



DISTINGUISHED DIASPORA



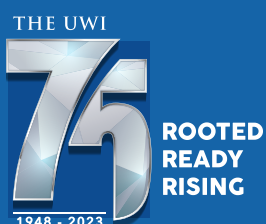
Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal, The UWI, St Augustine Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine shares a light moment with His Royal Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II of Ghana after presenting him with a gift on behalf of The UWI, St Augustine. At right is Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley. His Royal Majesty Tutu II visited Trinidad and Tobago in August as part of Emancipation celebrations. PHOTO: DAMIAN LUK PAT



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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

REPARATORY JUSTICE

Renewing our commitment to activism and Africa

Sankofa is a word from the Asante Twi language of Ghana that means “go back and get it”. It’s rooted in an Akan proverb which when translated to English says, “It is not taboo to go back for what you have left behind.” Sankofa has become a popular symbol in the African Diaspora representing the necessity of remembrance and reconnection with our ancestors. The proverb begs the question, “How do we know where we’re going if we don’t know where we came from?”

It was in the spirit of Sankofa that I made a plea to the Honourable Prime Minister Dr Keith Rowley and the Minister of Education Dr Nyan Gadsby Dolly recently to return the mandatory teaching of history to secondary schools and to educate our children about the history of Africa and the struggle for reparations for descendants of enslaved African people. When I made this plea at the Distinguished Open Lecture series in August (see coverage in this issue), it was in the presence of His Royal Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the Asantehene or King of the Ghanaian Asante Kingdom, who was our featured speaker and esteemed guest.

The Asantehene’s visit to Trinidad and Tobago was itself emblematic of Sankofa. Arriving at the official invitation of the Prime Minister for the Emancipation holiday, the Asantehene was here during a season of celebration of African heritage, a season of resistance and a season primed to chart a future for just societies. As I said at the lecture, The UWI as a premier university plays an important role in reconnecting and reclaiming our proud heritage for the benefit of mankind.

We have a long standing tradition at the university of undertaking leadership in the quest for a more equitable world. Our Vice Chancellor, Sir Hilary Beckles, has been a leader in the now global movement for reparations for over 30 years. Beckles, current chairman of the CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC), and other scholars from The UWI were integral in the commission’s formation. We also established the Centre for Reparations Research at The UWI Mona. The CRC has outlined a 10-Point Action Plan for Reparations to promote the case for reparatory justice for the region’s indigenous and African descendant communities who are the victims of crimes against humanity in the forms of genocide, slavery, slave trading, and racial apartheid. Recently, The UWI in partnership with the CRC and the Grenada National Reparations Committee guided a historic public apology from the Trevelyan family of Grenada whose ancestors owned more than 1,000 slaves on that island. The apology was accompanied by £100,000 of funding towards an education fund for The UWI Open Campus. The apology was a marked achievement in the 10-Point Plan, but the work doesn’t end here.

This month, as we welcome new students, The UWI also welcomes a new programme with a mission directly aligned to this cause. September, 2023 will mark the first term and the first cohort



The struggle for reparations isn’t just about monetary gains. The United Nations has recently named The UWI the leading university in the world on climate change - an environmental issue disproportionately affecting developing countries in the diaspora. For over 40 years, we have been advocating for action on this issue and have committed our scholarly knowledge and resources to solutions.

of the MA/MSc in Reparatory Justice. As The UWI continues to champion reparations, we have partnered with the University of Glasgow on this programme designed for social activists in the Caribbean and African Diaspora.

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Each of these accomplishments circle back to our connection with Africa—a connection we were reminded of by the Asantehene. As he said during his lecture, the Emancipation story is conjoined with African heritage and therefore inseparable from the African experience. He encouraged us to consider that the conditions of Africa today are the conditions of the Caribbean, as is the history. Though some of our new undergraduate students may not have learned this history in secondary school, we are sure that during your time at The UWI, the learning opportunities will abound. We invite you to uphold the long standing UWI tradition of activism, resistance and reconnecting with The Continent.

Rose-Marie Antoine

Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine
Campus Principal

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Visit **The UWI’s 75th Anniversary** website
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■ CAMPUS NEWS

Peace Park gets Pollinator Garden

Department of Life Sciences joins UN project



The Department of Life Sciences is now home to a Pollinator Garden following a recent sod-turning ceremony. The garden is a collaborative project of The UWI, St. Augustine, the Ministry of Planning and Development, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net TT) aimed at raising awareness about the importance of pollinators while serving as an educational and demonstration location. Speaking at the launch, Planning and Development Minister Penelope Beckles-Robinson noted the significance of the project, “Simple and small-scale initiatives add up over time and not only help change our environment for the better, but also have the effect of changing mindsets and behaviours.”

Pollinators such as bats, bees and butterflies are vital to the reproduction of numerous fruits, vegetables, and plants, and to sustainable agriculture and food security. However, these species face numerous threats, including habitat loss, pesticide use, climate change, diseases and a lack of data

and public awareness, in addition to deficient pollinator-appropriate management. These threats to pollinators were part of the impetus for the partnership.

The Pollinator Garden is one aspect of a multi-pronged approach spearheaded by BES-Net TT to develop policy for effective pollinator preservation and management locally. By creating pollinator gardens in public spaces, BES-Net TT’s Practice Output project seeks to provide vital habitat for these species while offering educational opportunities for the public. Other aspects of the project include data collection, stakeholder training workshops, dissemination of public education materials, policy recommendations and beekeeper capacity building.

As a consortium of United Nations agencies, BES-Net includes not only the UNDP, but also the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the UNDP Global Policy Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification. This garden at

The UWI will enable students and professors to actively contribute to the project’s implementation, fostering hands-on learning experiences that emphasise the importance of pollinators and their critical role in our ecosystem.

Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal, The UWI, St Augustine, Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, expressed her enthusiasm for the collaboration, “As the leading tertiary learning institution in the region, The UWI is thrilled to champion and support yet another initiative that promotes sustainability, conservation and environmental education. Our efforts to ‘green’ the campus align perfectly with the establishment of an initial pollinator garden near the existing Department of Life Sciences’ butterfly enclosure.”

■ **For more information** on the Pollinator Garden project, please visit <http://www.biodiversity.gov.tt/index.php/bes-net/bes-net-tt.html>



[L-R] Dr Lena Dempewolf, Biodiversity Specialist, Environment Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Planning and Development, Dr Brian Cockburn, Dean, Faculty of Science and Technology, Ms Rosemary Lall, Programme Officer, United Nations Development Programme, Hon. Penelope Beckles-Robinson, Minister of Planning and Development, Prof Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal, The UWI St Augustine, Dr Azad Mohammed, Head (Ag.), Life Sciences Department and Prof Indar Ramnarine, Deputy Principal. PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM



[L-R] Mr Rajindra Mahabir of the Life Sciences Department, The UWI St Augustine Campus shows a butterfly specimen to Prof Indar Ramnarine, Deputy Principal, Hon. Penelope Beckles-Robinson, Minister of Planning and Development and Prof Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Pro Vice-Chancellor & Campus Principal, The UWI St. Augustine. PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM

Simple and small-scale initiatives add up over time and not only help change our environment for the better, but also have the effect of changing mindsets and behaviours.



■ CAMPUS NEWS

Graduates from The UWI St Augustine have been ranked competitive by local employers. These were the results of the 2022 Employer Perception Study conducted by the Campus Office of Planning and Institutional Research (COPIR) with support from the Office of Institutional Advancement and Internationalisation. A major challenge faced by employers, however, was an under-supply of soft skills among recent graduates.

The survey was carried out in partnership with the T&T Chamber Industry of Commerce and the Human Resource Management Association of T&T. It was presented to and accepted by the Academic Board in April. Employers were invited to participate in the initiative as part of the institute's continued efforts towards quality enhancement and institutional effectiveness.

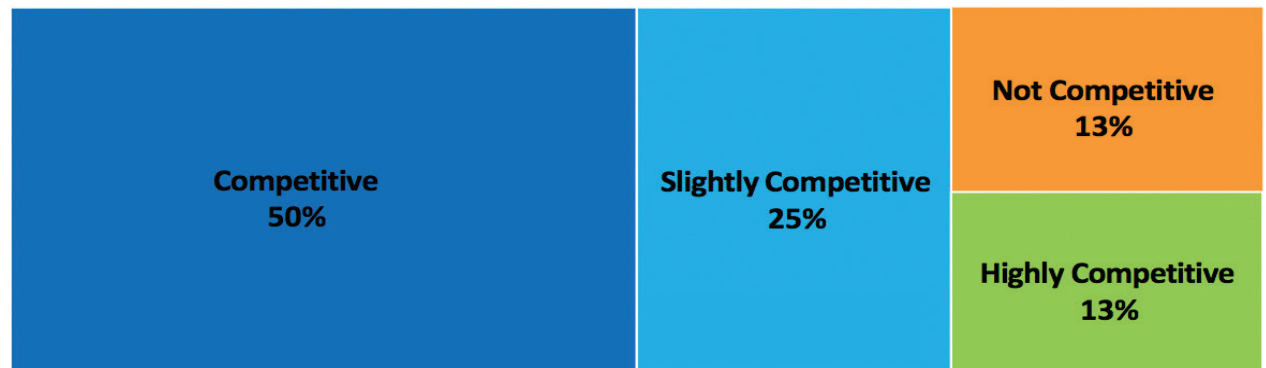
Sixty-eight percent of respondents represented the private sector while the public sector represented 21 percent of respondents. Other agencies surveyed included regional, international and non-governmental organisations. Forty-seven percent of the responding organisations reported that between 10 to 30 percent of their staff were UWI graduates. Seventy percent of these graduates were from the Faculty of Social Sciences while 16 percent represented the Faculty of Engineering. Of the employers surveyed, 50 percent described UWI St Augustine graduates as competitive when compared to graduates from other institutions. UWI St Augustine graduates were also found to perform higher than their peers in multiple areas including teamwork, written and oral communication, ethics and entrepreneurial and enterprise skills.

Although employers commended graduates for competitiveness, they noted that more training in soft skills was necessary. The most valuable soft skills were deemed to be communication, analytical/critical thinking, sector specific technical skills, emotional intelligence and leadership. The lack of soft skills was a recruitment challenge. Additional challenges cited in the report included a lack of practical workplace experience, unrealistic salary expectations and candidates applying for positions for which they did not meet the requirements. Recommendations to these challenges suggested making internships, work-study and volunteering part of the curriculum, strengthening employer engagement and skills training.

According to COPIR Institutional Research Analyst and Planning Officer, Keren Wilson, some of the recommended strategies are already in place, but steps are being taken to implement further recommendations. "In an effort to continue sensitisation across the campus, we have been invited to present findings to faculty boards where they can discuss and refine strategies for implementation. The

UWI graduates ranked COMPETITIVE EMPLOYEES

COPIR employer survey suggests more soft skills training



Data from the 2022 Employer Perception Study on respondent ratings of UWI STA grads' competitiveness.

50 percent of employers described UWI, STA grads as more competitive than their peers

results of the survey made them aware that the strategies already in place could benefit from expansion through increased collaboration with employers and industry and increased communication of said opportunities to the student body. Additionally, we will continue working with Student Support Services to explore the expanded provision of opportunities for students to develop soft skills," said Wilson.

She added, "Consideration is being given for the establishment of a Campus Working Group on Graduate Employability with the aim to develop a harmonised approach for the campus response to improving graduate employability which will of course document further avenues for collaborating with industry in adequately preparing our graduates for the labour force."

BOLIVAR'S BIRTHDAY

His Excellency Álvaro Sánchez Cordero, Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to Trinidad and Tobago, left, and Vice Admiral Reinaldo León Fajardo, Military Attaché of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to Trinidad and Tobago, right, lay a wreath in front of the bust of Latin-American freedom fighter, Simón Bolívar at the Alma Jordan Library on July 24 as part of a ceremony to commemorate the 240th anniversary of Bolívar's birth. The ceremony also commemorated the bicentennial of the Battle of Lake Maracaibo - a watershed in the Venezuelan struggle for independence - as well as the Day of the Bolivarian Navy. Farjado gave the keynote. Following the ceremony, attendees were given a tour of the Dr. Eric Williams Memorial Collection Research Library, Archives and Museum. PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM



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CAMPUS NEWS

Developing the Diaspora

Asantehene Tutu II highlights Caribbean and Africa's common history

BY DIXIE-ANN BELLE

"I will argue that you cannot separate the conditions of Africa today from the conditions of the Caribbean, nor can you isolate the afflictions arising from the pervasive challenges of discrimination and racial inequality from the challenges confronted in Africa and the Caribbean islands." These were the words of the Asantehene, His Royal Majesty (HRM) Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, expressing a desire for stronger connections between the diasporas of the Caribbean and Africa. His speech resonated with the audience during his address at this year's Distinguished Open Lecture series at the Daaga Auditorium, UWI St Augustine campus in August. The packed event was also attended by the Prime Minister, Dr the Hon Keith Rowley and his wife, Sharon Rowley.

The UWI St Augustine Campus Principal, Prof Rose-Marie Belle Antoine expressed similar wishes in her welcome address. "It is time for us to reconnect with Africa," she stated, "not just in our intellectual engagements, but as a nation and people - and it is not simply because of nostalgia or history." She highlighted the need for scholars, intellectual leaders and policy makers to collaborate with African nations to develop beneficial partnerships and "to address the common challenges that we face in an increasingly perilous and unequal global space."

Many in the audience wore African themed attire, and there was a spirited performance by the Asantehene's dancers which further evoked a sense of cultural pride.

Despite the atmosphere of celebration, the king did not shy from speaking of some of the darker themes of colonialism that Caribbean and African countries have in common.

"All these afflictions have grown from the same root," he asserted, adding, "we all have been bitten by the same virus and the consequence is the same wherever we may be."

Emphasising the enduring scars of colonialism, the Asantehene likened the psychological effects to untreated post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). "The failure of the post-emancipation experience to address the challenge of the mental and psychological liberation of the people from the combined effects of slavery and colonialism cannot be dismissed as a factor in the struggle."

He expounded on how history has often depicted warped views of African society and drew images of sophisticated, ancient African empires which boasted marvels of architecture and art and were advanced in writing, arithmetic, geometry, medicine and astrology. He observed that historians have often disregarded these significant details and chosen "to rather consign the African experience at best as an appendage to the story of European adventures and at worst as some subhuman evolution." He maintained, "It is a travesty that does not have a place in our time."

The Asantehene noted that even after emancipation, it was "the perpetrators who were compensated and not us." He added, "The victims were left to themselves. Not only was no possibility of support available, but crucially, no consideration was ever given to the consequence of the centuries of trauma and suffering."



Front row from L-R: Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal, The UWI, St Augustine Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, HRM Otumfuo Osei Tutu II of Ghana and Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Hon Dr Keith Rowley. PHOTO: DAMIAN LUK PAT



Pro Vice-Chancellor and Campus Principal, The UWI St Augustine, Professor Rose-Marie Belle Antoine delivers welcome remarks at the Distinguished Open Lecture featuring HRM Otumfuo Osei Tutu II of Ghana at The Daaga Auditorium. PHOTO: DAMIAN LUK PAT



His Royal Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II of Ghana delivers his distinguished lecture at The UWI St Augustine campus' Daaga Auditorium. PHOTO: DAMIAN LUK PAT

In spite of this painful history, the Asantehene stressed the importance of continuing to push forward and advance beyond colonial influence. He affirmed that the African diaspora has risen and continues to rise above many obstacles. He held up Nelson Mandela and his own grand uncle who had both gone into exile in different circumstances and returned to their homes encouraging peace and reconciliation.

Even in the midst of the struggles that persist post-emancipation, he stated, "it remains my view, ironically, that our experience shines a brighter light on the path to global peace". Acknowledging his country's relationship with the rest of the world, he added, "We have come to terms with the course of history, and better still, we are fortified in our belief that the courage to wage war is meaningless unless it is backed by the wisdom to make peace."

Noting that unfair history should not hamstring the diaspora with regard to its past, he emphasised, "We should be capable of mastering the energy to repel the misconceptions of

the past and build a better world for ourselves. The examples we have heard cited should inspire us to build inclusive societies where peoples of all races and religions share a common destiny." Stressing the importance of taking pride in the diaspora's rich heritage and unquenchable resilience, he added, "the Africa which is the cradle of mankind remains today the future of mankind".

Principal Belle Antoine asserted the importance of UWI's role in promoting African heritage for the benefit of all and commended Vice Chancellor Hilary Beckles as a leader in the movement for reparations for the descendants of enslaved Africans. She noted that steps were being taken to heal tangible, economic loss as well as intangible psychological ones. She also took the opportunity to ask assembled government officials to reinstate the mandatory study of history in schools.

"Emancipation must be more than a celebration or a fashion statement," she declared. "It must be a revelation and a revolution."



The Africa which is the cradle of mankind remains today the future of mankind.

Dancers from the Asantehene's court perform in announcement of the arrival of the Asantehene. PHOTO: ATIBA CUDJOE

■ OUR GRADUATES

UWI graduates are everywhere – politics, business, the arts, and as public intellectuals. In the coming months, **UWI TODAY** will profile some of our high achieving alumni who have made or are making a positive impact on society.

A Culture of FIRSTS

Dr Rhonda McEwen: first black, female president of Victoria University

BY SERAH ACHAM

First is a weighty word, heavy with expectation, possibility and responsibility. It alludes to power, sometimes trial, always hope. More than most, Dr Rhonda McEwen understands this, because on October 12, 2022, she was installed as the first black, female President and Vice Chancellor of Victoria University at the University of Toronto, Canada.

The child of teachers and a former student of St Joseph's Convent, St Joseph, Dr McEwen began her academic life at UWI in 1991 as a science student planning to pursue chemistry and management. Until that is, she spent a year teaching Standard One students at St Theresa's Girls' RC School.

"Trying to explain the Gulf War to eight-year-old girls really started pulling on my interest in other things," she says, "like global politics and how things got communicated around the world as they happen." So, she swapped chemistry for sociology.

It was a big change that led to a very difficult first year, but her decision was a defining one. "The UWI degree gave me really great grounding," Dr McEwen reflects.

She considers her lecturers during that time, among them the now Honourable Justice Gillian Lucky, Professor Patrick Watson, and Professor Rhoda Reddock.

With no background in business subjects or sociology, she had to work extra hard to catch up to her peers. She picked up quickly and within her first year, she became one of the first two students to double major in sociology and management. Her research focus was on the social impacts of technology.

One day, while visiting Prof Reddock's office, she found herself challenged — Prof Reddock advised her to continue to graduate school and apply for a scholarship. Dr McEwen hadn't thought that far ahead, but the bright light of possibility now danced in front of her.

In 1994, Dr McEwen graduated from UWI with first class honours. She was also awarded the coveted Chevening Scholarship which allowed her to further her research interests. Those were the very early days of the Internet, and Dr McEwen, already recognising its vast potential, was intrigued.

"I was really interested in technology and how technologies affect people," she said. So, she enrolled in City University's Information Technology MBA. A few years later, she followed that degree with an MSc in Communications Engineering, and in 2007, a PhD in Information. "My PhD thesis was on mobile information systems and social networks," she says, in other words, "how people build social networks on phones." In 2008, the first iPhone was released.

Dr McEwen's research interests, it seems, have always met technological advancements stride for stride.

"I'm driven by curiosity," she says, another quality she attributes to her UWI education. "I think I learnt somewhere deep in myself that it didn't really matter if I don't know all the things about something. If I am passionate and interested in [it], I should go for it."

Dr Rhonda McEwen President and Vice Chancellor,
Victoria University, University of Toronto, Canada.
PHOTO: BRIANNA ROYE

In 1994, Dr McEwen graduated from UWI with first class honours. She was also awarded the coveted Chevening Scholarship which allowed her to further her research interests.

"We're looking at how well these large language models like ChatGPT understand Trinidad English Creole and can [respond] to questions or anything posed of it."

So, into the world of research she dove and she's continued to seek cutting-edge solutions ever since, earning her two terms as Canada Research Chair in Tactile Interfaces, Communication and Cognition.

While her current research interests are still in people and technology, they've shifted to emerging technology, and "technologies to support communities, schools, [and] children...who have autism or other related disorders." This is why, when Sesame Workshop approached her to help inform a project on autism, she accepted. Her earlier research on apps and tablets designed for children on the spectrum put her on the Workshop's radar and gave her the opportunity to consult on the creation of the first autistic puppet to live on Sesame Street.

Virtual Reality, robotics and artificial intelligence have also fallen under her proverbial microscope. She is particularly excited to share her current research being completed in collaboration with fellow UWI alumna, linguist, Dr Samantha Jackson. "We're looking at how well these large language models like ChatGPT understand Trinidad English Creole and can [respond] to questions or anything posed of it," Dr McEwen explains, sharing that this could provide serious benefits to young children just learning to read. "It's the first time I've been able to incorporate something very specifically Trinidadian into my research on technology," she says.

As President and Vice Chancellor, however, researcher is just one of the multiple roles Dr McEwen fills. She also deals with infrastructure issues, fundraising, and outreach, and provides mentorship and support to students, faculty and staff. Dr McEwen recognises her responsibility as the first black woman to serve in such a prestigious role. "It is a big responsibility, but it's also quite an honour to be the first," she says. Her legacy, she hopes, is to "build enough of a pathway so I'm definitely not the last. I really want to inspire others to push through and try. Prof Reddock's little word of encouragement went a long way, and I hope to pay it forward."

In the West Indiana section of the Alma Jordan Library, there is a desk belonging to the late Professor Brinsley Samaroo. Even after he retired from The UWI in 2005, Prof Samaroo could be found at this desk on weekdays hunched over books and papers; taking notes in pencil; greeting and meeting students and colleagues alike. It was a space he occupied up to the time he became ill and eventually passed on July 9.

Occupying public space was characteristic of Prof Samaroo. Public historian was one of his many titles. He was also an author, politician, husband and father. Some may even call him an activist. A pioneering researcher on the history of the Indian diaspora, Prof Samaroo was by no means limited in his scope. As his longtime colleague and friend, Professor Bridget Brereton says, “In no way could Brinsley be described as a narrowly ethnic historian.” In addition to his scholarship on the Indian diaspora, Prof Samaroo’s research interests included class and labour struggles, the general history of T&T and the life of Dr Eric Williams.

Among Prof Samaroo’s many books and publications is the groundbreaking anthology he co-edited, *India in the Caribbean* and the recent, *Adrian Cola Rienzi: Life and times of an Indo-Caribbean progressive*, which Prof Brereton regards as a remarkable text. “I think that is his most notable book, first of all, because he was researching this book for a long time. It’s very well researched, and it tells the story of somebody who is not well known to people in T&T. Nearly everybody has heard of [Uriah] Butler, fewer people have heard of Rienzi. He [Rienzi] was very important, because for a short, but crucial period of time between 1937-1944, this one man, who was of Indian origin, managed to lead the two most important unions in the country — the Oilfield Workers Trade Union, where the members were nearly all Afro-Trini, and the Sugar Workers Union, where the members were mostly Indo-Trini. So he really was a very important person, and for Brinsley, he symbolised the possibility of bridging the ethnic divide and pursuing what could be described as class-based or labour politics.”

Uniting the people of T&T was a cause dear

to Prof Samaroo’s heart. Coming from the rural village of Ecclesville, Rio Claro, Prof Samaroo grew up on the cocoa estate owned and managed by his father. Although raised Presbyterian, he harboured a keen interest in various aspects of Indian culture such as Islam, Hinduism and the Hindi language. After completing primary school, Prof Samaroo was awarded an Exhibition Scholarship which afforded him the opportunity to attend Naparima College, San Fernando. It was at Naparima College that he met lifelong colleagues and friends such as Professor Kenneth Ramchand and Dr Kusha Haraksingh.

Following this, Prof Samaroo went on to receive further scholarships allowing him to complete his BA and MA at Delhi University, New Delhi, India. Studying in India was an eye-opening experience for Prof Samaroo, helping him to better understand his ancestry and forge connections within the diaspora. After obtaining a PhD in History from the University of London, Prof Samaroo returned to The UWI St Augustine where he became a lecturer in the Department of History in 1968. It was a tumultuous period in T&T’s history as the Black Power Movement was at its peak. Determined to continue his mission to unite people, however, Prof Samaroo joined the movement giving public lectures on both African and Indian history as well as working to quell negative perceptions of the movement among the Indo-Trinidadian community.

Participating in the Black Power Movement was indicative of the public presence Prof Samaroo would maintain in his over 40-year career. Yet, still his work on the Indian diaspora remained paramount. Prof Brereton noted that in the 1970s, not much quality research existed on the Indian diaspora. “As a very young man he was exposed to India through his studies at Delhi University and he went back there often to lecture, to attend conferences and so on. So there’s a network of international researchers which has grown bigger and bigger, and Brinsley helped to create that. His hugely important contribution to the academic study of the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean was not in one book. It was through a series of articles in journals, co-edited books and networking. By the time he died, he was the centre



Archival photo of Professor Brinsley Samaroo with students at the time - now Professor in Arch

BELOVED Public Historian

BY ZAHRA

*“There were no airs or
no affectation. His
and he wa*

Professor Brinsley Samaroo speaking at his retirement function.



Uniting the people of T&T was a cause dear to Prof Samaroo’s heart. Coming from the rural village of Ecclesville, Rio Claro, Prof Samaroo grew up on the cocoa estate owned and managed by his father.

Professor Brinsley Samaroo at the 2023 Bocas Lit Fest with L-R D Professor Bridget Brereton, Pro Vice Chancellor and UWI, St Aug Principal, Rose-Marie Belle Antoine, Judy Raymond and Gerard



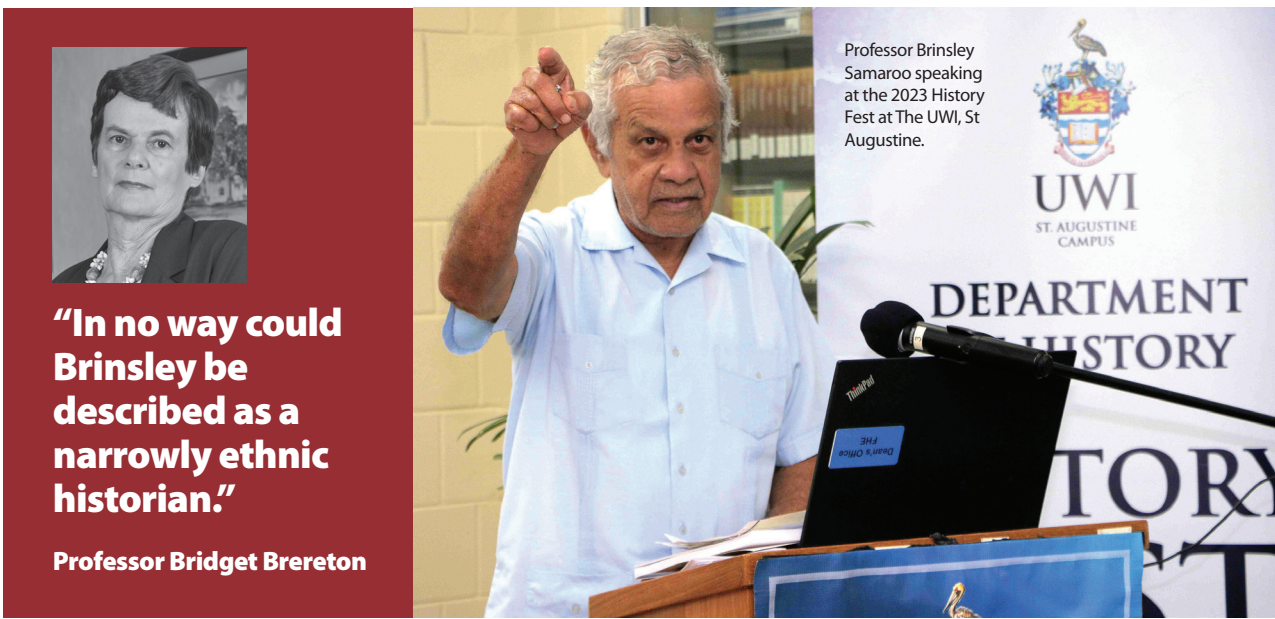


aeology, Basil Reid and Dr Ron Sookram.

BRINSLEY an & Professor

GORDON

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lifestyle was simple
as humble.”



“In no way could Brinsley be described as a narrowly ethnic historian.”

Professor Bridget Brereton

of that network; many, many scholars are working hard on the aspects of history of the indentured Indian diaspora and he’ll always be remembered for that contribution. That work will continue.”

Speaking with *UWI Today*, Dr Haraksingh, who joined the History Department shortly after Prof Samaroo in 1973, fondly remembered him as a colleague who was “affable, helpful and a great raconteur”. He also credits Prof Samaroo with having a major impact on the way history is taught in T&T. “In history, he taught for many years a compulsory course on Foundations of New World History. This meant that thousands of students passed through his hands. In his Foundations course, he would tell the students how the Conquistadors, on landing in the New World, first fell upon their knees, then upon the Aborigines. In the early days many of the students were more mature than nowadays; many were graduates from teacher training colleges who were taking the opportunity to acquire university credentials. These would return to classrooms across the country, carrying with them Professor Samaroo’s influence.”

Another aspect of Prof Samaroo’s public life was his political career. From 1981-1986, he served as an opposition senator and from 1987-1991, a

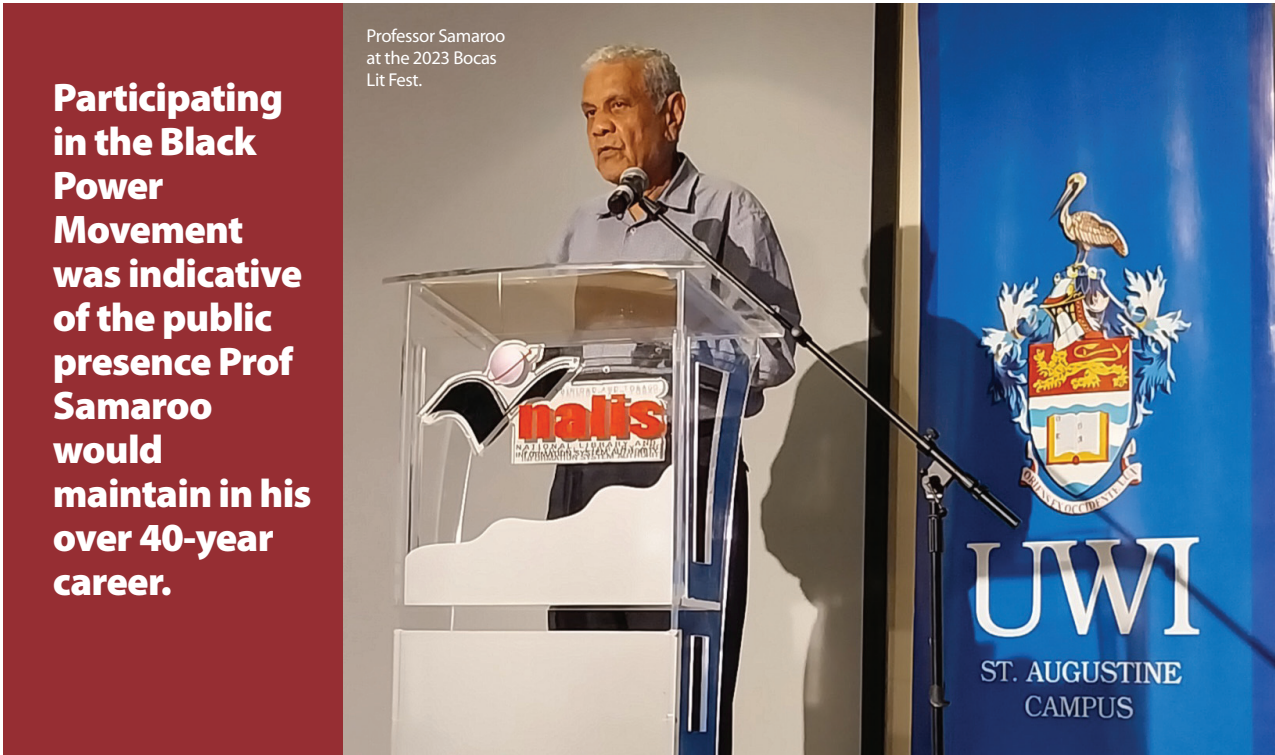
government minister. Prof Brereton shared that despite entering the political arena, Prof Samaroo retained a great deal of humility. “There were no airs or graces about Brinsley, no affectation. His lifestyle was simple and he was humble. When he decided to leave Parliament in 1991, he didn’t assume he would just walk back into the History Department. No. There had to be a vacancy, he had to apply, and he accepted an appointment at the lecturer level—though he’d been a senior lecturer when he left in 1986. That was the man.”

Other notable works by Prof Samaroo include *The Dictionary of Caribbean Biography: Trinidad and Tobago*, *The Price of Conscience: Howard Nankivell and Labour Unrest in the British Caribbean*, *The Art of Garnett Ifill: Glimpses of the Sugar Industry*, *The Mike Men of Trinidad and Tobago* and *The Blackest Thing in Slavery was not the Black Man: The Last Testament of Eric Williams*. He also recently completed a book, commissioned by San Fernando Mayor Junia Regrello on the history of San Fernando which will be published posthumously.

Zahra Gordon is a poet and freelance writer/editor.



Dr Karen Eccles,
ustine Campus
Besson.



Participating in the Black Power Movement was indicative of the public presence Prof Samaroo would maintain in his over 40-year career.

Professor Samaroo
at the 2023 Bocas
Lit Fest.

ENERGY

the Temperature topic

Max temperature of warmest month (Celsius) < 0° 10° 25° 40° > 50°

BY DR PORTIA FELIX

Climate change is said to be driving hotter temperatures, with recent climate data showing that July is on track to be the hottest month in human history. Nations are experiencing extreme climatic events, and a strengthening El Niño pushes temperatures in countries around the world to record highs, exacerbating unprecedented heat waves, fueling wildfires, and triggering storms in ways that climate scientists believe would not be possible without the influence of climate change.

Closer to home we too, were not spared, as we saw severe flooding in the month of June, followed by high temperatures across both islands in July. All these activities prove that the climate crisis is no longer conceptual, but one that is touching the lives of people all around the world. Scientists say it's clear that climate change is making events such as storms and heat waves more enduring. High carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels are blamed for global warming, and so oil companies and governments are continuously urged by climate scientists, international bodies as well as activists to accelerate the transition from non-renewable fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) toward renewables (solar, wind, biomass and hydropower). Yet, fossil fuels continue to play a dominant role in the global energy system.

In the midst of these extreme events, there is some reluctance by leading energy companies to fully commit to decreasing fossil fuel production and cutting emissions. Recent newspaper articles with headlines like 'Big oil quietly walks back on climate pledges as global heat records tumble' (*The Guardian*, July 16, 2023), "Shell CEO calls it 'irresponsible to cut oil production now' (*The Associated Press*, July 6, 2023) and 'Shell saves the day' (*Trinidad Express*, April 11, 2023) are describing how oil companies are scaling back or withdrawing from their initial targets and commitments to lowering their emissions, explaining how the timing of transition to renewable energy might be premature and increasing their fossil fuel production respectively. These actions contradict the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

However, as transitions to renewable energy strengthen, the challenge is becoming clearer. For example, a review of the costs associated with the transition to renewable energy illustrates that the falling cost of solar panels is proof of the viability of localised energy generation in communities and businesses. Under these conditions, where renewable sources seem to be viable, when energy consumption from renewables becomes intermittent,



Dr Portia Felix, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering in the Faculty of Engineering.

A view on the CLIMATE CRISIS' HEATWAVE

fossil fuel compensates for peak demand. This may not be a bad thing at the moment, as recent studies indicate that natural gas can be an excellent ally in the current energy transition. This is because of its intense energy production with lower emissions, its ability to be eventually swapped one-to-one with biogas in all technological applications, and the fact that its efficiency can be improved with newer technology. However, as the energy transition advances, less reliance on non-renewables is expected.

The view here is that the energy transition cannot happen by immediately abandoning fossil fuels. The process has to be gradual and carefully considered in order to handle the advancing stages of the transition. This requires new technologies including storage capacity—for when there's too much wind and sun, and release in moments when there's not enough—and power grid stability and resilience—which is critical in preventing equipment damage and power outages due to the unpredictable nature of renewable sources—to ensure that renewables are capable of guaranteeing steady energy for supply and demand.

Although moving from fossil fuels to renewables involves a paradigm shift from a well-developed energy system that built economies and improved everyday lives to an intrinsically uncertain scenario, the worsening global climate crisis should give impetus to oil companies and governments to commit and strengthen investments in renewables. These entities must understand the challenges we face or risk pushback later when the world has even less time to lose.

Furthermore, though renewable energy is touted as emission-free and less polluting, we must consider that in developing its use to levels that can handle national and global energy supply and demand, other aspects of the environment are not compromised, for example, deforestation, where trees are felled for wood to produce biofuel, and changes in biodiversity to accommodate both onshore and offshore solar and wind farms. Hence, journeying towards an energy sustainable world should not be a fixation on an energy source, but should be guided by continuous research insights. Oil companies and governments should make balanced decisions to do the right things and do things the right way.

The egg drop: a classic science experiment that began at a jet propulsion lab in the 1950s which is now used around the world as a problem-solving challenge for students. The problem: how to safely land a fragile object like an egg when dropped from a great height. This classic experiment was the final assignment that capped off a week of learning at The UWI-Upper Level Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) Vacation Camp. Held at the Department of Physics, The UWI, St Augustine campus in July, secondary school students ages 14 to 18 from 13 participating schools were able to get hands-on STEM experience.

“As the outreach coordinator in my Department of Physics, we had been wanting to do something of this nature for a while locally,” said Prof Shirin Haque, astronomy professor in the Physics Department. “Linking up with the Upper Level Educational Institute (ULEI) allowed us to keep our ears on the ground with high school students to create an amazing experience for them right here at The University of the West Indies,” says Haque, who added that ULEI CEO, Shoba Bedassie was integral to the programme’s coordination and ultimate success.

Prof Haque, who took on the role as the science programme coordinator for the event, aimed to expose a new generation of students to the world of STEM and impart the skills that would help them develop the passion for one of the many fields in STEM that can bolster the future of T&T. Students were required to write an essay detailing why they wanted to participate in the camp, and the responses were overwhelming. “We were oversubscribed for the 30 spaces,” says Prof Haque, “so we had a full house indeed!”

Each day of the week was dedicated to a different letter of STEM—Monday was Science Day led by Shazir Ali, Tuesday was Technology, with Dr Stephanie Mohammed, Wednesday Chelsea Manwah took on Engineering and Kaylan Marie Achong handled Mathematics. “It all culminated on Friday with the Egg Drop Competition, which required all the STEM skills of creativity, design and problem-solving skills to be harnessed,” says Prof Haque. “Six teams competed for the egg to be dropped from the fourth floor of the Natural Sciences building to land unbroken, encapsulated with the best engineering design. The teams explained to the judges the science, physics, design and mathematics behind their project.” Incredibly, every team was able to land their egg intact.

The camp consisted of morning and afternoon sessions meeting with scientists and having hands-on lab demonstrations coordinated by the technical staff in the Department — Chief Technician Shazaad Ali-Shah and Research Technician Sadira Khan. Students learned about programming drones, light powered robotic vehicles, 3-D printing and other cutting edge technologies. “What I enjoyed most about the UWI-Upper Level experience was that it was a very hands-on experience, and I got to talk to a lot of professionals in their field, which gave me a lot of insight to what I want to study in the future” says Amy Lezama, one of the students from the camp.

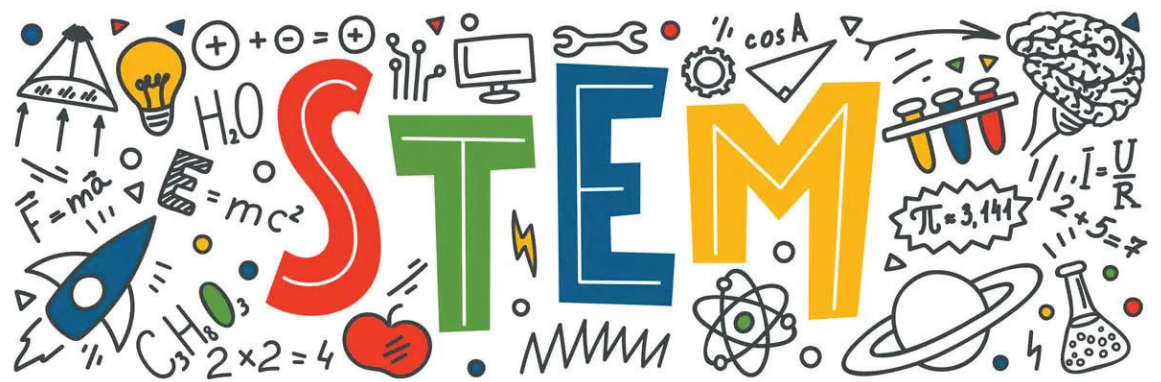
“The best part was the egg-drop! It was very fun,” says Sian Khoon Khoon, another camper. “I’m very grateful for this opportunity and I’ll for sure see you at the next STEM camp!”

One key aspect of the camp was instilling in students a sense of what is possible in the world of STEM and sparking their imaginations. “The future is greatly technological. The younger generation is the future. As a matter of fact, it is already here,” says Prof Haque. “There is barely any aspect of life that can escape technology anymore – how we communicate, how we do banking, medical care, and climate change. The list is endless. All require STEM skills which is focussed more on holistic problem solving than working in silos.”

For Prof Haque, the most memorable aspect of her time at the camp was getting to interact with the campers and share her love of STEM, physics in particular. “They were so utterly inspiring with their intrigue, participation, and excitement,” say Prof Haque. “What I saw in the camp that week, our future in the hands of children like these is bright and full of hope. One incident does stand out for me – on Mathematics Day, I drew a number line going from negative five to positive five and asked students to clamour around the number they felt they identified in their love for mathematics: positive five being totally love it to negative five being totally hate it!. One young student stood at negative five, saying he hated mathematics. At the end of the sessions that day, seeing the power of mathematics differently – he exclaimed, he would like to revise his position on the number line to positive four. Moments like that make all the effort worthwhile.”



Staff of the Department of Physics and Upper Level Educational Institute. Back row from left: Shoba Bedasie, CEO, Upper Level Institute, Prof Shirin Haque. Fourth from left: Shazaad Ali-Shah, Chief Technician, Department of Physics. Front row left: Sadira Khan, Research Technician, Department of Physics
PHOTOS: COURTESY PHYSICS DEPARTMENT



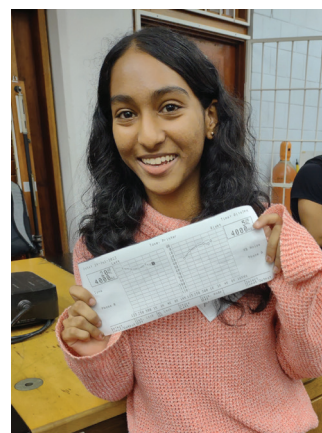
CAMP SOARS

Physics Department hosts secondary students

B Y A M Y L I B A K S H



From left to right: Students Ishmail Jordan, Amy Lezama and Arianne Ali while learning how to program Raspberry Pi in the Physics Laboratory.



Sian Khoon Khoon displays an audiometry chart for hearing evaluations which she learnt during camp.



Students Ishmail Jordan, Amy Lezama and Remington McIntyre test prosthetics they designed and built during camp with Medical Physicist Chelsea Manwah, second from left.

"I'm very grateful for this opportunity and I'll for sure see you at the next STEM camp!"

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

RESEARCH

Radiation a radical solution?

Research team testing new treatments for PCOS

BY TYRELL GITTENS



Over the past seven years, a team of researchers at The UWI St Augustine has been working arduously to raise awareness of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) and research new, non-invasive treatments.

Team co-supervisor, Dr Stephanie Mohammed recently spoke with UWI Today about the ongoing research which has been accepted for presentation in October, 2023 by The Androgen Excess-PCOS Society's 21st Annual Meeting.

PCOS is a condition which causes the ovaries to produce an abnormal amount of androgens - male sex hormones. While there is naturally a small amount of androgen in women, this condition results in women experiencing hormonal imbalances, cystic follicles, hirsutism, weight gain, acne, insulin resistance and depression.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that up to 13 percent of reproductive-aged women (15-49) are affected by this condition which can even lead to infertility and other chronic conditions such as Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM).

Despite the long-term health problems associated with PCOS, the WHO estimates as much as 70 percent of affected women are still undiagnosed.

This research started in 2017 as part of Dr Mohammed's MPhil. She was inspired to investigate the effect of electromagnetic radiation on the development of PCOS after she learnt that an international company was treating cancerous ovarian tumours with similar methods.

Supervised by Dr Venkatesan Sundaram, Head of Department of Basic Veterinary Sciences and medical physics lecturer, Dr Nikolay Zyuzikov, Dr Mohammed was also motivated to undertake the research in light of what she found to be a lack of resources and information in T&T about PCOS.

She added, "The treatment options that they have now for PCOS are limited to: diet and exercise, medications and laparoscopic surgery."

"These treatment options for managing the symptoms were invasive and had women experiencing a lot of side effects. Because of technological advancement and the potential use of radiation, I wanted to experiment on a non-invasive method that could prove useful for treating the condition. I also wanted to experiment with animal models so I reached out to Dr Sundaram who was already studying reproductive systems in animals and he agreed."

In the initial stages of the research, there was focus on testing the effects of electromagnetic radiation on the development of PCOS in rats.

"To our surprise we realised that the radiation was able to slow down the growth of the follicular cyst in the PCOS-induced animals," says Mohammed. With these results, Mohammed was able to earn first place in the Three

PHOTOS: COURTESY DR STEPHANIE MOHAMMED



(From L-R) Dr Venkatesan Sundaram, Dr Stephanie Mohammed and Dr Nikolay Zyuzikov while Mohammed collected the 2022 Three Minute Thesis Competition (3MT) first place award.



Dr Stephanie Mohammed conducts a test on blood samples during her PCOS research.



(From far R-L) Dr Brian Cockburn, Dr Venkatesan Sundaram and Dr Stephanie Mohammed during the launch of the Prevalence of PCOS research in Trinidad with several of the research sponsors.



Dr Venkatesan Sundaram (3rd L), Dr Stephanie Mohammed (centre), and Dr Nikolay Zyuzikov (2nd R) with technical research staff at The UWI School of Veterinary Sciences.

Minute Thesis Competition (3MT) Competition across all UWI campuses held by The UWI, Mona.

After completing her PhD, Dr Mohammed shifted focus to expanding the research under Sundaram's supervision to develop a comprehensive understanding of PCOS on a national scale.

The project's team was also expanded. Faculty of Science and Technology Dean, Dr Brian Cockburn, was also enlisted in the study due to his expertise in diabetes research and Founder and Executive Director of PCOS Challenge, Sasha Ottley, also joined the team to help advocate for women with PCOS.

Mohammed explains, "I reached out to Professor Ricardo Azziz - a top PCOS researcher [worldwide] and the CEO of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine - about our ongoing research and he agreed to guide and collaborate with us on the research. His expertise has been able to help us understand our research design much better."

The current phase of the research has been focused on testing women across Trinidad to determine the prevalence of PCOS.

With the guidance of Sundaram, and other team members, she has been able to source additional funding and resources from donors including The UWI's School for Graduate Studies and Research, Ramps Logistics, Caribbean Eye Institute, Rotary St Augustine, Rotary Club of Felicity/Charlerville and Rotary Club of Central Port of Spain.

To date, the team has been able to conduct an initial community-based survey of 250 women across Trinidad aged 18-45 to gather data on PCOS.

There are plans to survey a further 50 women to bring the total survey size to 300 as the initial part of their study. The study population was randomly chosen across eight locations in Trinidad reflecting a diversity of ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses.

"Because of the nature of the study, women have been receptive to providing their information and blood samples for testing to determine whether they have the condition or not. The community has been supportive in facilitating us to help recruit persons at designated locations."

Preliminary results have shown a positive correlation between PCOS, Body Mass Index and infertility in Trinidad.

Throughout the study, the investigators observed that many women were also unaware of PCOS or being misdiagnosed with the condition.

The research also has an outreach component through which a webinar was hosted in July 2023, and an educational, secondary school tour is planned for PCOS Awareness Month.

■ ENVIRONMENT



Barnett challenges Caribbean Climate Change

Guyanese activist wins Eric Williams School Bags Essay Competition

BY ANNA-MARIA WILLIAMS

Guyanese activist **Diego Barnett** is the most recent winner of the Eric Williams School Bags Essay Competition. After a three-year hiatus due to COVID-19, the contest, which is hosted by the Eric Williams Memorial Collection Research Library, Archives & Museum (EWMC), has returned. Barnett won the 2019/2020 competition with his essay on how Caribbean governments can implement effective strategies for managing climate change. According to Barnett, his success was due not only to his passion for writing and scientific research, but also his family and faith.

Barnett shared with UWI Today that, as a young boy, education was important in his household. He grew up with his mother, a teacher, and grandparents, all of whom created an environment conducive to his academic success. Barnett affectionately shared the instrumental role his grandfather, Albert Connell, played in his life. Barnett was extremely close to his grandfather who helped him appreciate the value of order and structure both in life and writing. Barnett's grandfather even provided feedback as he wrote his award-winning essay. He fondly remembers a favourite quote of his grandfather's, "Give me a fish and I'll eat for a day, teach me to fish and I'll eat for a lifetime," recalls Barnett.

A naturally curious person, the essay competition piqued Barnett's interest; he knew his scientific background, writing experience and desire to serve others promised a win. As he wrote his essay, Barnett said his purpose was "to prepare others so that they can better deal with climate change". He wanted his writing to reflect an earnest desire to provide people with reliable information. For Barnett, the competition was a platform to shed light on how climate change affects the Caribbean region and offer solutions to the crisis.

A graduate of Queen's College, Guyana, Barnett also has an Associate Degree in Natural Sciences and is pursuing a BA in Chemical Engineering at the University of Toronto. Currently, Barnett is on a team of researchers designing and testing a module which uses forward osmosis and freeze concentration technology that treats wastewater from mining sites to reduce water consumption and provide clean water. In addition to his degree, Barnett plans to complete a Certificate in Artificial Intelligence.

Barnett said participating in and winning the competition was a significant milestone in his academic career as it expanded his knowledge of climate change. He was elated that the judges enjoyed his essay and hopes that more people will benefit from his work in the near future.

First held in 2007, the biennial Eric Williams School Bags Essay Competition is open to lower and upper sixth form students in 17 Caribbean countries. The first winner, Dexnell Peters, went on to obtain a PhD from Johns Hopkins University, a Bennett Boskey Fellowship in Atlantic Studies from Oxford University and is now a lecturer at The UWI, Mona. The 2023/2024 competition was announced earlier this year with the theme "Help or Hindrance: Discuss the Impact of Social Media on Civil Society or Politics in the 21st Century". The deadline for entries has been extended to January 31, 2024.

■ **For more information contact**
Erica Williams Connell at ewmc@ewmc-tt.org

Anna-Maria Williams is an aspiring corporate communications specialist and former president of The UWI, St Augustine Communication Studies Association.

Barnett said his purpose was, "to prepare others so that they can better deal with climate change".

Diego Barnett, left, winner of the Eric Williams School Bags Essay Competition and Speaker of the House, the Honourable Member of Parliament Brigid Mary Annisette-George, right, at the Parliament of Trinidad & Tobago on August 24, 2023. A trip to T&T was part of Barnett's prize. PHOTO: COURTESY OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT



An excerpt of Diego Barnett's winning essay on effective strategies for Caribbean governments to deal with Climate Change

The Caribbean's carbon footprint has drastically increased, as there are more carbon dioxide emissions from automobiles and industrial sites, due to the combustion of fuel and other organic chemical reactions. There are many developing Caribbean countries that have established industries with the goal of maximising their productivity and profits. However, parsimonious efforts are made towards environmentally-friendly projects and sustainable development. We have intensified the effects of climate change with our advancements, is it not then fitting that we correct our actions?

Furthermore, carbon dioxide is responsible for more than half of the anthropogenic greenhouse effect, and its concentration in the atmosphere is currently 40 percent higher than it was when industrialisation began. This rise in carbon dioxide levels can be attributed to the high levels of deforestation in the Caribbean where our forestry, home to a multiplicity of species, is under constant threat. Haiti is the epitome of the existence of deforestation. In the colonial era, the French cut down trees in order to establish sugar cane plantations ("Deforestation in Haiti," n.d.). Haiti was the first Caribbean country to become an independent nation and, as the French severed all links to the country, its people struggled to further develop it. The most economical method was selling lumber, or charcoal production. Thus, one of the major dangers to biodiversity and nature, as a whole, is deforestation where both plant and animal species are lost. The Caribbean's forestry management needs to be subject to national legislation, and sector-specific policies must be implemented in a timely manner. Governments should seek to establish and enforce policies that aim to protect and conserve our environment. These conservation sites would prove to be invaluable assets in the battle against climate change. Additionally, any wood production industry should be limited to a portion of our forestry, with policies that promote sustainable development, such as making it mandatory for these industries to participate in afforestation on a large scale. However, since many Caribbean countries depend on timber exports, it will not be feasible to halt all operations.

Since agriculture contributes significantly to the Gross National Product and Gross Domestic Product of many Caribbean countries, numerous Caribbean agricultural practices promote climate change. Many farmers are oblivious to the fact that when livestock digest feed and egest faecal matter, methane is released. Even during combustion, methane is released. Why is methane so detrimental? The heating effect of methane is approximately 25 times greater than that of carbon dioxide. To relieve this, governments can install gas systems to collect methane from landfills and livestock operations, then refine the contaminated methane to a certain biological standard.

Barnett's full essay can be found in the UWI Today web version.

We have intensified the effects of climate change with our advancements, is it not then fitting that we correct our actions?

ARTS

JADA JOHN: *Med student turned crochet artist*

BY SCYLLINA SAMUEL

Jada John may not be a grandparent, but she's embraced a growing trend among young people - "granny hobbies". John, a second-year medical student, recently showcased her talents at The UWI Pop-Up Shop, an artisan market held on June 4 in the JFK Auditorium and Undercroft, and Engineering Undercroft.

"Granny hobbies" include crafting, embroidering, knitting, sewing and John's hobby of choice — crocheting. A talented crochet artist and the proprietor of Croje, her online shop, at The UWI Pop-Up Shop, John displayed her crocheted animal dolls, also known as amigurumis. A keen interest in Japanese culture led to John making amigurumis - a Japanese-style, small, stuffed animal.

Reflecting on her experience, John expressed delight at witnessing people's enthusiasm and fascination with her creations. The event provided tangible evidence of her diligence and dedication, proving that the public was interested in her work. At first, John was pleasantly surprised by the quantity of pieces she had to display and how quickly her collection had grown. However, it wasn't always smooth sailing. When John first learned to crochet from YouTube, she harboured a fear of completing projects, anxious that they might not turn out as desired. Fortunately, John's parents played a pivotal role in encouraging her to persist and take the plunge. "My parents always ensured that I finished what I started. They pushed me to realise my potential," says John.

Despite the challenges, John finds crocheting to be a relaxing hobby. According to John, "Pursuing a degree can be stressful, regardless of the field." She believes that having hobbies that serve as a counterbalance to the demands of academic life is essential for overall well-being. As a medical student whose life purpose is to help people, Jada hopes to donate her dolls to needy children in the future while also helping to promote the craft nationally. She aspires to build a vibrant community of crocheters where support and motivation can be shared.

■ Visit John's online store, "Croje: From Hook to Heart," on Instagram: @crochet_croje.



Crochet artist and medical student, Jada John displays her handmade amigurumis.
PHOTO: ANEEL KARIM

INSTALLATION OF IDENTITY

Spaces Between student exhibit bridges the gap between Trinidad and Tobago

BY SCYLLINA SAMUEL

With family in both Trinidad and Tobago, Lynne Parks has always carried a dual identity. This identity made the filmmaker, lecturer and PhD candidate sensitive to the relationship between Trinidadians and Tobagonians. Her keen interest in the subject led Parks to create the immersive art exhibition *Spaces Between*, held recently at the The UWI Film Programme Building. Parks said her goal with the exhibit was to simulate the experience of being in between two spaces and to help citizens relate to each other, thus decreasing the cultural gaps between them.

While completing her doctoral research on national identity, Parks noticed a polarising difference between the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. Hurricane Flora, known as one of the deadliest hurricanes in history, hit Tobago in 1963. According to Parks, most Tobagonians know about its devastating aftermath, but it's not as important in Trinidad. This is just one example of the divide.

Spaces Between was a maze that allowed participants to tangibly experience a Trinidadian and Tobagonian identity. Upon entry, the maze prompted the question, "Are you Trinidadian or Tobagonian?" By physically submerging visitors into this question, Parks promoted a united Trinbagonian identity and debunked the assumed major differences between the islands. The exhibit also interrogates the role of media in shaping national identities.

"What was initially supposed to be a film quickly turned into a massive installation art piece," says Parks. The immersive mode truly allowed for thought-provoking discovery and interrogation of national identity. Parks noted that the piece and, by extension, cultural studies "allow us to leave spaces in academia and bring them to the people to participate in these difficult conversations".

Spaces Between also raised awareness of how media causes polarisation between the islands and the impact on identity. The media fills the gap in our knowledge by replacing it with images that divide us, according to Parks. Hence, the



most significant objects placed in the maze chambers were television or computer displays. These displays reflected the outside perspective of the islands. For example, the Trinidad Chamber displays included videos on Tobago as an idealised tourist destination, still untouched and primitive. While the Tobago Chamber displays included news of increasing crime and violence in Trinidad.

However, both the Trinidad and Tobago Chambers bore an identical resemblance to one's experience, regardless of which island they resided in. Many items of Caribbean nostalgia were also included such as scents of citronella, old photo albums, Christmas cards, and empty Smalta bottles. "I didn't expect the maze to evoke so much nostalgia," says Parks. The scenes connected participants from both Trinidad and Tobago allowing a conscious realisation of a connected national identity between the islands of Trinidad and Tobago.

Notably, Parks evoked a sense of patriotism by displaying familiar Caribbean scenes. As it was placed quietly for a spectacle, the consequently liminal space created room for the romanticisation of an otherwise normal daily encounter, driving an appreciation and pride to call both Trinidad and Tobago home.



[LEFT] A patron enjoys an interactive display of the *Spaces Between* exhibit.

[RIGHT] Artefacts from the *Spaces Between* exhibit.

PHOTOS: LYNNE PARKS

ARTS



Samara Lallo
PHOTO: KLP PHOTOGRAPHY

“Samara is one of the most formidable actors we have produced in T&T.”

Those words came from Dr Yao Ramesar, veteran director and Coordinator of The UWI Film Degree Programme in his interview with UWI Today earlier this year. In the 2023 Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival, Lallo’s talent will be witnessed not only as she appears in Ramesar’s film, *Fortune for All*, but also in her own film, *Vulnerable*—

written, produced by and starring this rising talent.

“*Vulnerable* is an experimental film that touches on a subject I was very passionate about - the in-between period of when we are going from being ok to not and then to being ok again. It asks the questions about how one fares through that in-between, that unseen part of life that we shy away from talking about, that vulnerable period of the void in-between.”

Lallo, a graduate of UWI’s Department of Creative and Festival Arts (DCFA) was always drawn to creative endeavours but in particular, she was drawn to the DCFA. As a child, she gravitated to a very particular building at the St Augustine Campus as if drawn by an unseen tether. Her father was a lecturer at the UWI and she would always tell him that she wanted to study at a particular building located near to the present Republic Bank, St Augustine branch building. As it turns out, that building was the DCFA.

She pursued a BA in Theatre Arts as she had already benefited from her immersion in the field via the Drama Club in UWI Sixth Form with Lincoln Douglas, and quickly found the place she was looking at all this time was exactly the place she needed to be.

“The Theatre Arts programme was pretty interesting in terms of having a fairly holistic approach that I appreciated. We got to experience festivals and events like stick-fighting, and participate in dance as part of our curriculum which covered everything from dances of African origin to traditional dance from the katchak and Indian influences. What I particularly appreciated was that we explored what it means to be Caribbean people and Trinbagonian from an objective and critical position and through critical thinking. There was immense power in those explorations.”

In addition to being a film-maker, she is also a voice talent, writer, acting and voice coach, producer and educator.

“I am very passionate about creating a sustainable creative economy in T&T by understanding the business about what we do - it is after all, not show fun, it’s show business. Working with agencies as a creative for TV and radio I also understand the importance of marrying the needs of the talent with that of the client too. So, I currently offer courses in voice acting and acting as well so that we can improve the quality of talent here overall.”

As Ramesar put it, there is likely no better person to be taught by.

There is much work to be continued in T&T in the sphere of where culture, creativity and even carnival collide with what her learnings of theatre at The UWI offered her. According to Lallo, there is an immense opportunity missed at Carnival in terms of the incredible folklore and stories that we developed over many years locally.

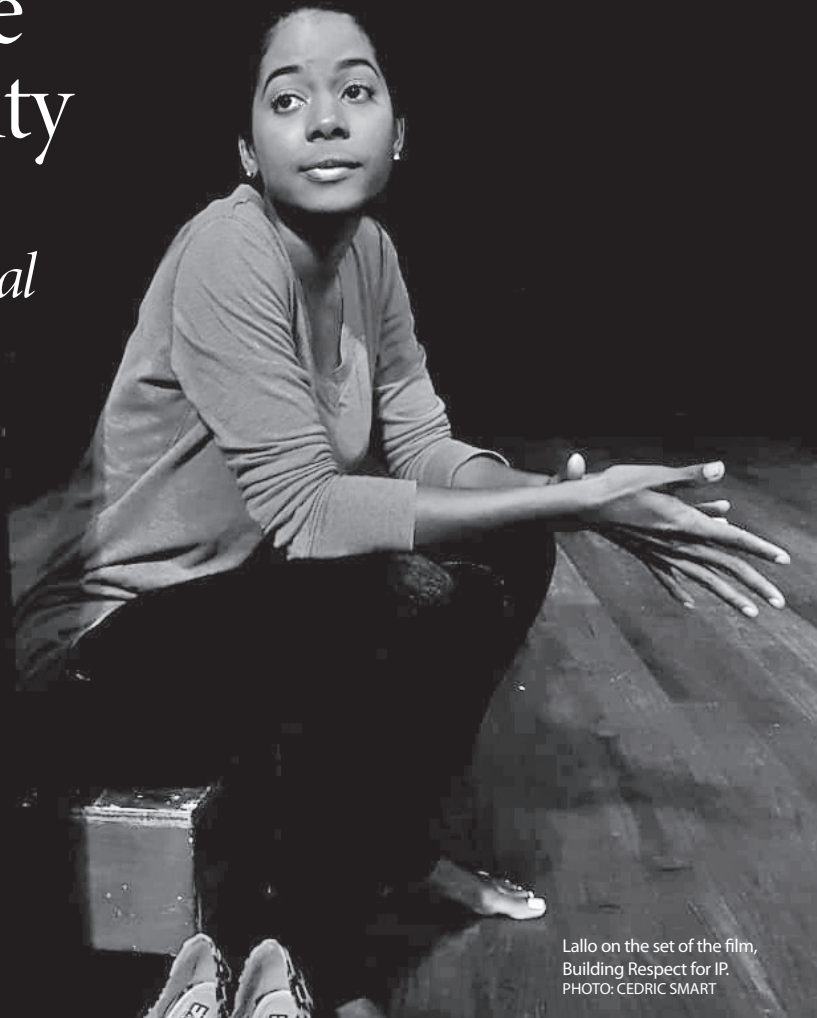
“At DCFA, we learned about the Carnival characters and the stories behind them. We learned about folklore that originated during slavery and we saw how those characters came to life to find creative and meaningful

SAMARA LALLO’S Formidable Vulnerability

*DFCA Graduate
unveils Film Festival
selection*



Samara modelling for a social media campaign.



Lallo on the set of the film,
Building Respect for IP.
PHOTO: CEDRIC SMART

BY KIERAN ANDREW KHAN



Samara on the runway of Decibel's 2017 Fashion U.

ways to share about societal ills that they had to deal with. But today we have reduced those characters into caricatures of their former selves. There is a lost opportunity to use theatre for healing and reconciliation. If we can leverage theatre arts for healing it can provide a space for transformation too.”

As an active participant in her secondary school’s drama club, Lallo is happy to see theatre arts being integrated into the curriculum, but encourages all schools and particularly at-risk schools to consider using theatre for transformation.

“I have seen instances where theatre helps to pull stories out of people, because they can detach from themselves and not feel shame as they express themselves as the character or role they play in training and not as themselves.”

Lallo is the Chief Amazement Officer at her company, Tiny Thunder Productions, where she works with creatives of all kinds - from authors to actors and voice talent. She is also a multidisciplinary freelancer who has edited a novel and is also voicing an upcoming audiobook. Most of all, she looks forward to the TT Film Festival which will allow her to share a piece of her soul projected to a cinema screen through the fragments of her writing, storytelling, and her raw talent and passion for acting.

■ For more info, visit samaralallo.com

Kieran Andrew Khan is a marketing consultant and writer.

The UWI Calendar of Events | September 2023



10th International Energy and Sustainability Conference (call for abstracts)

**September 14 (deadline for abstracts)
November 9-10, 2023 (conference dates)**

The University of the West Indies in collaboration with Stony Brook University and Farmingdale State College will be hosting the 10th International Energy and Sustainability Conference (IESC) on "Building a Resilient & Sustainable Caribbean" at The UWI Regional Headquarters, Kingston, Jamaica.

Topics include: Energy and climate resilience, disaster risk and recovery, healthcare technology readiness, transportation, food and water security, energy and cybersecurity, diversity, equity and inclusion. To submit abstracts under 300 words, or to find out more: email isd.comms@uwi.edu

The UWI/Guardian Life Premium Open Lecture 2023

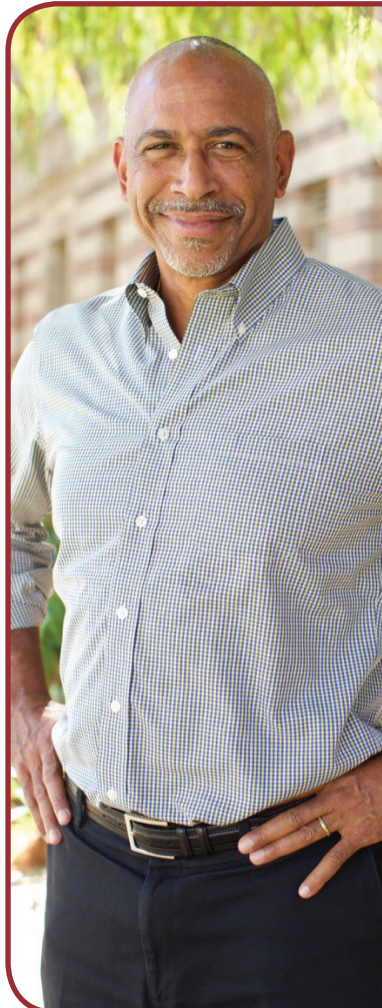
**September 29
Daaga Auditorium
St Augustine Campus**

Join the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning's (CETL) for The UWI/Guardian Life Premium Open Lecture, "Redefining Educational Success: Post-Pandemic Challenges and Opportunities". Featured speaker, Dean and Distinguished Professor Pedro Noguera, from the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education, will examine how education must evolve and the elements for shaping the current and future landscape of education.

The Premium Open Lecture is a programme in which new ideas, concepts, and research focus on learning and teaching in higher education.

**To register, go to
<https://bit.ly/premiumopenlecture2023>**

**For more information, email
STA-premiumeventcslt@sta.uwi.edu**



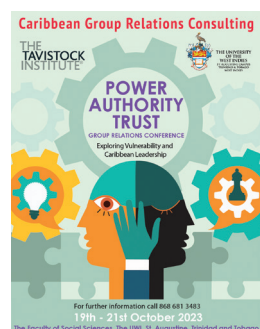
Caste, Class and Race: Reflections of the Life and Work of Oliver Cromwell Cox (call for abstracts)

**September 30 (deadline for abstracts)
April 26 and 27, 2023 (conference dates)**

Oliver Cromwell Cox was a Trinidad and Tobago-born scholar, whose writings made significant contributions to mid-20th century sociological thought. His work challenged dominant thought and practices related to the social and economic organisation of race relations within Western societies.

UWI St Augustine's Department of Behavioural Sciences within the Faculty of Social Sciences invites the submission of 300-500-word abstracts for panels and roundtables on topics relevant to this important scholar and his work.

Proposals or queries should be submitted to STABehavioural.Sciences@sta.uwi.edu under the subject heading "Oliver C Cox Conference 2024".



Group Relations Conference: Power Authority Trust - Exploring Vulnerability and Caribbean Leadership

**October 19 to 21
Learning Resource Centre
St Augustine Campus**

This Group Relations conference, developed by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations and hosted by UWI St Augustine's Faculty of Social Sciences, will provide a unique framework for senior and aspiring senior leaders to study leadership, authority, and the dynamics of power, trust, and vulnerabilities through interpersonal, inter-group and institutional relations.

This conference is for anyone interested in developing a deeper understanding of managerial and leadership processes in organisations. Participants may come from private and public organisations and include business leaders, consultants, administrators, human resource and marketing professionals, NGO and religious organisation leaders, educators, activists, researchers, and others.

The closing date for applications is October 5, 2023.

For information on pricing and other details, and the application form, visit <http://caribbeangroupconsulting.com/conference>



**2023 Matriculation Ceremony
September 28
Venue TBC
St Augustine Campus**

**2023 Graduation Ceremonies
October 26 - October 28
Venue TBC
St Augustine Campus**

