on Caribbean poetics. His noted essays include "The Pleasures of Exile's" (1960), "The Indian Presence as a Caribbean Reality" (1989), "The Negro Writer and his World" (1956) and "The Sovereignty of the Imagination" (2004). The latter was delivered at Caribbean Reasonings: The Sovereignty of the Imagination: The Writings and Thought of George Lamming, a special conference hosted The UWI Mona Campus in his honour in 2003.

His insightful essays and lectures are contained in compilations such as *Conversations: George Lamming: Essays, Addresses and Interviews 1953-1990* (1992), a collaborative work of Richard Drayton, Andaiye and the author himself, as well as *The George Lamming Reader: The Aesthetics of Decolonisation* (2011), an Anthony Bogues edited text. Lamming also independently published his scholastic essays, like *Coming, Coming Home: Conversations II: Western Education and the Caribbean Intellectual Coming, Coming, Coming Home* (1995) and *Sovereignty of the Imagination: Conversations III: Sovereignty of the Imagination: Language and the Politics of Ethnicity* (2009).

The UWI has had a long relationship with George Lamming. In 1967, he was Writer-in-Residence at The UWI Mona campus. In 1980, 1983 and 2009, Lamming delivered his formative lectures, "Politics and Culture", "The Plantation Mongrel" and "Caribbean Thought: History, Pedagogy and Archive" at The Cave Hill campus. In 2011, he was a guest lecturer at UWI St Augustine's Department of Creative and Festival Arts' 25th anniversary celebration. In 2009, The UWI renamed the Pedagogical Centre of the Errol Barrow Centre for the Creative Imagination at Cave Hill to the George Lamming Pedagogical Centre his honour. Additionally, the George Lamming Distinguished Lecture is hosted annually, and the George Lamming Collection is currently housed at the Sidney Martin Library's West Indiana Collection – Special Collections at the Cave Hill campus.

George Lamming died on Saturday, June 4 in his native Barbados, four days shy of his 95th birthday. He was a literary genius and a profound Caribbean intellect who will be greatly missed.

Alfrena Jamie Pierre is a PhD Candidate in Literatures in English at The UWI. Her doctoral research focuses on George Lamming. She has presented academic papers on Lamming's work at local, regional and international conferences.

CAMPUS NEWS

UWI 2018 Valedictorian, Ms La Reine Rivé 2017, Artistic Director of the Tobago Performing Arts Company, Director of the 2022 run of *Bitter Cassava*, wife, and mother – thirty-year-old Rayshawn Pierre-Kerr holds these and many other titles (and an entire cache of accolades), and is on track to garner more.

Born in Point Fortin, Rayshawn started living in Tobago with her family at a young age, and soon discovered her love for the stage. She wanting to be around the theatre, performing arts, and music, and this affinity was fostered early in her life. Her first stage experience was in 1999 at just 7 years old. All that was needed was a push from her primary school teachers. At the Pentecostal Light and Life Secondary School, librarian Merle Baird and teacher Jared Prima were both willing to provide financial support for her to represent the school in various competitions for the arts. This love further blossomed at Signal Hill Comprehensive (now Signal Hill Secondary), and from there, she looked towards The UWI.

At the Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA), she pursued the Practitioner's Certificate in Drama/Theatre in 2012, which she did on sponsorship from the Tobago House of Assembly. At the end of this certificate course, she was awarded the Samantha Pierre Award for Best Final Project, which positioned her to do incredible work in the community, and gave her the opportunity to write proposals to the UN and UNDP.

Later, she joined Arts-in-Action and was supported by Brendon La Caille and Patrice Briggs. Rayshawn soon saw the bigger picture; she saw what life after UWI would look like. With these experiences under her belt, she was motivated to continue forward to read for her double major degree in Theatre Arts and Carnival Studies, for which she earned first class honours. Grounded by her time at Arts-in-Action and encouraged by (director, educator and now Head of Department at DCFA) Louis McWilliams, Rayshawn decided to try her hand at directing. She directed JS Barker's play *Vulnerable Double* and Dexter Musgrave's *Green Mango*. From this, her love for directing was born. Through Arts-in-Action, she directed children's theatre pieces and soon moved on to directing her first national play in 2018, Kevin Soyer's *Amazing Grace*, and her own play, *Salt: No Seasoning*. The latter won her Best Director and itself Best Directed Production at the Prime Minister's Best Village competition, and was featured in Carifesta 2019.

Inspired by her time at the DCFA, Rayshawn felt honoured to report back to work at the department as a part-time lecturer. She understood the importance, she recalls, of having someone who has experience in the theatre and performing arts to look up to while pursuing a degree. She sees her position within the department as an opportunity to let students know that there is a space for them and their voices. The DCFA is the place where they can sit and absorb, and figure out which "elder's feet [they] would like to sit at to learn".



Claiming her Success

Rayshawn Pierre-Kerr

Rayshawn giving her valedictorian address at graduation in 2018.

BY OMEGA FRANCIS



A dramatic scene from *Bitter Cassava*. PHOTOS: PHILBERT WILLIAMS



With playwright Dr Lester Efebo Wilkinson, the writer of *Bitter Cassava*.

While her journey towards directorial success and theatre arts prominence did manage to have a few meandering paths, everything she did has led her back to theatre and performance. Everyone in her life had several ideas of how she would attain success, from becoming a journalist to a politician, but as Rayshawn puts it, theatre had its own plans.

Her advice to her fellow 2018 graduates was this: “There are no blueprints for your success. Many Anansi-like figures will come to you with clever and attractive ideas of what your success should look like. Be careful, simply because for each of us, the road to success will vary and will require us to not only do, but to become.”

Becoming for Rayshawn means leaving her mark and her legacy, and telling the Trinbagonian and Caribbean stories that need to be told – stories like *Bitter Cassava*. Between her time at Tobago Heritage, spending time in class with *Bitter Cassava* playwright Dr Lester Efebo Wilkinson and individuals like performing arts educator Dr Dani Lyndersay, there was no chance that Rayshawn would have made her mark on the world in any other way than in the performing arts. Her time at the DCFA steeped her in performance and research, and inspired her love for Caribbean theatre, and Caribbean stories. Her love for Caribbean stories led her to try her hand at telling the story of *Bitter Cassava* differently. Not better; differently, because to her there can be no better. Originally produced as a student play at UWI in 2009 and directed by Louis McWilliams, it ran once again in 2016 at Carifesta with playwright Dr Wilkinson at the helm.

Written after Euripedes’ *Medea*, *Bitter Cassava* is a Caribbean story that deals with the weight of consequence in the most nuanced way. Set in the 1970s, it is “an interrogation of the depth of a lover’s scorn, pain, loss, revenge and vindication”.

The story is narrated by the character who represents the archetype of the village elder. It is about Sam, who has a very typical Caribbean masculine superiority complex: the inflated ego and misogynistic ideals. Sam embodies aggressive, violent, and womanising behaviour in order to prove his “manliness”. Looking at it through a Tobago folkloric “lens”, Rayshawn was able to finesse the story and “illuminate the moments in the play where the mystery, magic and nuance of the folk take the lead”.

As a director, Rayshawn knew the story could be told differently and that is what she did. That was her driving force, to take this classic play that is as relevant now as it was 43 years ago, when it was written, and celebrate that which is beautiful, while highlighting the issues of Caribbean masculinities, misogyny, and violence.

She started with wanting to direct the play, wanting to share the story, and engage a team of people who would move the story forward. With responsibility over the Theatre, Dance and Movement Unit in the Tobago Performing Arts Company (TPAC), Rayshawn has always wanted to do a play where the



“There are no blueprints for your success. Many Anansi-like figures will come to you with clever and attractive ideas of what your success should look like. Be careful, simply because for each of us, the road to success will vary and will require us to not only do, but to become.”

range and variety of talent that exists in the company could be showcased, and *Bitter Cassava* fit the bill. However, putting together a production as esteemed as *Bitter Cassava* was no easy task. The first “cold reading” that was set up to get everyone’s feel for the play drew positive responses and this led immediately to auditions and casting.

Next came the staging of the work, which saw them bounce between two different facilities for rehearsals. Engaging vendors to act as the supporting backbone for the play is also under the purview of the director, and *Bitter Cassava* had what Rayshawn called an “avalanche” of technical support from production managers, stage managers, costume designers, and more. The engagement of several talents across Tobago was necessary for the success of the play, as well as for ensuring that it had a Tobago feel. Her role overall as the director was one of engagement of the team, communicating the vision, inspiring people to want to tell the story, and connecting the story to themselves.

The successful run of *Bitter Cassava* is a proud moment for Rayshawn. She saw how hard everyone worked and how all of that translated onto the stage. As a young person, she is open to what she can learn from her team while also being a teacher. She recognises that so much of what she has been able to achieve in the directorial space would not have been possible without her coming through the ranks of the Tobago Heritage Festival, as well as the formal training and exposure she got from being at The UWI.

Rayshawn has not yet gotten over the high of *Bitter Cassava*’s successful run, but there is more work to be done. In her own words, she knows she should not “... confuse movement with progress. To achieve success, we must honour that which has been taught to us, that adding value to human existence is greater than simply making money.”

Currently pursuing a Master of Philosophy in Cultural Studies at The UWI, Rayshawn says she will continue to refine her skills, continue to make her mark, and leave her legacy. For her, a legacy for which her two children can be proud is important to leave behind.

“When you think about your own journey – where you go, how you transition – sometimes you think about living in it and seeing the people who are inside of it, but you have missed the opportunity to really credit the people in the background. A lot of what I have been able to do, knowing that the legacy that I leave when I pass on, whenever that is, is one that I want my children to be proud of. I have been able to accomplish a lot because I had the domestic support from my family.”

Omega Francis is a writer, editor and blogger.



FOOD SECURITY

BANKING ON SEEDS

FFA researcher Dr Wendy-Ann Isaac leads project to preserve and share local seeds, breaking the grip of multinational providers and bolstering food sovereignty

BY TYRELL GITTENS

As the rapidly growing world population, climate crisis, and now the war in Ukraine continue to affect the viability and vitality of global food production, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has called on countries to bolster their food sovereignty, starting with the preservation of heirloom varieties and protection of local seed systems.

Also called farmers' varieties, heirloom varieties are crops which have become traditional food staples in countries after being cultivated for decades and their seeds continuously being saved for use in subsequent harvest cycles.

As such, control over the seeds of heirloom varieties can often times mean control over a country's food security and sovereignty.

With a handful of multinational agricultural enterprises producing a range of genetically modified (GMO) and hybrid seeds, some of which have established themselves as the heirloom varieties in some countries, there are growing concerns about the food sovereignty of countries like Trinidad and Tobago who are dependent on these seeds.

During a 2015 research study on agricultural practices in T&T, Dr Wendy-Ann Isaac surveyed stakeholders in local food production and found that there was a high dependency on imported GMO and hybrid seeds.

A senior crop science lecturer at The UWI St Augustine's Faculty of Food and Agriculture (FFA), Isaac recalled, "The high number of local farmers using imported seeds was very alarming to us, and especially the fact that farmers were no longer saving seeds. What we sought to do was to get a grant to do another study solely concentrated on seeds."

A Project for Seed Independence

In 2019, Isaac secured research funding from The UWI TT Research and Development Impact (RDI) Fund and created the Sustainable Seeds of Survival project with the FFA's support.

Work on the project started with the refurbishment of a facility at the University Field Station in Valsayn. The facility was previously used as a seed storage and research unit, but was decommissioned due to its state of disrepair and an accident that resulted in the loss of stored seeds. Once up and running, the newly refurbished facility was commissioned as the current project's seed bank.

She said, "There are three different types of seed banks, and our seed bank is a combination of all three. You have the assitentialist bank, where you bulk up your seeds and those seeds will be available to farmers; the productivist bank, which involves a lot of research to do breeding works on seeds; and the preservationist bank, where those seeds will be bulked up and kept for use in circumstances like natural disasters."

Several species of open-pollinated seeds – including tomatoes, pumpkin and hybrid species of corn created at The UWI – are stored in the bank.



Pigeon pea, corn and pumpkin seeds are a few of the seeds currently being stored at the Faculty of Food and Agriculture Seed Bank at the University Field Station as part of the Sustainable Seeds of Survival initiative.



Isaac explained the project is supporting the storage and use of open-pollinated seeds given that they are easiest to save from harvests and replant when compared to genetically modified (GMO) and hybrid seeds.

"We're in the process of going on expeditions to various markets where we are trying to see if we can make [seed] collections from different farmers. We also had some expeditions where we went out in the field to see what seeds we could have gotten from farmers and give them seeds as well from what we had," said Isaac.

A Resource not just for Farmers

Anyone from farmers to home gardeners can get seeds from the bank, but they are required to keep a portion of their harvest to donate seeds to the bank.

Commending the project, FFA Dean Dr Mark Wuddivira said the Faculty continues to strive to be a hub of creative thinkers contributing to the development of innovative solutions to meet the challenges of the day throughout its next 100 years of existence. The Faculty celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2021.

Wuddivira told UWI TODAY, "The availability, accessibility and quality of seeds is a very critical issue, and



FOOD SECURITY

vitality important to the quantity and quality of food that we produce.

“What we are importing as seeds will be hybrid seeds, but once we plant them, that is it... they are not open-pollinated.

“This means that for the next year or harvest cycle, if you are going to plant again, you’ll have to go back and import more seeds to plant again. You cannot bank any seeds from the ones imported.”

Apart from contributing to the mitigation of current issues like the access to and availability of imported seeds, Wuddivira said the bank ensures local stakeholders have access to seeds of good quality.

He explained, “We at the FFA believe that having greater access to seeds is only part of the solution, as we must also have access to seed varieties that are best suited for our local tropical conditions. We have a specialised seed testing unit where we bring in seeds, we test their viability, and we put them under conditions to see their durability.”

By providing farmers with climate resilient crops, the project also aims to develop their operations to be more climate resilient and environmentally sustainable.

In addition to the seeds provided, farmers are being taught to grow these crops using sustainable cropping systems and practices including mulch use, different types of compost systems, and improved irrigation techniques. Combined, these best management practices are expected to contribute to the protection and sustainable management of soil resources.

In an effort to further improve the project’s sustainability and reduce environmental effects, the project is striving to be zero-waste. The flesh of the fruits and vegetables from which seeds are harvested are used to make a variety of products like chips, powders and flours.

With the production of value-added products from the waste, Wuddivira said a circular economy has been created, which makes the initiative financially sustainable.

First Annual Seed Fair

To expand the project’s educational reach, the FFA held its first annual seed fair themed “Seed of Survival (SOS)” on April 22 to commemorate World Earth Day 2022. In an effort to improve collaboration amongst agricultural stakeholders, the Faculty also launched the T&T Seed Savers Network at the event.

The Network is comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture’s National Seed Bank and Vegetables Unit, AgroPlus 2017 Seed Bank, Kairi Seed Bank, the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net), T&T Field Naturalists’ Club and National Agricultural Marketing Development Company (NAMDEVCO).

From promoting awareness of the importance of seed saving, to collecting, swapping and documenting stories of seed-saving among communities, Isaac is calling on people to join the network which she said will aim to build a culture of sharing open-pollinated seeds and creating a strong genetic resource to ensure future food security and sovereignty.

To fulfill the network’s mandate, educational outreach caravans have already been held at NAMDEVCO Farmers Market in Macoya and Chaguanas.

A seed-saving competition will also be held among primary schools with 4-H Clubs. Participants in the competition will be challenged to start an innovative seed bank or seed library in their own schools and communities.

Describing the network’s efforts, Wuddivira said, “People are being educated and sensitised on the need for seed-saving for a “rainy” day, as well as sensitising them on what services we have to train them for seed-saving.”

While the network is yet another sign of the project’s continued expansion and progression, Isaac said more funding can tremendously move these and other efforts forward.

She explained, “We are trying to see if we can attract some more funding for the project because what we want to do is expand the seed bank. We need more space and we want the bank to be powered by a generator because, in the event of a shortage, we may run the risk of losing seeds. We are looking at the idea of having solar powered generators. So, we are in talks with different funding agencies to see if we can expand the system.”

There are also hopes to get the other UWI campuses involved in the effort to embrace not only the “One UWI” motto, but also help place the university at the forefront of improving regional food security.

Isaac said the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down these plans, but she has already been in talks with Jamaica’s Rural Agricultural Development Authority and done presentations with the agricultural extension officers in Dominica.

Wuddivira pointed out that 2021 World Food Prize winner Dr Shakuntala Haraksingh Thilsted is one of the FFA’s graduates, and said that the faculty continues to remain committed to ensuring that it creates a space that is sustainable and adaptable to the changing needs of the university and the world.

He added, “While we need to import certain things we cannot produce, a country that relies on (food) importation simply means our survival and the quality of life that we have is dictated by where we are getting our food from. We are looking at sustainability, and we are looking at the quality of the food that we produce, which will affect the quality of what we eat and determine the quality of life.

“I think we can look back and see the impact that we have made. But we have not stopped there, as we continue to look at the problems and opportunities.”

■ To book a tour of the **University Field Station** and learn more about this initiative email **Dr Isaac at wendy-ann.isaac@sta.uwi.edu**.



Project lead Dr Wendy Ann Isaac (right) distributes free seeds from the project’s seed bank to a patron at the Namdevco Farmers’ Market in Macoya.



FFA representatives from the Sustainable Seeds of Survival initiative engage farmers.

Tyrell Gittens is a conservationist, environmentalist and geographer dedicated to the sustainable development of T&T and the advancement of environmental education.

■ OUR GRADUATES

Prof Naola Ferguson-Noel

Pioneering researcher, inventor and award winner in poultry vaccines and mycoplasma

BY PAUL HADDEN

Before she was even old enough to know the meaning of words like “dissection”, “sample collection”, and “biology”, Professor Naola Ferguson-Noel was spending her childhood exploring her garden in her St Augustine home and collecting all the insects and creatures that she could get her hands on.

“When I was growing up, my room was full of jars of things like tadpoles, beetles, spiders, and snakes. I would go out and catch whatever I could find, observe the animals for a few weeks and then let them go. I was always just fascinated by how things in the natural world operated. Thankfully, even though my parents didn’t particularly like having these creatures in the house – my mother in particular was terrified of snakes – they always allowed me to do my thing. In addition to all of the bugs, I had lots of pets and was always rescuing strays, so I had quite a few dogs, cats, hamsters, and rabbits. Again, my parents weren’t too keen on this, but in spite of their personal preferences, they always managed to nurture my love of the natural world.”

This innate love of nature, fascination with animals, and naturally inquisitive mind would eventually lead her to enrol in the [then] newly formed UWI School of Veterinary Medicine (UWI-SVM).

“I think I started saying I wanted to be a vet since I was like seven years old,” says Professor Ferguson-Noel. However, the decision to study veterinary medicine was not one that she took lightly. “A lot of people think that just because you love animals you should be a vet, but it’s definitely not all about dealing with cute animals all day long. Many people don’t realise how challenging and, frankly, gross it can be to be a vet. You are going to be dealing with sick animals after all.”

After much deliberation and some encouragement from her parents to at least “give vet medicine a try”, she ended up joining the UWI-SVM and became part of what would be one of the programme’s smallest cohorts. “I think there were only six people in my year,” she recalls, “and I was one of the youngest students in the group.”

“My experience at UWI was great and has really served me well in the long run,” she says. “There was always a lot of one-on-one attention, and the professors were always open to talking to you and helping out. From day one, the programme also taught us how to talk about our area of study, which is not something that comes naturally. Writing about it is one thing, but being able to verbalise your research and be confident about what you are saying is an extremely difficult thing to do. This confidence that I garnered from my time at UWI has helped me immeasurably in my career today, especially with regards to my research on mycoplasma here at the University of Georgia.

“After I graduated from UWI I began to work under a veterinarian, but I really didn’t like working as a practising vet. The vet whom I was working with suggested that I look into avian medicine as he thought it might be an interesting field for me,” she recalls.

This interest was further deepened through her contact with Dr Gabriel Brown, a lecturer on the subject at the UWI-SVM. “Dr Brown was the one who



PHOTO CREDIT: AMY WARE/UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

‘Her impact is **truly global**, and her hard-work and dedication have made her **one of the most respected pioneers in the field of poultry vaccines and mycoplasma**. The vaccines that she has developed represent a major success for both **animal health and food production worldwide**.’



– Dr Karla Georges
Director of
The UWI School
of Veterinary
Medicine.

suggested different masters’ programmes to me, and the best one was at the University of Georgia. Once again, I was lucky to have very supportive parents who were on board with this move.”

The decision to leave home was not an easy one for Professor Ferguson-Noel. “I was always a homebody and I really didn’t want to leave Trinidad, but one day my dad told me I ‘should just go and do the programme. Trinidad will always be here,’ he said, ‘you can’t just think of yourself as a citizen of Trinidad, you have to think of yourself as a citizen of the world.’

“So I got on a plane, came to Georgia without knowing anybody, rented a car at the airport and drove to the university to begin my new journey.” In spite of the amazing opportunities that studying in Georgia would present, it was a difficult transition and she jokes that her professors told her that she was the most homesick student that they ever had! “These were the days before cell phones after all, and long distance calls were very expensive. It was tough, but I survived and it really was an excellent programme. People also tend to have a certain negative image of the South, but I found everybody to be very nice and welcoming, and had a great experience. After completing my master’s in Avian Medicine I went on to then start a PhD in Medical Microbiology where I specialised in mycoplasma research.”

Mycoplasma, its treatment, and the poultry industry

Mycoplasma is a respiratory disease which affects many species including poultry. “It is a bacteria that is very difficult to treat and very difficult to control,” explains Professor Ferguson-Noel. “Mycoplasma strains are naturally resistant to many antibiotics and tend to be chronic. In the poultry industry, a lot of antibiotics are being used around the world to treat mycoplasma infections, but part of my goal is to develop alternate methods so we can reduce this dependence on antibiotics. This is why most of my research has been on the development of mycoplasma vaccines.”

This research on mycoplasma has recently earned her the prestigious Inventor of the Year Award from the University of Georgia. Five invention disclosures from her research have resulted in two US patents and an array of foreign patents. Some of these vaccines developed by Professor Ferguson-Noel are already licensed and on the market in many countries.

Commenting on Professor Ferguson-Noel’s success, Dr Karla Georges, Director of UWI-SVM, says, “It’s truly mind-boggling what [she] has accomplished, and it is a massive achievement for the University of Georgia and, by extension, The UWI where she began her career. She is now somebody who is known worldwide in the field, and has managed to put Trinidad and Tobago on the map in the world of mycoplasma research. Her impact is truly global, and her hard-work and dedication have made her one of the most respected pioneers in the field of poultry vaccines and mycoplasma. The vaccines that she has developed

■ OUR GRADUATES

represent a major success for both animal health and food production worldwide.”

Both Professor Ferguson-Noel and Dr Georges credit their time at UWI as a major factor for their success, and agree that the small class sizes and personal interaction between the professors and students is one of the major appeals of the university.

“Everybody here knows you by name. Here at the UWI-SVM, you aren’t just a number on a page or a blank face in a classroom, and we tend to get to know the students quite personally. Of course, this can sometimes be tough, and it might feel like you are always being scrutinised, but in the end, it helps you to progress through the programme more easily. We even try to help you on an individual level if there are ever any administrative problems that crop up, and try our best to intervene and get stuff sorted out. You will never be left to just fend for yourself,” says Dr Georges.

That the UWI-SVM is located in the Caribbean is another reason for prospective students to consider studying here. “Another benefit of studying here at UWI,” adds Dr Georges, “is that we are in a tropical environment and can offer so much experiential learning opportunities with the vast diversity of different species that are found here in Trinidad and Tobago.”

Dr Georges also speaks about the high level of achievement of many of the programme’s graduates. “Most of our alumni are in positions of influence and are represented in all of the relevant administrative divisions throughout the Caribbean.” Professor Ferguson-Noel, of course, is one such among the UWI-SVM’s alumni in positions of influence.

However, like a true Trini, it’s not all about work for her. As much as she loves what she does, Professor Ferguson-Noel knows how to leave room for fun outside the lab. As Dr Georges can confirm, “Naola was always an open, friendly, caring person. She was also very well-rounded and fun-loving. She definitely wasn’t just a bookworm who only focused on her studies, but always knew how to have a good time as well. All of us students had a lot of fun together, and there were a lot of parties, Carnivals, and trips to Tobago together. We always made time to lime!”

Professor Ferguson-Noel currently lives in Georgia with her husband Dr Richard Noel who is a practising veterinarian, and her two teenage sons. She continues to make important developments with global impact, and credits her success to the support of her family.

“Nobody does this on their own,” she says, “and I think I am lucky to have had very open-minded, understanding, and supportive parents. They never made me feel like anything I wanted to do was impossible or crazy. There were also so many professors and teachers who opened up my mind to the different possibilities within this field. I don’t even want to start naming people because there are so many who have helped me along the way.”

Her advice to students who are currently studying or considering studying veterinary medicine is this:

“Expand your mind as to where you can go. A lot of people tend to associate vets with dogs, cats, horses, and cows – and that’s absolutely fine – but there is a very broad diversity of careers in veterinary medicine. There are UWI graduates and SVM graduates everywhere who are doing fantastic work all the time in many different fields. You never know where life will take you.”



With her husband Richard Noel and their children on vacation at Bondi Beach in Australia.

In the poultry industry, **a lot of antibiotics are being used around the world to treat mycoplasma infections**, but part of my goal is to develop **alternate methods so we can reduce this dependence on antibiotics**. This is why most of my research has been on the **development of mycoplasma vaccines**.

Five invention disclosures from her research have resulted in **two US patents and an array of foreign patents**.

Some of these vaccines developed by Professor Ferguson-Noel are already **licensed and on the market in many countries**.



Dr Ferguson-Noel (centre) and her parents Professor Theo and Mrs Gloria Ferguson at the Veterinarian's Oath taking ceremony, Amphitheatre A, Faculty of Medical Sciences, 1996.



Visiting a poultry farm in North Georgia with two colleagues from UGA, Dr Vijay Durairaj (left) and Mr Patrick Black.

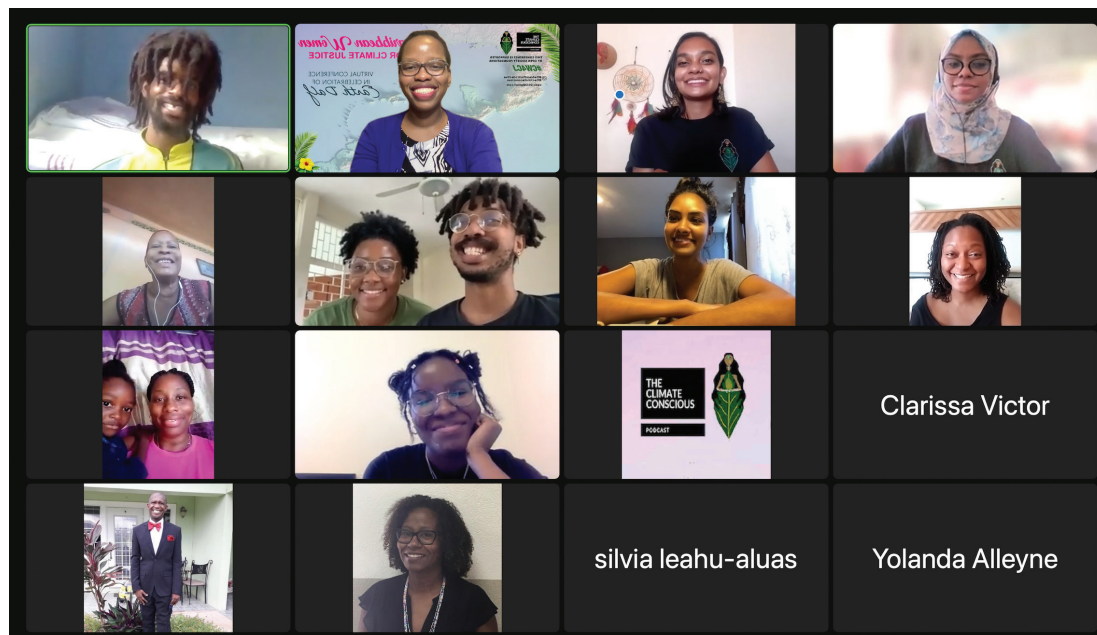
■ OUR GRADUATES

Caribbean Woman, Climate Conscious

BY ZAHRA GORDON



Environmentalist
Derval Barzey



Working in the energy sector was somewhat of a wake-up call for environmentalist Derval Barzey. She had a lifelong interest in the environment, but her position at an oil and gas company in environmental risk management put more into perspective. There, she saw firsthand how energy impacted the environment and, moreover, how climate change was a multifaceted issue – one such facet was the lack of Caribbean voices in climate advocacy.

“It’s not just a climate crisis – it’s a health crisis. It’s an economic crisis. I wanted to help people who would listen make that connection,” said Barzey speaking of her podcast, *The Climate Conscious*. “Although climate change is a global issue, the conversations are being dominated now by what we refer to as the Global North or developed nations. The flip side to that is me being from the Caribbean and observing the impacts of climate change and acknowledging that our region is classed as one of the most, if not the most, vulnerable regions for climate change. If persons are not really involved in the environmental or sustainability space, they’re basically going about their lives trying to survive and put food on the table, and not really making the connection between their lives, their livelihood, and the climate crisis.”

The Climate Conscious is focused on discussing advocacy around climate change and environmental sustainability, specifically in the Caribbean and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Started in 2020, the podcast has been quite successful in its two-year existence. Listed as one of the top sustainability podcasts in 2021 by University College London, *Climate Conscious* has 41 episodes and 4,550 downloads thus far with listeners in 106 countries. The podcast was also the foundation for the recently held “Caribbean Women for Climate Justice Conference” organised by Barzey in conjunction with Guyanese NGO, The Breadfruit Collective.

All of these projects are a culmination of years of studying the environment and acknowledging the need for regional action on climate change. Barzey is an alumna of both The UWI St Augustine and the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business (now known as the Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business), where she obtained a BSc in Environmental and Natural Resource Management and an MBA in Sustainable Energy Management. She noted that her time at The UWI was pivotal in her transition from interest in the environment, to career, to then the passion project of her podcast.

‘It was pointed out that, particularly in our region, women seem to be the face of climate activism, and even though that is true, the issue is that in the seats of power, it doesn’t often reflect the gender dynamics of the actual population. – Derval Barzey

“UWI sowed the seeds of it. The programme gave me broad exposure to environment and natural resource management, but also looking at natural ecosystems and getting an understanding of the biodiversity that exists in our space. One fascinating thing for me was looking at seawater under the microscope and discovering all the organisms that exist in a drop of seawater. It helped me to understand how vast our environment is beyond what we can see with the natural eye, and go deeper into my appreciation of the environment.

“There’s a lot going on in the region, but because of our geographic fragmentation, we haven’t really figured out regional integration fully yet. So, I could be doing something in T&T and somebody doing something similar in Jamaica, but we’re unaware of each other. If we were able to partner or collaborate, we could be able to share resources and ideas, and the results could be much more effective,” she said.

According to Barzey, there’s a need for integrated action in the Caribbean that goes beyond signing international agreements. “For us as SIDS, we have similar lived experiences when it comes to the climate crisis, and coming together would allow us to make stronger representation for ourselves as opposed to going alone. There’s a saying that

we are stronger together, and that’s definitely true because we’re coming up against more powerful nations and are demanding that they act responsibly. Another side of it would be our shared history of colonisation and exploitation which came out as being the root of the climate and gender injustice issue. There’s more that brings us together than separates us, and for us to be effective in what we accomplish, we need to partner,” added Barzey.

Part of her purpose for both the podcast and conference was also highlighting the need for more female voices, not only in activist circles, but as top environmental decision makers. “It was pointed out that, particularly in our region, women seem to be the face of climate activism, and even though that is true, the issue is that in the seats of power, it doesn’t often reflect the gender dynamics of the actual population. So, when we talk about climate and gender justice, it’s about ensuring that whatever decisions are being made, the perspectives, experiences and concerns of women are accounted for. Whereas we have a lot of women involved in activism, we also need a lot of women to be involved in decision-making and planning to ensure that our needs are catered to,” noted Barzey.

As such, Caribbean Women for Climate Justice made the intersectionality of gender and climate change their main theme. Held virtually from April 21-24, 2022, the conference was made possible by a grant from the Open Society Foundation. There were 27 panellists and 250 registrants from 21 countries. They discussed human rights, climate resilience and gender equality, and included not only panel discussions, but also film screenings, storytelling for children and a wellness session. One of the 34 conference community co-sponsors was the UWI Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) IGNITE. One of the outcomes from the conference is the creation of a database of regional environmental stakeholders. The database will be made accessible to the public through a partnership with the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute.

The conference solidified the need for continued discussion and action on a regional level, but also made it clear that true change is required from the bottom up. “I’m happy to know that there is wide interest in the environment. I just think that we need greater engagement between the persons on the ground – because we have a lot of grassroots activism – and the seats of power.”

■ OUR CAMPUS

There has always been something otherworldly about the Natural Sciences Building at UWI St Augustine. The historic home of the Faculty of Science and Technology, students have walked its halls, climbed its stairs, and taken part in its classes and labs for decades. There's a whole Zoology Museum filled with many exotic and enthralling species of plants and animals. Then there's the Physics Department.

This department, dedicated to the study of the universe and its fundamental forces, has become home to special units that support its programmes of study and research, serve the campus, and provide revenue generating services to the public. What kind of services? They range from detection and analysis of materials useful for the energy sector, agriculture, and construction; to powerful imagery generation technology for medical research and engineering; to even repairing a client's specialised equipment.

The units are the Electronics Workshop, the Electron Microscopy Unit, the X-Ray Diffraction (XRD) Unit and the Mechanical Woodwork Shop. The first three are particularly active, with staff members applying their practical knowledge of science and technology to a variety of tasks and research projects which rival what you might have seen on the television show *The Big Bang Theory*. Among their clients are the Tobago House of Assembly, CARIRI, and the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards.

Dr Davinder Sharma, Head, Department of Physics believes that the units have the potential to support the UWI in realising its strategic goals. They share the campus' expertise with clients from the wider society – and earn revenue. The department's Master of Science (MSc) in Renewable Energy Technology and Master of Biomedical Physics programmes are some of their major sources of income, but the units are also doing their part on a smaller but significant scale.

Services for business, industry, science and the individual

The Electronics Workshop commenced operations in 1995 and is currently supervised by Mr Michael "Noel" Charles. The workshop provides maintenance services (for electronic lab and testing equipment, and computers and their peripherals), student project assistance, research and development, along with practical electronic training for the BSc Biomedical Technology programme. They also offer services to institutions, companies, and schools.

The XRD Unit houses a Bruker X-Ray Powder Diffraction system which was upgraded in 2015. It allows for non-destructive x-ray diffractometry for powder and particulate samples. The unit's Chief Engineering Technician Mr Shazaad Ali Shah, explains that they bombard samples of fine grains and powders with x-rays as the samples are rotated 180 degrees. Once that is done, "the diffracted x-rays are analysed by a collector-tube. We then use a specialised software for peak detection, mineral/material identification, and structural analysis."

The XRD machine can be used for crystallography, a science concerned with the structure and properties of crystals. Organisations have used the service for oil exploration, volcanic material identification, fertiliser content, and asphalt quality to determine viability and set quality controls.

"Just recently a postgraduate candidate published a paper in a reputed journal about different kidney stone identifications," says Ali Shah.

"This data can be used in future developments or for maintaining quality controls," he explains. "It simply depends how we decide to interpret all the data we get."

Led by Development Engineer Mr David Hinds, the team of the Electron Microscopy Unit harnesses the power of a Transmission Electron Microscope (TEM) to capture eye-popping images of the ultra-structure of biological and non-biological materials. They examine plant and animal tissue, bacteria and viruses, and non-biological samples. The unit's Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) produces high-resolution imaging of surfaces and can do elemental analysis, imaging, mapping, line scan, and report generation. The team has used it to examine animal and plant tissue, teeth for dental research, bacteria, fossils, nanomaterials and more.

Referring to the university's goal of "improving the quality, quantity and impact of research, innovation and publication," Dr Sharma declares, "we are basically motivating impactful research work within the university." He states that the XRD and Electron Microscopy units are instrumental to researchers not only in physics, but in areas like chemistry, medical sciences and other engineering departments.

"We encourage school students and others interested to visit and see how actually it works and what careers can be [pursued]

Research, Revenue, and Tools for Teaching and Learning

Physics Department special units combine expertise, technology to offer income-generating services to the public

BY DIXIE-ANN BELLE



Dr Davinder Sharma,
Head, Department of Physics

Dr Davinder Sharma, Head, Department of Physics believes that the units have the potential to support the **UWI in realising its strategic goals**. They share the campus' expertise with clients from the wider society – **and earn revenue**.

worldwide after having expertise in them, along with a degree from The UWI." One possibility could be the field of material science which he says has exciting potential and for which scientists have been awarded Nobel prizes.

Even though the units charge for their services, they are able to offer those services to clients at costs that are generally less than other options available in Trinidad.

Revenue and savings for the campus

The Electronics Workshop also saves precious university finances because the team repairs equipment across the campus. Charles notes that his staff's duties include "equipment maintenance, acquisition of equipment and parts, commissioning and decommissioning of equipment, assisting students with their research projects, training, research and development and consultation". Recently, they developed a prototype of an ultraviolet disinfectant robot for sanitisation against COVID-19. Its efficacy is being tested.

Their services are sought across the campus for a wide variety of tasks. Some surprises can appear on their to-do lists.

"One of the more interesting requests we received was the repair of a cattle orgasmic probe. This probe is inserted anally to stimulate the bull to produce semen," remarks Charles.

Pointing out that seeking repairs of research and general equipment outside of the campus could be expensive, Dr Sharma says that the work of the unit saves The UWI thousands of dollars.

The Department's goals for the units involve expanding their reach outside of the university and improving the services they offer, assisting in The UWI's objective to "increase and improve academic/industry research partnerships".

Dr Sharma says they are working to procure a 3D printer and a troubleshooting kit at motherboard level for the Electronics Workshop, and looking at the possibility of providing certification

for various medical equipment and developing renewable energy kits for schools. They are also preparing a proposal to procure a new SEM and a new TEM for the Electron Microscopy Unit.

Recently, they received samples of nanomaterials from India, and they are ready to take on more exciting projects in the Caribbean and beyond.

"We are getting ready to fulfill outside customer demand," affirms Dr Sharma.

The units pride themselves on knowing the importance of excellent customer service, and their high level of expertise, knowledge and experience in their staff. The team in the Electronics Workshop, for example, cover over 75 years of combined experience, with qualifications ranging from engineering degrees to diplomas in Electrical and Electronics Engineering Technology (EET).

Dr Sharma highlights the competitive cost of the services in the units, and says that they offer the added benefit of the knowledge and experience to provide consultations and help with problem solving.

"We can help industry to develop their projects," he observes. "We can collaborate with them and do industrial level projects to solve their specific problems."

■ Electronics Workshop

Website: <https://sta.uwi.edu/fst/electronics/index.asp>
T: 1(868) 662-2002, Ext. 82317 | 1(868) 662-6134
E: ews.s@sta.uwi.edu

■ XRD Unit

Website: <https://sta.uwi.edu/fst/physics/x-ray-diffraction>,
Esadira.khan@sta.uwi.edu | adrian.gayah@sta.uwi.edu

■ Electron Microscopy Unit

Website: <https://sta.uwi.edu/fst/physics/electronmicroscope>
E: david.hinds@sta.uwi.edu | emu@sta.uwi.edu

UWI Calendar of Events | July 2022

Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering's Virtual Master's Programmes Information Session

July 14

ONLINE

Have you completed your first degree in engineering or an engineering-related discipline and are considering furthering your education to develop your knowledge, skills, and competitive advantage in the job market or workplace? The Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering is hosting a virtual information session on their Master of Science programmes. The session will give attendees the info they need about the opportunities available for educational and professional development in these dynamic fields. This virtual event will be hosted on Zoom.

To register, go to <https://bit.ly/DMMEmscinfoession>.

For more information, email mechanical.engineering@sta.uwi.edu or adminassistant.mecheng@sta.uwi.edu.



Science, Human Population Dynamics, and Development Policy Agendas in Caribbean SIDS

July 22

ONLINE

This virtual seminar, hosted by The Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES), will feature demographer/statistician and survey research specialist Dr Godfrey St Bernard. Dr Bernard is the Acting Director of SALISES. His areas of focus are population and sustainable development, evidence-based decision-making in social policy, the wellbeing of youth, violence prevention and safety, vulnerability and resilience in small states, and return migration. This webinar, hosted on Zoom, is part of the SALISES Spotlight Series, a project that showcases the outstanding scholarship and expertise of its fellows to the public.

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/policyagendasincaribbeansids>. For more information, email salises@sta.uwi.edu.

Customer Service Workshop: Creating the Ultimate CX: The Roadmap to Brand Leadership

July 13 and 14

ONLINE

Creating a positive customer experience can result in greater sales opportunities, increased customer loyalty, and a strong brand reputation. This Business Development Unit workshop teaches participants about the new service environment and the changing needs of customers, and how to understand the importance of service excellence and customer experience (CX). They will also learn strategies for delivering service excellence, how to prepare and apply management tools for CX, and how to apply CX principles.

This two-day workshop will be facilitated by Dr Leslie-Ann Jordan-Miller, Senior Lecturer at The UWI St Augustine Department of Management Studies, Founder and Director of the Institute of Service Quality Management Ltd, and Certified Manager of Quality/Organisational Excellence (CMQ/OE) from the American Society for Quality (ASQ). The workshop will be delivered on Zoom.

Cost: TT\$1,400/US\$200

A 10 percent group discount is available for groups of three or more individuals attending from the same organisation, as well as members of The UWI campus community. Online payment option available (bank charges of 3% applies).

Contact Dalaiah at sta-fssbdu@sta.uwi.edu, or visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/fss/business-development-unit> for registration details, or complete the registration form at <https://uwi.jotform.com/221564395274865>.

Web Development Boot Camp

July 18 to 25

ONLINE

Careers in technology are in high demand globally and are expected to keep growing. The Department of Computing and Information Technology (DCIT) at UWI St Augustine is offering a web development boot camp that can prepare young people for a career in this exciting field. The boot camp is designed for secondary school students in forms 4, 5 and 6, and prospective undergraduate students with no programming experience. They will learn the fundamentals of web development - from design, to coding, and deployment. Participants will be taught web design and prototyping, HTML 5, CSS 3 and JavaScript Es6, web animation and web APIs. This online event will be hosted on Zoom, and gives students the opportunity to interact with UWI lecturers, guest speakers and mentors.

Cost: TT\$625.00

To register, visit <https://sta.uwi.edu/fst/dcit/bootcamp/2022/home>. For more information, email DCIT.Bootcamp@sta.uwi.edu or go to their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/dcitbootcamp>.

Fête Champêtre: The Garden Party

July 24

St Augustine Campus

The UWI Development and Endowment Fund (UWIDEF) is excited to announce *Fête Champêtre* – The Garden Party. There will be bubbly to excite patrons and the fashion is expected to be fun, garden glam with fascinators, feathers, and flowers for the tresses. All profits from this all-inclusive event will go towards providing bursaries to assist deserving students. Secure your early-bird tickets for *Fête Champêtre* and spread the word to your networks.

Cost: \$750 | Tickets available now at:

- Division of Student Services and Development, Student Administration Building, UWI
- Saith's Gas Station, Marabella
- Republic Bank:
UWI / Long Circular Mall / Grand Bazaar / Trincity Mall / Gulf City Mall

For updates, visit the UWI Fete Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/UWIFete/>.

