



N E W B E G I N N I N G S



Homecoming

Students from UWI St Augustine gather under a tree on the main campus. Since March 2020, the campus has been closed because of the pandemic. There were no in-person classes, and students lost the benefits of spending time on this alluring and expansive space. This August, they were welcomed back for Academic Year 2022/2023, once more allowing them to partake in one of the most important – and fun – aspects of the university experience. PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM



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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

B E G I N N I N G S

On March 14, 2020, all places of learning in Trinidad and Tobago were closed to students to prevent the spread of COVID-19. What was meant to be a short-term response to the risks of a pandemic had no choice but to be continued. By the end of March, UWI St Augustine sealed its gates to all but Campus Security and a few colleagues with essential functions. For more than two years, our campus was a ghost town. Finally, that time is over.

It gives me great pleasure in this, my first message in UWI Today as Campus Principal, to celebrate the physical reopening of UWI St Augustine. As a campus community, we are embarking on several new beginnings – new academic year, return to campus, and new leadership. These are auspicious times, and my hope is that all of us – students, faculty, and staff – can recognise the potential in this moment. It is customary to treat a new year as a new beginning. As members of a community in higher education we are blessed with the gift of two New Years. Let us make Academic Year 2022/2023 the starting point for a journey towards new levels of excellence on a thriving campus.

I have been part of this university for decades, first at the Cave Hill Campus, and then as Dean of the Faculty of Law at St Augustine, and I am as committed to this institution as I am to our region. Throughout my career, I have been guided by my belief in our exceptional nature as Caribbean people and an imperative to make a positive contribution to communities, the society, and the world.

We are as intelligent, creative, and capable as anyone anywhere, and our abilities find their greatest expression in the service of justice, equality, and improving lives. I am fortunate to be part of an institution that gives me the opportunity to work so closely in alignment with these values. I am grateful for the trust placed in me to lead this campus.

We face many challenges – as an institution and a region. In fact, the world is beset by crises. However, I am confident that UWI St Augustine can and will thrive in the coming years. We will have to



We face many challenges – as an institution and a region. In fact, the world is beset by crises. However, I am confident that UWI St Augustine can and will thrive in the coming years. We will have to work very hard, show great resilience and harness our creative dynamism. It will not be easy but we can do it.

work very hard, show great resilience and harness our creative dynamism. It will not be easy, but we can do it. As a former dean of a brand new faculty, I had the experience of establishing and building an enterprise in challenging circumstances, which I hope served me well. We succeeded because our will to win was stronger than any obstacle. That will resides in all of us. I look forward to working with staff and other stakeholders in unleashing that potential.

To our students, new and returning, I welcome you to the campus. More than an educational investment, many of you will find on this campus a home away from home and an extended family. We will do our best to serve you. To all faculty and staff, this is a team effort. We will ensure that our team members are heard. To the people of T&T and the region, The UWI is *your* university. The services we provide go well beyond education. We are a Caribbean asset, and we are at our best when focused laser-like on the needs of Caribbean society. Let me assure you, some of our best work is yet to come.

I would also like to thank my predecessor, Professor Brian Copeland for his steady and dedicated leadership during his time as Campus Principal. I wish him all success in his next endeavors.

In closing, I would like every member of The UWI St Augustine Campus community to appreciate the importance of this moment. The pandemic has eased, much of the world has reopened. It is a new era and we have work to do. Let us arise in power and make this a new golden era for UWI St Augustine.

Rose-Marie Antoine

Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine

Campus Principal

A New Home for the Eric Williams Collection

Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago Dr Keith Rowley and Mrs Erica Williams-Connell, daughter of former Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams, cut the ribbon for the new Dr Eric Williams Memorial Library in Port-of-Spain on August 30, 2022. For many years, the late Prime Minister's library and archives, a national resource of great significance to the region, were housed at The UWI St Augustine's Alma Jordan Library. Speaking at the opening, Campus Principal Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine (third from right) said, "For a long time, the UWI has been the guardian of this treasure, tucked away in the hallowed halls of academia. It has already done much.... Now, however, housed in this national library, there is the opportunity for it to reach so many more, to once again teach the public, the man and woman on the street, as Eric Williams himself did on Woodford Square."

In the photo as well, from left, are Port-of-Spain Mayor Mr Joel Martinez, Prime Minister of Jamaica Mr Andrew Holness, UDeCOTT Chairman Mr Noel Garcia (in rear), Chief Justice Mr Ivor Archie and UDeCOTT Chief Executive Officer Ms Tamica Charles-Phillips. PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM



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FOOD

‘I am not seeing the urgency’

UWI agriculture, economic experts call for greater action towards food sovereignty in the shadow of COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict

BY TYRELL GITTENS

It’s a known fact that Trinidad and Tobago’s food security is deeply connected to the global economic climate. But experts from UWI St Augustine are warning that Trinidad and Tobago’s food security is actually in a precarious state as the country’s food import bill continues to rise despite economic decline over the past several years.

During The UWI’s July 29 Trade and Economic Development Unit online forum on food security, economist Dr Roger Hosein called on stakeholders to produce a viable strategy to reduce the food import bill.

Dr Hosein explained, “Between 2008 and 2020, food imports increased 12 percent, GDP per capita fell 20 percent, and official reserves fell 26 percent, but retail food prices increased 165 percent.

“It’s time to get our act together... we need a detailed understanding of our food import bill and where our food comes from, so we can plan what proportion could be substituted within Caricom.”

Frustrated by the “lip service” paid to the issue, Hosein said T&T will remain food insecure, especially as food prices continue to rise, if the issue of food sovereignty isn’t addressed.

In a food secure country, all people – at all times – have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs. What sets a food sovereign country apart is that such a country also controls the policies of food production and distribution.

With up to 80 percent of its food products imported, T&T isn’t considered food sovereign.

Pointing out that the price of flour – a food staple – rose due to the disruptive effects of the Russia-Ukraine war on global wheat supply, Dr Hosein said the war is an example of how shocks to the global food supply chain affect countries that are not food sovereign. When the availability and accessibility of a food staple like flour become affected, food security is in turn affected.

Apart from a lack of food sovereignty, Hosein added, “We have a situation where our stock of foreign exchange is basically equal to our external debt.”

He explained, “If you have a stock of foreign exchange that is basically equal to your external debt, then you have to get your act together because some of the food imports that you are accustomed to, you won’t be able to afford in some form in the future.”

\$6 billion in food imports

Former Faculty of Food and Agriculture Dean and major regional voice for food security, and sovereignty Professor Wayne Ganpat said it isn’t impossible for the country to achieve food security, but it will take effort. On average, T&T spends at least \$6 billion on food imports. The Russia-Ukraine war and the COVID-19 pandemic have pushed the bill higher.

Unconvinced the country has learnt much from the



We are two years into the pandemic and I am really not seeing the urgency. I’m not seeing the increased production. I am not seeing the activities and the headway that we should be making in making ourselves food secure.

Professor Wayne Ganpat
Former UWI Faculty of Food and Agriculture Dean



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Economist Dr Roger Hosein

pandemic and war, Prof Ganpat wants to see a substantial increase in local food production.

“We have slow local and regional efforts for our immediate needs. We have spoken about them (our food needs) since the start of the pandemic,” he said.

“We are two years into the pandemic and I am really not seeing the urgency,” Prof Ganpat pointed out. “I’m not seeing the increased production. I am not seeing the activities and the headway that we should be making in making ourselves food secure.”

While Prof Ganpat commended recent national initiatives like the Ministry of Youth Development’s Youth Agricultural Homestead Programme, and the national home gardening campaign, he wants more to be done.

For now, he thinks T&T setting a goal of producing at least 50 percent of its food products is achievable.

“We will never be able to fill that plate [of producing all food locally], but we have to have the majority, or a greater part of that plate, locally produced,” he said. “When I say locally, maybe regionally as well but not from the outside... not extra-regionally, not from the food provided to us by the importers.... They should not be able to dictate what’s on our plate.”

Even though he recognises the barriers to greater agricultural productivity – like the availability of arable land for large-scale agriculture – Dr Hosein said it is still not an excuse for not ramping up production.

With farming methods like vertical farming optimising spaces, Dr Hosein said, “We don’t have land in a big way but whatever land we have, we have to use it wisely [along with] greenhouses and shade houses. These are intensive systems that could produce a lot more vegetables on a given portion of land than if you did it traditionally.”

Looking to the sea

Managing Director of Kent Farms Limited, Mr Kent Vieira, said his company has made strides in modernising its production systems to maximise outputs and revamp its products to attract local consumers.

Though a demand for local seafood exists, Vieira noted that efforts should be made to refine products.

He recalled, “Last year, we were able to supply PriceSmart.... they were able to refine our packaging and presentation. We sold whole fish in PriceSmart – something people often want filleted. The whole fish did extremely well for the [2021] Lenten period and it was all down to how it was marketed and presented.”

Already offering a variety of fish products, including fillets and fish balls, Vieira teased his farm is researching the feasibility of farming a new fish species to make fish fingers.

Looking forward, Vieira added, “Most of our equipment is electrical, so it lends well for us to be able to use solar power at the farm and move towards that green opportunity.”



■ CAMPUS NEWS

PROFESSOR SELWYN RYAN *remembered in painting*

He has been described as a **national treasure**, and on July 9, a few months after his passing in March of this year, the friends, colleagues and family of Professor Selwyn Ryan gathered together for a very special commemoration. Artist and educator Dr James Armstrong paid tribute to the late social scientist with a portrait that was gifted to his widow, Mrs Jan Ryan.

Dr Armstrong, better known as “Jim”, explained in his description of the piece that, “It was while liming at Selwyn’s home that I caught him gazing with admiration at his wife, Jan. I thought that I should capture the moment with my phone camera. Thereafter, I decided to experiment with a new painting technique on copper and while going through my images came upon the photo of Selwyn. I decided to paint his portrait, as a surprise.”

He added, “Since it was an experimental painting and he was not aware, I was under no pressure to move with haste. The painting was in progress for about two years, when, unfortunately, Selwyn passed away. The painting was completed and handed over to Jan so that we may always be able to reflect on that gaze of love.”

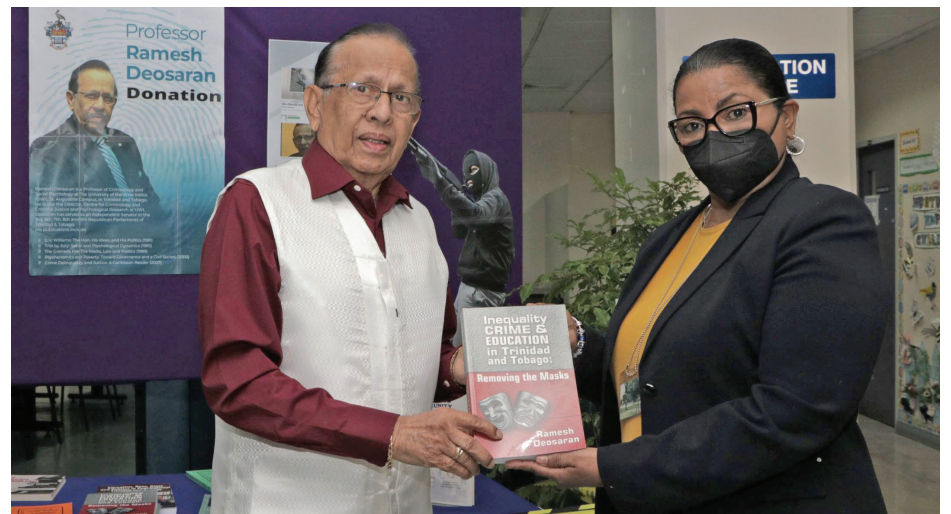
The event, held at the Ryan residence, brought together a host of national figures – leaders in academia, public policy, business, and the arts.

“I first met Selwyn Ryan while I was a student at Ryerson in Toronto in 1968,” said Dr Armstrong. “He had already completed his postgraduate studies and was lecturing at York University in Toronto. I believe that our first encounter was on the occasion of a lecture by the visiting Tanzanian President, Julius Nyerere.

“My recollection of Selwyn was that he was quiet and intense, as if always pondering something that was not yet evident, but which was there to be determined. We talked about politics back home and of his earlier experiences in Toronto. His quiet scholarship was most evident.”



Dr James Armstrong unveils the portrait of Prof Ryan.
Mrs Jan Ryan receives the gift.



Deputy Campus Librarian Miss Allison Dolland thanks Professor Ramesh Deosaran for the donated books.

PROFESSOR RAMESH DEOSARAN *donates collection of books to The UWI*

Professor Ramesh Deosaran, Emeritus Professor, one of the Caribbean’s leading scholars on crime and justice, institutional development, and education, has donated a collection of his books to The UWI St Augustine School of Education Library. The handover was made on July 27 at a short ceremony on the campus.

Speaking at the ceremony, Professor Deosaran said, “the education system and its vulnerabilities are open to forces of social contact and social class.” These forces, he explained, “work against the ideal of education” and while deepening social stratification they create a challenge in closing the gap created by such inequalities.

Among the books donated in his collection were *Inequality, Crime and Education in Trinidad and Tobago: Removing the Masks*; *Education, Race, Class, and Politics in Post-Colonial Trinidad and Tobago*; and *Psychonomics and Poverty*.

In his long career, Professor Deosaran amassed a wealth of experience and expertise in teaching, research, and policy development. He is a former independent senator, former Director of The UWI Centre for Criminal Justice and Criminology, former Director of the ANSA McAL Psychological Research Centre, and the President (Acting) and Programme Professor in Public Safety of the University of Trinidad and Tobago. In 2013, he was awarded the Order of Trinidad and Tobago for distinguished and outstanding service to the nation.

Receiving the books on behalf of the library was Deputy Campus Librarian Ms Allison Dolland, who expressed gratitude for the gift. Professor Jerome De Lisle, Director of the School of Education, praised Professor Deosaran for producing scholarly work with significant social impact on society.



Learn More

It’s never too early (or too late) to learn more about the hundreds of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered at UWI St. Augustine across eight faculties; our easy online payment plans, scholarships and bursaries; applying with CSEC, CAPE and alternative qualifications; opportunities for internships and to study abroad; our robust student support programme; how you can build a network of peers across different industries and countries; or how you can become a #GameChanger.

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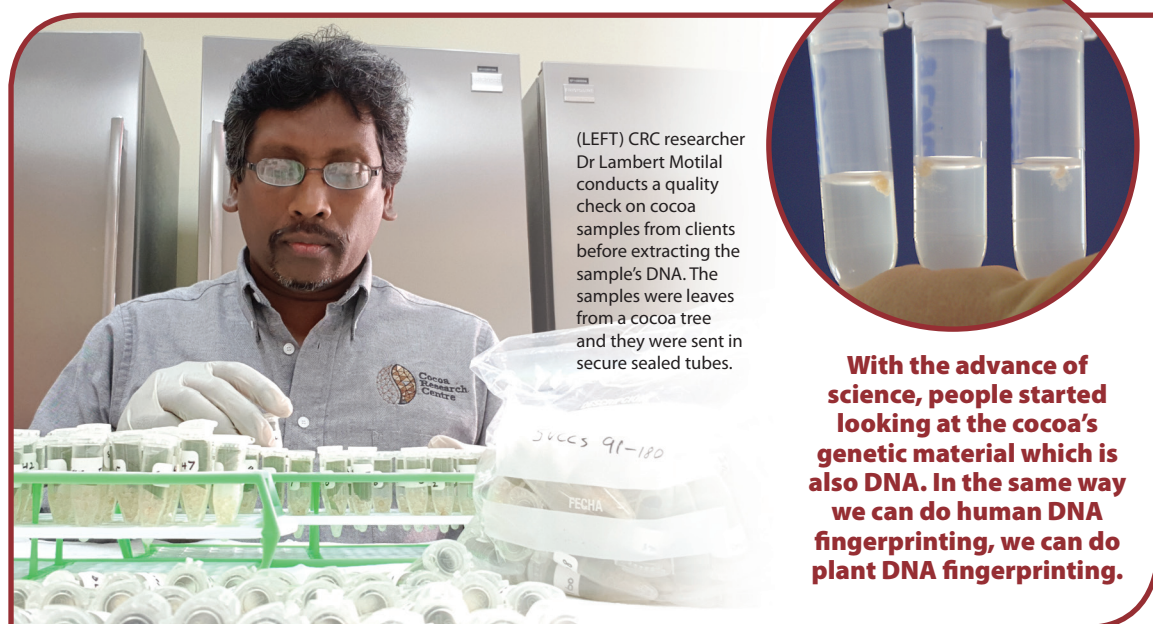
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RESEARCH



USING COCOA DNA to help identify varieties

BY TYRELL GITTENS



(LEFT) CRC researcher Dr Lambert Motilal conducts a quality check on cocoa samples from clients before extracting the sample's DNA. The samples were leaves from a cocoa tree and they were sent in secure sealed tubes.

With the advance of science, people started looking at the cocoa's genetic material which is also DNA. In the same way we can do human DNA fingerprinting, we can do plant DNA fingerprinting.

Advances in DNA sequencing methods have helped law enforcement catch perpetrators and given rise to genealogy research whereby people learn more about their ancestry. But did you know researchers at the UWI St Augustine Cocoa Research Centre (CRC) are using DNA sequencing to offer a Cocoa DNA Fingerprinting service to help cultivators identify the variety and ancestry of cocoa they grow?

In an interview with UWI TODAY, CRC's Team Leader of Genomics Dr Lambert Motilal said researchers once distinguished cocoa varieties using attributes like the colour of the tree's leaves, size and shape of cocoa pods and beans, and the texture and taste of the cocoa pulp. However, these traditional methods were not very accurate and were susceptible to human errors.

"Using these sort of (traditional) descriptions to delineate varieties can only take us so far," Dr Motilal explained.

"There is a DNA fingerprinting database for people where, if you are able to retrieve DNA from body tissue, you can determine if someone was present at a particular area by comparing their DNA profile to the profiles in the database," he said. "With the advance of science, people started looking at the cocoa's genetic material, which is also DNA. In the same way we can do human DNA fingerprinting, we can do plant DNA fingerprinting."

Serving local and international clients

Spearheaded by CRC director Prof Pathmanathan Umaharan – with assistance from Dr Motilal and other CRC researchers – the building blocks of the service were put together in 2015. In 2016, the centre started servicing its global clientele.

Several methods can be used to profile cocoa DNA, but the team at UWI uses single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) and relies on the SNP profiles of over 2,300 cocoa varieties in the CRC curated International Cocoa Genebank Trinidad (ICGT) as its original DNA database.

"At CRC, we have developed a panel of SNP markers that will identify varieties in our genebank," said Dr Motilal. "This panel can separate nearly all of them. The clients send us a leaf, or part of a leaf, and we extract the DNA from it and we use our panels of SNPs to fingerprint these samples that they sent."

"For example, we can tell if two varieties of cocoa are the same or if they are descended from a particular variety."

Testing one sample costs US\$51, and in 2020 alone, the CRC earned US\$30,000. The service brought in US\$38,000 in 2021.

Small batches of samples are sequenced at the centre, while large batches are outsourced to a facility which uses the CRC's panels of SNPs. To date, the service has attracted clientele from Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, England, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti,

Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Taiwan, Thailand, Venezuela, and T&T. The CRC recently received service requests from the Philippines, Hawaii and Guyana.

Dr Motilal told UWI TODAY, "We decided to offer this service worldwide to anyone who wanted to determine what variety they had or find out its genetic background."

Varieties dating back to the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture

He added, "Cocoa as a plant, like any other plant, has different varieties, including commercially improved farmer varieties, so some clients want to know what varieties they have."

Clients often want to know if their samples share similar DNA to the ICS 1 and ICS 95 cocoa varieties which Motilal explained were naturally developed in T&T.

Researchers at The UWI's previous incarnation – the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture – selected some varieties in Trinidad in the early 1930s and named the cocoa varieties "ICS", which means Imperial College Selections.

Dr Motilal explained, "These two varieties were shared worldwide. There are ICS 1 varieties in the Caribbean, Indonesia, Pacific islands and in South America, for example. ICS 95 has great promise in terms of being partially resistant or tolerant to Frosty Pod Rot disease, which is a very impactful cocoa disease found in South and Central America but spreading through the Caribbean."

As discussions continue about diversifying T&T's economy, which will include expanding the local cocoa market, Dr Motilal said the CRC's services are useful in many ways.

One way is helping farmers determine what varieties of cocoa are best to propagate and use, given that many local farms still have cocoa trees containing old genetic materials with high flavour profiles.

"We can tell the client their trees have certain ancestry profiles which gives a clue as to how the variety will progress and perform. A variety that is high in Amelonado ancestry is likely to have a strong cocoa flavour. A variety that is high in Criollo or Nacional ancestry is likely to have fine cocoa flavor," he said.

While these services exist elsewhere, Motilal explained that investing in the centre's services to ensure it remains cutting edge and a worldwide hub for science and technology can be financially lucrative:

"We would like The UWI to make this Cocoa DNA Fingerprinting service known locally, regionally and internationally."

"One way that we can make money for the university, one way we can keep ourselves afloat is to have consultancy services that people would actually like to have done with a reputable agency like the CRC."

DR AMY DEACON wins international award for her work in fish biology

Dr Amy Deacon, lecturer in Zoology in the Department of Life Sciences, has been awarded the Fisheries Society of the British Isles (FSBI) Medal 2022 for her "exceptional advances" in the study of fish biology and fisheries science. She received her medal at the FSBI 2022 Annual Symposium held from July 25 to 29 in Nottingham, England.

The FSBI Medal is awarded to an early career scientist who has made great progress in the field. Dr Deacon was announced as the winner in February 2022. She received her medal in person, and gave a talk on her research at the symposium held at Nottingham Trent University.

"I feel incredibly honoured to have been chosen to receive this medal," she said in an interview with UWI TODAY. "It is especially nice to be recognised not just for my scientific contributions, but also for raising awareness of freshwater biodiversity more broadly. For me, both are vital given the imminent threats to freshwater habitats globally – and particularly in the tropics."

Dr Deacon also expressed gratitude to her colleagues and students, singling out her former PhD supervisor Professor Anne Magurran (a Professor of Ecology at the University of St Andrews in Scotland).

"Professor Magurran continues to be an invaluable mentor long after I submitted my thesis more than 12 years ago," she said.

At the symposium, she presented on the topic "Bringing the Guppy Home", which focused on her Trinidad-based research that has shed light on the guppy's role as an invasive species globally.

When asked what this achievement means for her work in the field, Dr Deacon said, "It is particularly motivating to know that some of my long-term goals as a scientist, such as mentoring future Caribbean scientists to build capacity for conservation and ecology research, and raising public awareness of issues facing tropical freshwater habitats and species, are goals that are valued by international learned societies such as the FSBI. It motivates me to continue working towards these goals."

Describing herself as a "kid who enjoyed rock-pooling and pond-dipping", Dr Deacon followed her natural passions into the science of zoology at A-Levels. That passion only intensified when she came to T&T.

"There is so much incredible diversity here and the chance to encounter many species that are not easily seen elsewhere," she said. "I've lived here for 12 years now, but the excitement of seeing animals such as leatherback turtles, hummingbirds or praying mantises has yet to wear off!"

She added that the world is facing a biodiversity crisis and "it has never been more important to study the species that we stand to lose".

■ **More information** on Dr Deacon's research, outreach and other naturalist activities can be viewed at her website <https://amydeacon.weebly.com/>

Joel Henry



From left, Dr Deacon with winner of the Huntingford Medal, Dr Martha Patricia Rincón-Díaz from Argentina

■ OUR CAMPUS

UWI FETE AND BEYOND

UWI Development and Endowment Fund will host more events to provide scholarships and bursaries for deserving students

BY KIERAN ANDREW KHAN

UWIDEF Chairman
Dr Sterling Frost



The iconic UWI “Fete for a Cause” holds a special place in the calendars of Carnival connoisseurs. But the real impact of the annual event is seen for years onward. After the event ends, all proceeds are directed to The UWI Development and Endowment Fund (UWIDEF). To date, that fund has granted approximately 4,035 bursaries and some 67 scholarships totalling over \$21 million to deserving students.

That is just the start of what UWIDEF does – and what it plans to achieve in the coming year. The fund is managed by a board whose Chairman, Dr Sterling Frost, is also the St Augustine Campus’ first Professor of Practice – Management Studies. Apart from these roles, Dr Frost serves as Deputy Group CEO, Operations and Administration at First Citizens Bank, and Chairman of FEEL – one of the most prominent NGOs in T&T – among other roles.

Dr Frost says that the fund’s major annual event is set to be renewed in 2023 following its two-year hiatus due to the pandemic.

“We are looking to host one of the largest UWI Fetes in recent memory next year – and we want to max out the enjoyment of the event for patrons,” he explains. “We also have other events in mind, including the return of The UWI Golf Classic and expanding a new event we just held in July, Fête Champêtre: The Garden Party. That event was held to whet the appetite for the main event on January 22, 2023, and it was so well-received that The Garden Party will be on our annual calendar of events going forward.”

The Chairman of UWIDEF is actively working on two other projects that he notes are “more specific to our culture” and not just around feting. Currently, UWI Fete is the fund’s biggest and most impactful initiative, alongside financial contributions from Corporate T&T.

The fund is growing in meaningful ways

The UWIDEF was established in April 1989, with the primary objective of providing scholarships at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Its intention was then, as it remains now, “to promote academic excellence for deserving students that were experiencing financial hardship,” according to Dr Frost.

“We also utilise this funding for areas of selected research, endowment chairs and lectureship in key disciplines, and as necessary for capital projects. During the pandemic, the fund also contributed close to \$0.5 million for devices for students in need at the St Augustine Campus.



A group of UWI St Augustine scholarship recipients share the stage. UWIDEF has earned over \$17 million for scholarships and bursaries for students since 1991. UWI Fete, their signature event, has raised funds for more than 3,000 bursaries since its inception. UWI Fete Champêtre – The Garden Party, a new event held in July of this year and their first fundraiser since 2020, was completely sold out with all proceeds going towards 200 \$5,000 bursaries and 10 \$15,000 scholarships.

Those devices have since been placed into a loan programme managed by the Alma Jordan Library.”

Today, the fund is growing in meaningful ways. Dr Frost notes that he is intent on doubling efforts in support of students because there is increased hardship – given what is happening globally and felt locally.

“One learning from the pandemic has been the realisation that the fund can’t be linked only to physical events to generate income. We need to develop the space of e-charity. This would allow the public and/or alumni to make direct donations, whether by a lump sum or by standing order if they so choose, at anytime and anywhere in the world.”

He also highlights that all net proceeds from The UWIDEF fundraising events under their management go directly into the fund. “There are no administration fees, and our financial accounts are audited by certified auditors – right now that is PWC [PricewaterhouseCoopers]. I believe that our house must always be in order and we take our fiduciary responsibility very seriously, ensuring sound, ethical legal governance and financial management systems, processes and policies are in place.”

“I want to give every person possible that opportunity”

According to Dr Frost, national development is led first by education.

“The social and economic development of nations is fundamentally an education process. Educating people

alters patterns of behaviour, and that becomes a catalyst for the closely interrelated social, economic and demographic changes that result in what we call economic development.”

Interestingly, the man behind the mission to help as many deserving students as possible to receive tertiary education knows better than many about their situations.

“My parents couldn’t afford to send me to pursue tertiary education. Every degree I have done up to my doctoral studies, I have had to work while studying. I never had the luxury of full-time education. And knowing how difficult balancing work and studies can be, I understand what the benefit is to someone studying full-time, and I want to give every person possible that opportunity. This is what drives me.”

Dr Frost is also an ardent horticulturist and zoophilist. He recently showcased some of his African geese and peafowl at the CARICOM Agri-Investment Forum and Expo II held in Port of Spain in mid-August 2022. They were extremely well-received by attendees – many of whom had never seen these types of birds before.

Dr Frost has also serves as Chairman of several NGOs and advisory boards, Deputy Chair of the Public Service Commission of Trinidad and Tobago, Assessor of the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago, and Director of Angostura Holdings Limited and its subsidiaries, and several other companies.

■ You can learn more about his work at his website, sterlingkfrost.com

■ OUR CAMPUS

“I feel ecstatic,” says **Xaviella Millette**, a first year Computer Science student at the Faculty of Science and Technology’s Department of Computing and Information Technology.

She’s speaking about being able to attend in-person classes on the St Augustine campus, an opportunity that has been unavailable to students for the last two years.

In the closing days of August, The UWI St Augustine grounds came alive once again with the presence of new and returning students. Since March 2020, the campus, along with other educational institutions in T&T, had been closed by the government as a safety measure to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This means that new students like Xaviella began their university experience online in both 2020 and 2021.

Many students that started in 2019 haven’t even experienced a full year on campus. For many of them in three-year programmes, this is their final year.

“I had barely been on campus, so I was almost immediately adapted to online learning,” says third year Civil with Environmental Engineering student Brandon Ali.

“It had its pros and cons,” he said of his experience of pursuing his degree virtually. “You’re more relaxed at home. However, you did miss out on all the socialising and interaction.”

Mekelia Miller, a final year Theatre Arts student at UWI’s Department of Creative and Festival Arts, had similar sentiments.

“It really showed me that I value in-person interaction with my classmates and my lecturers,” she said. “Academically, the last two years have been trying. I’m the kind of person who values physical interaction. I’m more of a hands-on person. So, transitioning to online learning was truly a struggle for me. I am looking forward to coming back into the physical space.”

Academics is the primary reason that students invest in higher education, but it’s not the only one. University campuses are filled with activities and events. They are the setting for new and long-lasting relationships. Campuses are places for enormous personal development - especially for young people, for whom the experience is an important step in their young adulthood. The campus grounds itself is filled with expansive and attractive green spaces, making it an extremely inviting and stimulating environment.

Some students, like Computer Science major Kendell Ferguson, are even looking forward to the food.

“I’m a foodie,” he laughed. “I’m also looking forward to the vibes, meeting friends at the Student Activity Centre.”

However, Kendell also believed that being on campus will help him excel academically. The university “is the right environment to learn” he explained, saying that he needs “the right facilities, such as the library.”

Even though Xaviella is new to UWI, she did have to face the challenge of studying online for the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE).

“It was quite difficult,” she recalled. “I was not able to see my friends. During the pandemic, my motivation to attend classes decreased a lot. Throughout the year, I was able to pick myself up and get down to business for exams.”

Going into UWI, she is hopeful: “I am hoping that, come this semester, I will be able to see my friends and have the kind of experience I was not able to have during CAPE.”

Finding motivation while learning virtually was also an issue at times for students already at The UWI. Suraiyaa Khan, studying in the master’s programme in Criminology and Criminal Justice at the Department of Behavioural Sciences, said that while it did not affect her academic performance, like Xaviella, she sometimes found it difficult to attend class.

However, she did see some good in the experience: “I personally didn’t mind the online learning. I thought it gave the lecturers more of a chance to know their students on a one-on-one level.”

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE CAMPUS EX



BY JOEL HENRY AND DAVID RILEY



Sergio Camejo

Academics is the primary reason that students invest in higher education, but it’s not the only one. University campuses are filled with activities and events. They are the setting for new and long-lasting relationships.

Xaviella Millette



PERIENCE

PHOTOS: ATIBA CUDJOE



Suraiyaa Khan

New and returning students ready for in-person Academic year 2022/2023



UWI St Augustine's rapid shift to online teaching and learning during the pandemic was one of the campus' major successes during the two-year period. Within a relatively short space of time, the faculties were able to adapt their courses for virtual delivery. Even exams were delivered online. This was coupled with an unprecedented outreach programme by the faculties and campus units like the Division of Student Services and Development (DSSD) to provide devices like laptops, as well as other material goods, and mental and emotional health support for students.

Nevertheless, for many, it was a tough time. Sergio Camejo, a final year student doing his MSc in Regional and Urban Planning at the Department of Geomatics Engineering and Land Management, had "the luxury of being a student before the pandemic" he said. He described the two years of studying during the pandemic as a shock.

"I was always a very spontaneous guy. I like interacting with people - making friends and meeting new people. That was impossible during the pandemic."

He called the experience "a tough switch". Still, finally it is over, and Sergio is looking forward to the new academic year.

"I'm really excited to come back," he said. "Being here in UWI, being on campus, you can't beat that feeling."



From left: Kendell Ferguson, Brandon Ali, and Xaviella Millette.



Mekelia Miller (right)

■ OUR PEOPLE

“I have always seen myself as a builder. This is that experience on a grander scale,” says Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal of The UWI St Augustine campus.

It’s been a few weeks since she officially assumed the position on August 1, and the time has been busy with “meetings, appearances and ascertaining the state of play on the campus,” she tells me. After our interview, she is scheduled to jet off to a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

This is UWI TODAY’s third in-person interview with Professor Antoine, and an enormous workload has been a consistent feature in her professional life. She has successfully juggled senior roles all the way up to Dean of the Faculty of Law and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Board for Graduate Studies and Research. Apart from the occasional sigh and humorous aside, it doesn’t seem to phase her.

Yet some things have changed. In that first interview, she had just taken up the post of Dean at the new Faculty of Law on the St Augustine campus in 2014. Her office was a temporary space in the block of buildings that includes Chemistry labs and institutes. The second interview was in the spacious Dean’s office in the new Faculty of Law building. This time, she is in the ultimate office. In retrospect, her trajectory seems quite clear.

“I feel very honoured,” she says of being selected for the position. Her appointment was a unanimous decision, made by a 12-person panel made up of a cross-section of stakeholders. The media has also been in agreement with their choice, showing a strong consensus in favour of the appointment, and expressing optimism about what the campus can accomplish under her leadership.

It makes sense. As a public intellectual she has not only provided an expert voice on a host of topics of national and regional interest, but also been an outspoken advocate making the push for change on issues such as marijuana decriminalisation, human rights, protections for migrants, as well as speaking on labour law issues and COVID-19. She has served as President of the Organisation of American States Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). At the IACHR, she also held the posts of Rapporteur for Persons of African Descent and Rapporteur for Indigenous Peoples.

In the course of her work she has won many awards. In 2022, she received the Caribbean Court of Justice’s *Eminent Jurist Pioneering Woman Award*. Her work in public service was recognised in 2013 with The UWI Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Excellence. It was her second win of this prestigious honour, the first being in 2006 for research.

“I can’t believe the outpouring of support and goodwill I have received,” she says.

However, while she’s grateful for the support, she is very conscious of the weight of the expectations placed upon her, and takes them very seriously.



Bringing the magic back to St Augustine

BY JOEL HENRY

“I don’t get excited easily,” she comments very pointedly. “I am aware of the enormous expectations placed upon me.”

A campus in critical times

If the expectations are grand, the challenges UWI St Augustine faces are massive. For several years now, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (which provides a large amount of the university’s funding) has been cutting back on its investments in chunks. These last decades have also seen the rise of competing institutions of higher education, both in T&T and abroad. Long before the pandemic, the region had been dealing with slow economic growth. These negative forces have only intensified today, compounded by international conflicts and inflation. It’s an environment that may lead Caribbean society to weigh the value of higher education against other concerns. One could argue they’ve already been doing so.

The new Principal is very aware of difficulties.

“We have to take the good with the bad,” she says. “We may not have money to do all of what needs to be done, but if we are dynamic, driven, and work hard, and work as a team, we can do many things.”

She believes the current circumstances “give us a unique opportunity” to promote measures such as food security and sustainability – “Things we have a comparative advantage on.” As part of this push she intends on “greening” the campus.

So far, her work has involved “lots of listening,” she explains. One of her imperatives is re energising the campus community:

“I’m more focused on a new philosophy rather than new plans. I want to bring the magic back to UWI St Augustine. I want to bring back that sense of team, that dynamism. We need to reclaim the campus’s place in society. The intangibles matter. Once we do that, we will be more motivated to move on to bigger things.”

This isn’t surrendering concrete initiatives to carry the campus forward. On the contrary, the new Principal intends on implementing several plans that have stalled. Rationalising the institution’s programmes and services is a big priority.

She says, “There are many good plans that were not completed. I am known for my perseverance, and I strongly believe we should finish what we start.”

Indeed, during the regime of the previous Principal, Professor Brian Copeland, the campus did very good work in creating and sharing the vision for UWI St Augustine as a hub of innovation and entrepreneurship. She wants to ensure that the vision is concretised and realised.

Principal Antoine intends on going much further, and wants to “bring back campus social engagement”.

“There is a disconnect on the campus,” she says. “We are not together as a community. I would like to recapture that ‘one mission, one goal’ energy. I am a very open person. I want the staff to know that there is somebody who will take time to understand. I’ve been in the trenches, so I know what it’s like.”

“UWI is a vital institution”

Improving the culture on the campus, she believes, will improve its services as a place of education and a regional resource for research, policy formulation, advocacy, and outreach. She speaks at length about the university’s role in Caribbean society.

“UWI is a vital institution. We must reclaim our role, not just as individual consultants and commentators, but as UWI St Augustine. I believe we have become less visible as an institution,” she says. And that has to change.

UWI St Augustine, she believes, is a special campus well-suited for the times:

“I see the St Augustine as unique in The UWI family. We are the only one with a Faculty of Agriculture, a Seismic Research Centre, and, until recently, a Faculty of Engineering. We are also close to Latin America and Guyana and can benefit from key partnerships with them.”

She hones in on climate change and food security as two areas of major importance in which UWI St Augustine should further intensify its efforts (the university is already making a considerable contribution, both as an institution and through several individual faculty, staff and even students). She is also very outspoken on the need for educational reform.

In a recent interview with Newsday, it was stated that “all [Professor Antoine’s] plans are in line with enhancing the quality of education, and at the same time ensuring everyone has access to tertiary education”. In our interview, she went even further, speaking on the need for greater educational access and equality in standards of education at all levels.



I am a very open person. I want the staff to know that there is somebody who will take time to understand. I’ve been in the trenches, so I know what its like.

On a visit to a disenfranchised Haitian community in the Dominican Republic.

■ OUR PEOPLE

“It is a myth that we have free education in T&T,” she says. “It is also a myth that education is egalitarian. Poverty impacts educational outcomes. Location impacts outcomes. Home life impacts outcomes. Some students live in circumstances of poor and negative parenting. Some schools have no facilities or amenities. This situation affects people all over Trinidad and Tobago, especially those from poor and rural communities.”

She adds, “We have done a lot in education in T&T, but there is so much more we can do. If you say that the quality of education affects families, then you can see part of how we have come to be in such a negative cycle.”

Her views on education and giving opportunities to people who normally would not get a chance to receive a top educational experience led to the creation of the Makandal Daaga Scholarship. This Faculty of Law scholarship, named after the political activist and former revolutionary, was developed to “create lawyers who will be meaningful change agents within the Caribbean”. The first recipient, Kareem Marcelle (in 2017), is a young man from Sea Lots with an extraordinary ethic for community activism and social responsibility.

Kareem graduated with his Bachelor of Laws degree with honours, and is a dedicated public voice for the people of East Port-of-Spain.

Prof Antoine speaks of him with pride: “He proves that once you give someone an opportunity, they can move forward”.

Building Again

The example of Kareem points to one of the new Principal’s greatest assets in her leadership role – experience. She’s done it before, and she’s succeeded.

“It feels like déjà vu,” she says of her first weeks in the new position. The parallels to the Faculty of Law, a brand new faculty during her time as the Dean, are numerous.

The position has required her to assemble a new team (this is still in progress), and create new systems. Most importantly, she has to build a culture to match her ambitions for the office. It sounds tedious, but when she describes what it was like the first time at the Faculty of Law, her eyes light up.

“It was a very valuable experience. I don’t regret one minute of it – teething pains and all. There were some rocky times, but I knew where I wanted us to go.”

In her eight years as Dean of the fledgling faculty, Law at UWI St Augustine expanded dramatically in a short space of time to hundreds of students (487 in academic year 2019/2020). Demand for placement in the faculty was much higher. Under her leadership, the faculty embraced modern and internationally relevant courses such as Banking Law, Oil and Gas Law, Sports Law, and Entertainment Law. Research and publication are flourishing. They even established the Faculty of Law’s International Human Rights Clinic and won important donor grants.

The UWI St Augustine Faculty of Law developed into a model for the kind of strong public presence that academia can achieve. Their well-established conferences and workshops received strong public support, including from the private sector.

“It was a good feeling,” she recalls. “I saw the fruits of our labour materialise.”

As with her current post, Principal Antoine paid close attention to the intangible aspects crucial for a high-functioning organisation. Indeed, despite the faculty’s many successes, she



Professor Antoine with Makandal Daaga Scholarship winner Kareem Marcelle (third from left) alongside members of the Daaga family, Akhenaton Daaga (left), his mother Liseli, and sister Karomana (right) in a photo from 2017.

The example of Kareem Marcelle points to one of the new principal’s greatest assets in her leadership role - experience. She’s done it before, and she’s succeeded.



The parallels to the Faculty of Law, a brand new faculty during her time as the Dean, are numerous.

Professor Antoine in her capacity as Dean of the Faculty of Law.

seems most proud of the culture they developed. The idea of law as a force for social good is one of her guiding principles, and it took hold among the staff and students.

She says, “It’s part of the faculty culture now. It tells me that we can harness people and we can change culture.”

Daring to think bigger

Changing culture, however, is not easy. Still, she is not deterred, which may be her strongest asset of all: the confidence and determination to get it done.

“People sometimes ask me why I stay in the Caribbean, a question that surprises me sometimes,” she says. “I have faith in myself and I have faith in our people. I always measure myself against the best in the world. I always think big. When I look back, an important part of what I have achieved in my career is because I dared to think bigger.”

She is very much a regionalist. “I think of myself as Caribbean first,” she says. And that approach is reflected in her career. Regionalism will also, she says, be a big focus during her time as Campus Principal.

Professor Antoine’s work in the region is both extensive and transformative. She has served as lead consultant to all of the CARICOM governments (as well as to Canada, UK, USA, and numerous international organisations). She was the Chairperson of the CARICOM Regional Commission on Marijuana.

Her work in Caribbean Labour Law led her to author a 563-page report for proposed legislative amendments that has become recognised as the virtual bible for labour legislative reform and analysis in the region. She also led law reform efforts to successfully update labour laws in several Caribbean countries.

Principal Antoine acknowledges that, as a region, the odds are stacked against us, and there are double standards in international relations. Indeed, through her work she shaped the discourse on Offshore/International Financial Law, defending CARICOM governments and exposing these double standards from developed nations.

Nevertheless, through a positive attitude, self-belief, and a willingness to do the hard work, we can succeed.

She’s proved this in her own life, even from her days as a student at Cambridge and Oxford, where she was an outstanding scholar and author, and earned her doctorate in offshore financial law.

“Just as I went out there and proved what I could do, as a people, collectively, we need to do the same,” she says.

It’s that same confidence that guides her as a woman at the height of her profession.

“I never thought of myself in terms of gender like that,” she says. “I know the problems women face in these fields are very real. In fact, I’ve had to tell a gentleman or two in the past, ‘do you feel as though a woman should be seen and not heard?’ However, my father had no gender or racial biases.”

She laughs, “In my family, we understood that the women were the bosses.”

She does recognise that seeing her in this position can serve to inspire other women, and although not a font of advice on the topic, recommends to them that “if you have something to say or do, just say it, do it.”

It’s simple, straightforward and great advice for women, but also great advice for men, and great advice for an institution embarking on a new era.



As a public intellectual, she has not only provided an expert voice on a host of topics of national and regional interest. She’s been an outspoken advocate making the push for change on issues such as marijuana decriminalisation, human rights, and protections for migrants.

Speaking in her role as a Commissioner on the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2014.

■ VS NAIPAUL MEMORIAL 2022

“Non-fiction can distort; facts can be realigned. But fiction never lies.” This quote from the late, Nobel Prize-winning author Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul seems ever more relevant with the publication of Dr J Vijay Maharaj’s debut novel, *The Mystic Masseur’s Wife*. Written in response to Naipaul’s classic *The Mystic Masseur*, Maharaj paints a poignant portrait of pre-Independence Trinidad, Indo-Trinidadian culture and womanhood.

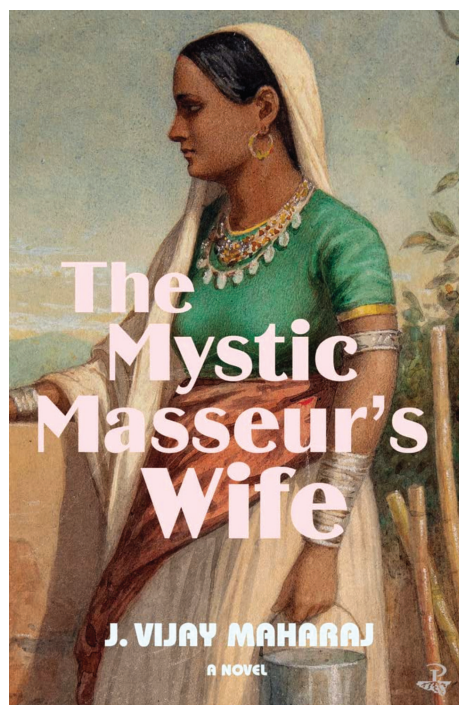
Maharaj launched the novel during the 5th annual VS Naipaul Memorial virtually hosted by The UWI St Augustine’s Department of Literary, Cultural and Communication Studies (LCCS) on August 17, which would have been Naipaul’s 90th birthday. Featured speakers included former UWI St Augustine Campus Principal Dr Bhoendradatt Tewarie, Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS) head Dr Sue-Ann Barratt, LCCS lecturer Dr Victoria Chang, IGDS lecturer Mr Tyrone Ali, IGDS research assistant Ms Renuka Anandjit, and Dr Maharaj.

The Mystic Masseur’s Wife begins where Naipaul’s *Mystic Masseur* ends. It shifts focus from his protagonist Ganesh Ramsumair, to his wife Leela. In Naipaul’s imagination, Leela played a peripheral role to Ganesh – a disgruntled writer who rises from poverty to politics through capitalising on his curious talent for healing the ill. At *The Mystic Masseur’s* end, Ganesh refashions himself as G Ramsay Muir, and leaves Leela behind to further his career in England.

Limited in his ability to frame women

Published in 1957, the novel is Naipaul’s first published work and it is his only work thus far to be made into a full-length feature film. It is as well-known and well-liked as the collection of popular short stories in *Miguel Street* and the classic epic, *A House for Mr Biswas*. The novel won the 1958 John Llewellyn Rhys Prize and was selected by the powerhouse team of Merchant-Ivory Productions for release as a film in 2001. Like many of the author’s works, it is regarded as a keen observation of Trinidadian society. *The Mystic Masseur’s Wife* compliments this book by giving Leela a voice, quite literally, as the novel is based on supposed tape recordings of her speaking with the near invisible narrator about her life with and without Ganesh.

Naipaul’s characterisation of Leela is on par with his positioning of women in most of his writing. According to Anandjit, Naipaul was “limited in his ability to frame women as individuals”, frequently falling on flawed characterisation and stereotypes. Naipaul’s Leela may have had some attributes of a modern woman – she was educated, for instance – but she was ultimately developed through the male gaze.



LEELA MADE WHOLE

Dr Vijay Maharaj’s new book ‘The Mystic Masseur’s Wife’, is a subversive reimagining of one Naipaul’s underserved characters

BY ZAHRA GORDON

Similar sentiments were echoed by other panellists. Tewarie noted that Naipaul had come under heavy criticism for his portrayal of women, stating that they were “rarely central” in his work and given less sympathy or respect. Chang said that she had always been dissatisfied with his female characters. Maharaj’s Leela is a “subversive reimagining” as Anandjit described it.

Of particular interest to the panellists was Leela’s sexual agency in *The Mystic Masseur’s Wife*, since Naipaul’s portrayal of sex was frequently violent and dissatisfying for the participants. Through Leela’s new found voice, readers find out more about her relationship with her husband and also her lovers. The reconstruction of agency is what Barratt referred to as the “power of the disruption of a single story”.

She comes alive

Chang noted that *The Mystic Masseur’s Wife* is as much Leela’s history as it is the history of Trinidad and Tobago:

“This is a compelling Leela. She comes alive in a new and invigorating way. Leela was previously an invisible woman in Caribbean literature. In Naipaul’s work, male characters were fully made, while female characters played only supporting roles, and this is a far from complete portrait of the role of women in our society. I always felt dissatisfied with his female characters, although there were hints in the novel of Leela having a shrewd business mind.”

She added that the representation of Leela’s sexual agency put *The Mystic Masseur’s Wife* in the tradition of novels about female sexual awakening such as Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* and Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*. However, in *The Mystic Masseur’s Wife*, Leela does not find paradise in a lover as with other novels in this tradition. Leela finds paradise within herself. This is a key factor in the shift from the stereotypical portrayal of Indo-Trinidadian women.

“Well-written stories are the antithesis to ignorant stereotypes,” said Chang. As Tewarie noted, the novelist gave Leela an identity, ownership of that identity and ownership of her life and story.

For Maharaj, the novel presents an intellectual space to discuss history and culture.

“We have no public space for debating or proposing our thoughts about society. This is about wanting discussion on the society in which we live,” she said.

Dr J Vijay Maharaj is a lecturer in LCCS specialising in Caribbean Studies, cultural identity, and cultural citizenship. Her essays have been published in journals such as *Anthurium*, *Tout Moun*, and the *Journal of West Indian Literature*.

VS Naipaul, regarded as one of the greatest literary masters of his time, was a Trinidad-born British writer who most notably won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2001. He has also won the Jerusalem and Booker Prizes. He received a knighthood and was awarded T&T’s highest honor, The Trinity Cross. Naipaul passed away on August 11, 2018 at 85.

The Mystic Masseur’s Wife gives Leela a voice, quite literally, as the novel is based on supposed tape recordings of her speaking with the author about her life with and without Ganesh.



Dr J Vijay Maharaj



Dr Bhoendradatt Tewarie



Ms Renuka Anandjit



Mr Tyrone Ali



Dr Victoria Chang



Dr Sue-Ann Barratt

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

CULTURE



Nnamdi Hodge in Paramin behind the camera.



HOW SWEET CASSAVA could provide sustenance for Trinidad and Tobago's Dying Language

BY DIXIE-ANN BELLE

One day, the Patois language of Trinidad and Tobago could be gone forever.

Once prevalent throughout T&T, Patois (French Creole) is now spoken mainly by elders in rural areas who have not been able to pass it on. Linguist Nnamdi Hodge is dedicated to documenting Patois, working on projects with Dr Jo-Anne Ferreira, Senior Lecturer in Linguistics at the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics (DMLL).

"It's a mission to bring back the old Trinidad and push back this foreign influence we have," he explains.

Hodge co-produced one of his latest projects *Mayòk* (*Sweet Cassava*), an 11-minute film which will be screened in this year's Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival. It depicts director Cassandra Joseph's grandmother from Paramin making cassava flour. Joseph conceptualised the film to chronicle the traditions of her Paramin relatives.

She first asked Hodge's assistance in producing the film *Sèptant Lanné Ansanm* (*70 Years Together*) which shows her grandparents talking about their marriage in Patois. Hodge contributes his expertise in the language he learned at The UWI and now teaches all over the country. He has worked on Joseph's *Vwé Kafé* (*Real Coffee*) and *Boukanen* (*The Tradition of Smoking Meat*), editing and subtitling the films as he did with *Mayòk*.

Hopefully, *Mayòk* will help kindle interest in Patois, just as the language captivated Hodge years ago when he started taking French and Spanish at UWI. His programme of study at the university required a linguistics course, and Hodge chose French-lexicon Creole. Gradually, the significance of the language clicked.

"My mother had a record at home which was called *Patois People are Alive*. The language used in songs was the exact language I learned in that course."

He bonded with Patois speakers and immersed himself in the culture. He became invested in trying to preserve it.

Besides teaching for The UWI St Augustine Centre for Language Learning and DMLL, Hodge has travelled around T&T documenting Patois (and helping with Bhojpuri/Hindustani), and been invited to Grenada, Venezuela and Martinique. A grant from The UWI Research and Development Impact (RDI) Fund was instrumental in purchasing the necessary equipment. The RDI Fund project, "Trinidad and Tobago Endangered Languages", was led by Dr Benjamin Braithwaite (Project lead) and Dr Ferreira (Project Co-Lead).

Hodge often works with students and Dr Ferreira. They want to ensure that, if there is a movement to revive Patois in the future, the resources will be available.

"Our goal right now is language documentation so that people can study, research and speak it," explains Dr Ferreira.

They have formed the group *Tout Bagay Patwa*, and produce videos featuring Patois speakers, stick-fighting, Camboulay and folk songs. They also help with the language input in Patois masses in church services, such as the one scheduled for October 9 in Talparo, and arrange live and virtual concerts, like the upcoming *Sé Yon Bagay Patwa* on October 23.

"We want to put Trinidad and Tobago on the map as a Patois-speaking country," declares Hodge.

Dr Ferreira hopes they are planting seeds of language and cultural appreciation.

"We have a really bad habit of saying Patois is broken French," she says, denouncing the "negative view of Caribbean languages".

"Elements of it are tied to our national identity," she notes. According to Hodge, "Nou ni pou konnèt koté nou sòti pou konnèt koté nou ka alé." – we have to know where we come from to know where we're going.

For more information, visit the Trinidad Patois Speakers Facebook page @trinidadianpatoisspeakers. To see *Tout Bagay Patwa* videos, search for them on YouTube.



Nnamdi in Venezuela interviewing a Trinidadian and a Venezuelan patois speaker.

LINGUISTICS



Society for Caribbean Linguistics celebrates 50th anniversary at Biennial Conference

"Get back to the communities and do the work."

This was one of the important takeaways of the 24th Biennial Conference for the Society for Caribbean Linguistics (SCL) according to Dr Jo-Anne Ferreira, former SCL President.

The conference was held virtually from August 2-4 and commemorated SCL's 50th anniversary.

"Linguists learn every day from our communities, but it is not always the case that the communities learn from linguists," explains Dr Ferreira, who is also the former Head of Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics (DMLL) and a Senior Lecturer in Linguistics at UWI St Augustine.

"We'd like it to be more of a two-way street," she says.

In keeping with the conference theme "New Frontiers in Caribbean Language Research", participants discussed topics like Caribbean Creole languages, Caribbean sign languages, phonology and syntax, language attitudes, and proverbs, ranging across West Indian territories and communities.

Among the plenary presentations was "Linguistics and Social Justice — from Upside-down to Upside-up Schools" by Michel DeGraff, Professor of Linguistics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. DeGraff discussed the imperative of teaching children in their mother tongue.

Bettina Migge, Professor of Linguistics at University College Dublin, presented "Sailing towards the Future: New and Old Horizons in Caribbean Linguistics". She outlined the importance of using digital tools to document Caribbean languages.

Dr Ferreira gave the opening Presidential plenary, "Linguistic Rights, Reform and Reparations in the Creole-Speaking Caribbean: Connecting the Dots". She looked at the ways in which Caribbean linguists and language activists must be part of the reparations movement and discussions.

Another event highlight was the Presidents' Panel featuring former society presidents Jeannette Allsopp, Lawrence Carrington, Hubert Devonish, Janet Donnelly, Silvia Kouwenberg, Barbara Lalla, Salikoko Mufwene, Peter Roberts, John Rickford, Ian Robertson, Hazel Simmons-McDonald, Lise Winer and Donald Winford.

They reviewed SCL's achievements throughout their first half-century. Five SCL presidents have come from UWI St Augustine. Clive Forrester, former SCL Secretary, took on the office of the president for 2022-2024.

The event's virtual format proved to have some challenges but lasting benefits. Participants expressed their pleasure in meeting again despite the lack of social interaction and field trips to sites relevant to linguistic research. Dr Ferreira noted that field trips allow researchers to build supportive relationships with residents in the communities.

She hopes the aftermath of the conference "will redound to the benefit of the societies", and that conference participants will work to get their various governments to listen to linguists and appreciate the importance of the field, which is instrumental in a range of areas like anthropology, education, mathematics, psychology and more.

The society is already planning the next conference which will once more have face-to-face meetings and site visits. Some sessions will be held completely virtually. The plenaries will be live-streamed again.

"I'm hoping we have set an example, a standard for the next conference in both virtual and face-to-face," explains Dr Ferreira.

Presentations from the conference and information can be found: SCL website: <http://scl-online.net/>, Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/societyforcaribbeanlinguistics/>, YouTube: **Search Society for Caribbean Linguistics**

Dixie-Ann Belle

Dixie-Ann Belle is a freelance writer, editor and proofreader.

■ UWI IN SOCIETY

In the middle of the 19th century, Trinidadian-born William H Gamble wrote, “Many distinct peoples go to make up the population of Trinidad. There are men from all quarters of the globe, and with but little exaggeration, it may be said that, in Trinidad, all the languages of the earth are spoken.”

It was from this turbulent island Tower of Babel that Trinidadian English Creole – a unique and colourful Creole language which resulted from the contact of various languages of the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe – was first born.

Nowadays, Trinidadian English Creole (TrinEC) and Trinidad and Tobago Standard English (TTSE) exist, relatively harmoniously, alongside one another, and while this tends to function quite well in society at large, it does present some unique challenges to both teachers and young learners with regards to the acquisition of TTSE.

Primary school teachers across the nation have reported that many students have trouble distinguishing between TrinEC and TTSE, and that this often leads to difficulties not only in the acquisition of TTSE, but in learning other subjects which are taught through the medium of that language.

“How the children speak at home is reflected in their writing; in most cases dialect,” noted one primary school teacher in an anonymous survey conducted by a team of language specialists.

This team consisted of Aarti Persad, Alicia Mathura, Aneera Maharaj, Aryanna Gayadeen, Dev Pooma, Mariette Cooper, Michelle Richardson, Natalie Bhawanie, Dr Nicha Selvon-Ramkissoon, Dr Sandra Evans, and Romulo Guede-Fernandez.

Caught between two languages

The problem lies not necessarily in the use of dialect itself, but in the inability to distinguish between the two languages, which leads to a weakened ability on behalf of the students to express themselves in TTSE. In an effort to support primary teachers, The UWI Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics (DMLL), in partnership with the Catholic Education Board of Management (CEBM) and UNICEF, hosted a series of online workshops in 2021 to train 98 primary school teachers in the use of a teaching methodology called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

CLIL is an approach to teaching languages whereby students are taught both content and language at the same time through the use of a second language. In other words, CLIL promotes the development of cognitive and language skills and sees all class time as an opportunity to help students enhance their skills in the target language. It also relies on the use of the mother tongue.

“CLIL offers a harmonious use of various techniques to teach subject areas such as math, science, or social studies through the use of a second language,” says Romulo Guédez-Fernandez, a lecturer in DMLL.

While CLIL is usually used in settings where two standard languages are present, the team at UWI use CLIL to teach in a setting where a Creole language exists alongside TTSE.

“CLIL has been around for a long time, but this seems to be the first time that it is being used in a situation where the first language is a Creole language,” says Guédez-Fernandez.

Repurposed for local students

While the UWI language specialists have creatively adapted CLIL to the linguistic situation in Trinidad, the original target group were actually migrant children, most of whom had come to Trinidad with their parents due to the ongoing crisis in Venezuela.

“We were initially planning to use this method to teach migrant children alongside local children, but because of delays in allowing them to enter the public school system, we had to shift gears. We realised that teachers could still use the CLIL approach in their lessons to help local children to improve their own language competence in Standard English,” says Natalie Bhawanie, who is an English as a Second Language (ESL) tutor at The UWI’s Centre for Language Learning.

Language Matters

UWI team uses a different approach to improve Standard English proficiency in primary schools

BY PAUL HADDEN



“It was in the process of preparing our ESL-CLIL training courses for these teachers who would be working with the migrants that we first began to utilise the CLIL teaching methodology,” says Guédez-Fernandez, “but it has turned out to be very relevant to the unique linguistic situation here in Trinidad and Tobago.”

Guédez-Fernandez also stresses the importance of dialogue between the various levels of the schooling system:

“The most rewarding part of this process has been the ability for us, who work at the university level, to collaborate with primary school teachers. We have been working alongside some very devoted teachers, and I would really like for more collaboration to take place between The UWI and the various levels of education in the future.”

He said the UWI language specialists wished to thank the many primary school teachers in T&T who took part in the surveys and ESL-CLIL workshops. They also gratefully acknowledged the support they received from UNICEF, the Catholic Education Board of Management (CEBM) and the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF).

“Primary school education is really the foundation for all of the other educational steps,” added Guédez-Fernandez, “so the more collaboration that there can be between the different levels, the better. We hope that CLIL will continue to be an effective way for teachers to improve their students’ competence in Standard English, develop their students’ cognitive skills, broaden their students’ content knowledge, and increase their students’ cultural awareness.”



Members of The UWI team of language specialists in an online meeting.

Paul Hadden is an educator, freelance writer, and aspiring polyglot with a passion for travel, foreign languages, and all things Caribbean.

■ UWI IN SOCIETY

The struggle in the Caribbean against gender-based violence is a huge one – at least that is what the numbers say. The region has higher than world average prevalence of intimate partner violence with Guyana topping the list at 55 percent, Suriname holding second place with 48 percent, Trinidad and Tobago third with 44 percent, and Jamaica and Grenada at 39 percent. The world average is 33.3 percent (one in three).

This disproportionate level of violence, which continues to make headlines, motivated the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) to dedicate their 10th Edition Virtual Forum to the discussion on methods to deal with this persistent issue.

“Counteracting the Scourge of Violence Against Women in Caribbean Societies: Towards Remedial Action in Response to Theory and Evidence-Informed Studies” – was held on Friday July 29. The virtual forum looked at gender-based violence and provided an open space for discussion – and interrogation – of the agendas and actions geared towards treating with the problem. The event brought together a number of experts in their fields.

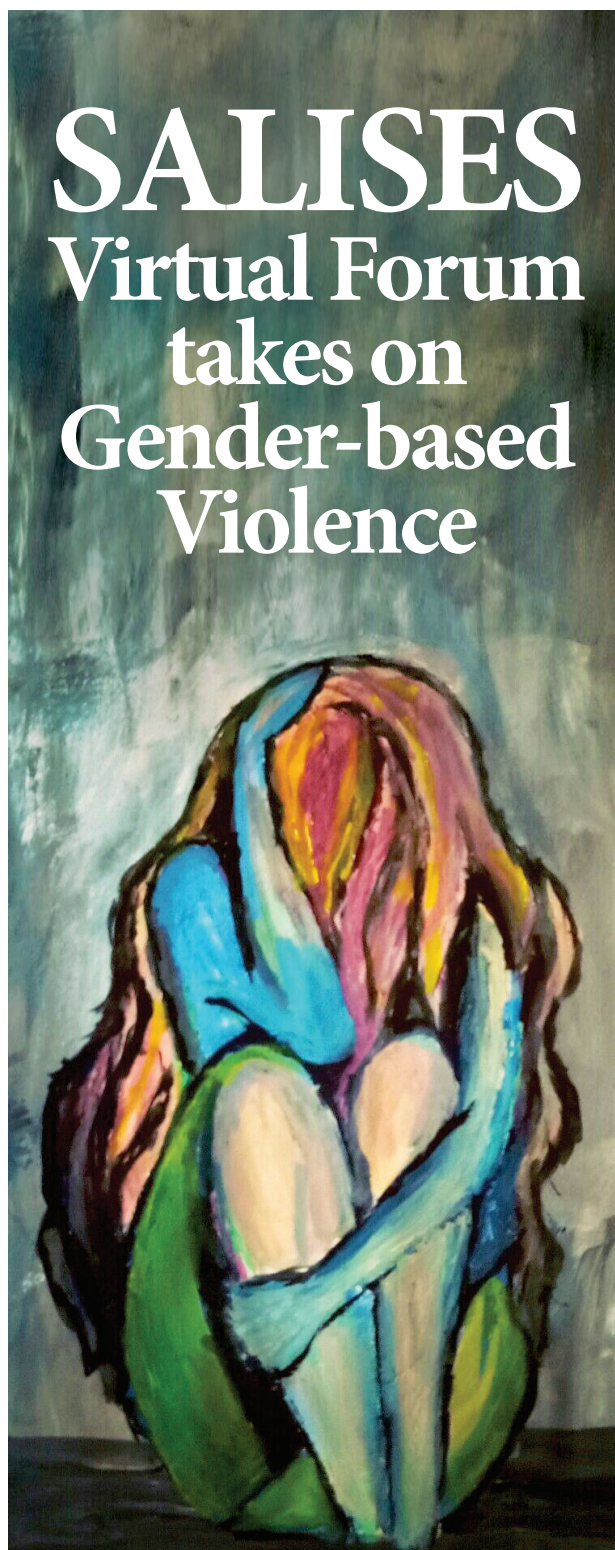
Steady increase in homicide cases

Speaking at the forum, Dr Godfrey St Bernard, Director of SALISES, explained that he had looked at the first 20 years of the new millennium in Trinidad and Tobago and saw 230 women die due to domestic violence, with a steady increase in homicide cases from 2011 to 2019. There is also a correlation between femicide and gun possession, he said:

“The prevalence and proliferation of guns and easy access to guns, I think we have to pay particular attention to that in terms of what impact it is having on the demise of our women due to violent episodes within domestic settings.”

So, we know there is a problem, but what exactly drives it? According to Dr Halimah DeShong, Senior Lecturer at the Institute for Gender and Developmental Studies (IGDS) at UWI Cave Hill, it is important to note that culturally most men in the studies that she has done tend to have antiquated ideas of ownership of women. They also view women in relationships giving consent to sex in perpetuity, not only in marriage, but also in common law unions.

This runs counter to the revisions in some legislations in many Caribbean states that have included references to marital rape as a crime. It is important to note however, that Caribbean women



BY OMEGA FRANCIS

disclose violence at higher rates than other countries and, according to Dr Ruth Rodney, Assistant Professor at the School of Nursing at York University, this is mainly due to five decades of activism and advocacy by Caribbean feminists.

Some progress has been made

The groundwork laid by activists has meant fewer social barriers to disclosing, greater public recognition for women's stories of survival, and an increased sense of connection to a community of diverse women speaking out as part of their own empowerment. This has ensured that the atmosphere for the creation of the Special Victims Department of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service in 2020 was one that was embraced by members of the community.

Counteracting the growing issue of gender-based violence means action in many areas. We need the researchers to collate the data and make it easily understood, activists to keep creating safe spaces, legislation to improve, and community members to discard harmful belief systems.

As Mrs Claire Guy-Alleyne, Woman Superintendent (Ag) of the TTPS's Special Victims Department, makes clear, “As a society, we need to step away from the victim blaming and the victim shaming. This can affect many victims and survivors as they may feel deterred from even coming forward to make reports, thereby causing the perpetrator to continue the abuse. Ignoring domestic violence and treating it like a private matter only ensures that the cycle of violence continues.”

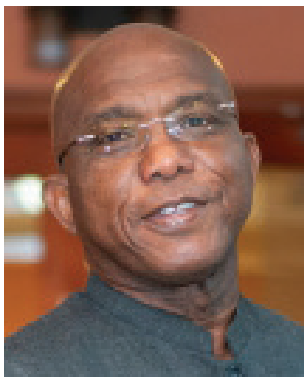
The virtual also included contributions from Dr Henriette Jansen, retired Technical Advisor for the Violence Against Women (VAW) Research and Data United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Asian and the Pacific Regional Office (APRO) in Bangkok; and Ms Carol Watson Williams, Principal Consultant of re-Think Social Development Ltd.

SALISES has engaged in a very progressive agenda through its virtual forums. These discussions focus on issues affecting Caribbean societies.

Dr St Bernard recognises the important role that SALISES holds and believes that it is important “...to ensure that we do what is necessary as an academic institution to bring the discourses to the people”.

It is vital that we recognise the scourge of violence against women is occurring, but it is equally important to eradicate it all together, and SALISES is – “head and shoulders to join the struggle”.

Ignoring domestic violence and treating it like a private matter only ensures that the cycle of violence continues



Dr Godfrey St Bernard



Dr Halimah Deshong



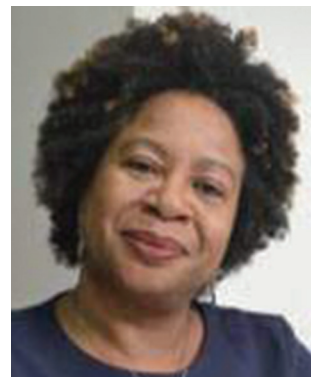
Dr Ruth Rodney



Mrs Claire Guy-Alleyne



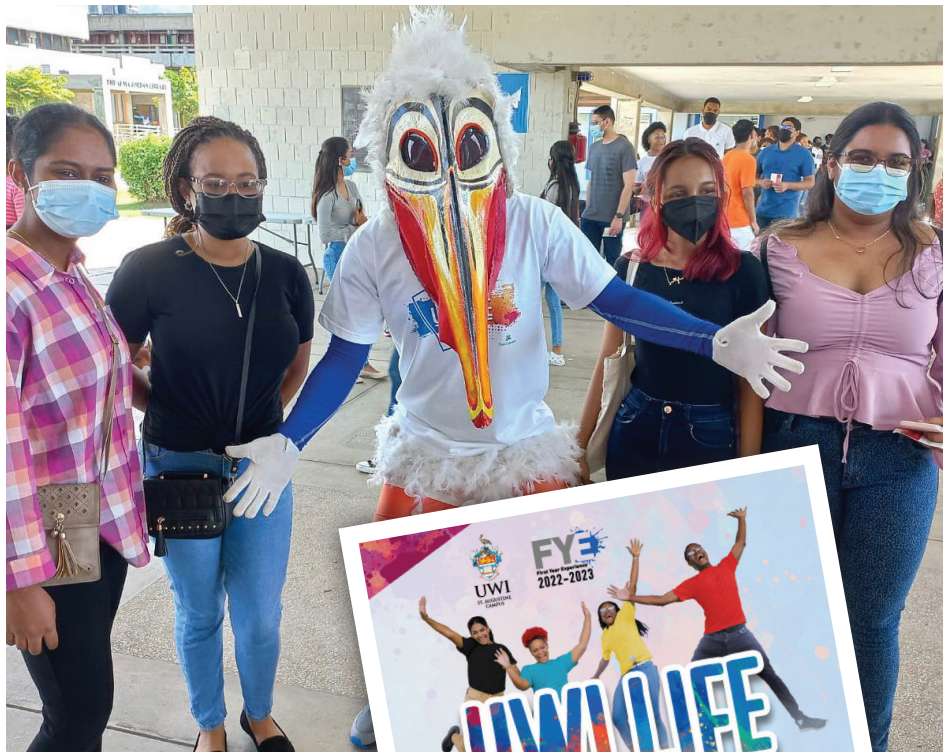
Dr Henriette Jansen



Ms Carol Watson Williams

UWI Life is Life

UWI St Augustine mascot Peli poses with a group of students at The UWI Life Student Orientation event on Friday, September 2. UWI Life, held at the JFK Lecture Theatre, Engineering Lecture Theatre 1, Daaga Auditorium, LRC Auditorium, and the JFK Quadrangle, was part orientation and part celebration for new and returning undergraduate students. PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM



UWI Calendar of Events September 2022

The UWI/Guardian Group Premium Teaching Awards Ceremony September 22

ONLINE



Join The UWI St Augustine and the Guardian Group for a celebration of outstanding educators. This biennial event, hosted by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), will be themed this year as "Ready, Set, Click: Negotiating Quality in the Blended/Online Teaching and Learning Environment". Attend the virtual ceremony on The UWI St Augustine YouTube page, and enjoy the presentation from featured speaker Dr Camille Dickson-Deane, Senior Lecturer of Higher Education Learning Design at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia.

For more information, email premiumentcetl@sta.uwi.edu
To attend, visit The UWI St Augustine YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/user/uwistaugustine>

Fundamentals of Hyflex Teaching and Learning: Meeting the Future needs of Young Learners School of Education, UWI St Augustine Campus October 8

We live in a digital era that offers exciting possibilities for teaching and learning at the early childhood level. We now have a scenario where teaching can shift from face-to-face, to remote and back. This workshop is the first of its kind to introduce Hybrid-Flexible or Hyflex teaching to early childhood educators in T&T. This workshop will introduce participants to Hyflex and upgrade teachers' skills in providing high quality teaching to young learners. It will be a valuable experience for early childhood educators, administrators, parents and the public.

Content:

- Principles and practices for engaging 21st century learners
- Technology tools and resources for Hyflex early childhood care and education

Presenters include:

- **Dr Sabeerah Abdul-Majied** (Early Childhood Specialist)
- **Ms Sandra Figaro Henry** (Fulbright Scholar and Education Technologist from New York Institute of Technology)
- **Dr Simone Primus** (Early Childhood Educator and Librarian)

Cost: TT\$375 per person

For more information, email Dr Abdul-Majied at Sabeerah.Abdul-Majied@sta.uwi.edu

UWI/Toronto Metropolitan University RCYP Conference - The Well-being of Children and Young People in Central America and the Caribbean October 19 to 21

ONLINE

Over the past six years, the Canada-based Rights for Children and Youth Partnership (RCYP) has conducted an international research project focused on the protection of children. This virtual conference, hosted by the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) at UWI St Augustine, represents the culmination of their scholarly research. The RCYP project looked at the well-being of young people in Central America and the Caribbean, and their diaspora populations in Canada. Scholars from over 13 universities were involved. Its themes included education practices, child protection systems, immigration dynamics, social media and ICT, and violence against children and youth. This conference is a great opportunity for academics, students, government officials and professionals involved with youth, NGOs, and the private sector. The conference will take place on Zoom.

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/UWI-TMUconference>.
For more information, visit SALISES at <https://sta.uwi.edu/salises/>
or RCYP at <http://rcypartnership.org/en/projects/>