



ADDRESS BY

THE HONOURABLE CAROLYN SEEPERSAD-BACHAN

MP FOR SAN FERNANDO WEST

MINISTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

AT THE ADVANCED LEVEL

SCHOLARSHIP SEMINAR 2013

HYATT REGENCY HOTEL

PORT OF SPAIN

WEDNESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2013



Ministry of  
Public Administration

## SALUTATIONS

Master of Ceremony, Jason Williams

Ms. Gillian Macintyre, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of  
Public Administration

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education

Ms. Prabha Maraj and Mr. Richard Madray, Deputy  
Permanent Secretaries in the Ministry of Public  
Administration

CEO of the Ministry of Education

Ms. Gillian Lucky, Guest Speaker

Parents & Guardians

Scholarship Winners

Members of the Media

Good morning,

I believe that there is no greater investment that any country can make than investing in the education of its young people.

I believe that a young person is not a bucket to be filled with learning but a fire waiting to be lit.

I agree with President Barack Obama when he said, “We have an obligation and a responsibility to be investing in our students and our schools. We must make sure that people who have the grades, the desire and the will, but not the money, can still get the best education possible.”

Here in Trinidad and Tobago, having the money is not as important to this Government as having the talent, the potential and the discipline to excel in the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination or CAPE and to become one of the elite students who have been granted scholarships based on their grades in the CAPE.

When you reach that milestone we help you to continue the journey to achieve even higher goals. We provide you the opportunity to be the best you can be and to contribute to the sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago.

We help you to fulfill your dreams, to achieve your goals and to develop your potential because we know that when we do

so we are also fulfilling our dreams, our goals and our potential as a nation to achieve a higher standard of living and a better quality of life for all our citizens.

Let me add that the Scholarships and Advanced Training Division of the Ministry of Public Administration is one of the pilot agencies for the Public Service Transformation Programme, and therefore you scholars sitting here today will participate in that pilot project which will lead to Diamond Certification.

What we are doing when we talk about achieving this Diamond Certification? We are talking about how we serve

our scholars. How do we improve our services to parents & guardians, and scholars? And why?

Because we want you to realize your dreams. We want to support you in your journey. We want to ensure that at the end of the day, whether we use our scholar support system, our SATIS system (e-govt platform), whether we are reengineering the procedures in the that department, we want to ensure that we support you, the scholarship winner, though this journey to ensure that when you return to Trinidad and Tobago to serve your obligatory service – when you join our AP Programme and we put you through a Professional Development Programme in order to expedite your success.

We know we make an investment in you and we want you to make that investment as well in Trinidad and Tobago. We expect you to be able to start as soon as possible to make a contribution to the development of Trinidad and Tobago – whether it be through the diversification of the economy; whether it be through transforming the public and private sectors; or whether it be through improving the competitiveness of Trinidad & Tobago in the Global Index.

This is what sustainable development is all about – it is not just a future without oil and gas but it is a future in which there are employment opportunities, livelihoods in fact, for those who want to work.

It is a time when the people of our country will be involved in the decision-making process, in which the public service is citizen-centric and the country works like a precision instrument. This is our goal, our destination and, I believe, our destiny as a people whose greatest strength is our diversity.

Look around this room – just look and you will see the diversity here. Trinidad and Tobago is one of the most diverse countries you can ever find – diversity in religions; diversity in races and mixtures; diversity in perspectives and viewpoints- just check the newspapers, the television, the



radio, Facebook and Twitter. Complementing the diversity is a level of religious tolerance unknown in any other society.

Do you realize that this diversity is a future platform for innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship?

In the Public Service we are building on our diversity to inspire, maintain and sustain a culture of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. In Trinidad and Tobago as a whole we have in our diversity an incubator for innovation.

We also have the best secondary education system in the region and our A Level programme is definitely world class.

We see grades here and combinations of grades that are

stunning. What is more important is that this level of performance is not a recent phenomenon.

Go back in time and look at the grades of people like Dr. Eric Williams, Sir Isaac Hyatali, Vidia Naipaul, Dr. Euric Bobb, Martin Daly, Merle Hodge, Roy Chong-Kit and so many others, and you will see that we have several generations who have excelled in their advanced level studies.

They have blazed a trail for this and future generations and have set an example of scholarship that you should emulate and try to surpass.

Just as we did in our Transformation, you have to move beyond the gold standard they set and create a diamond platform of excellence that will take us to sustainable development. Excellence is a moving target and we have to aim higher and do even more.

You have the potential and you have inherent leadership qualities. We have to ensure that you become that passionate patriot. You have to develop that emotional intelligence. I am sure that you have a foundation from your teachers, parents, guardians and community that is permanent and will be the rock on which you build your future and the future of our country.

Let me tell you about the future that I envisage for Trinidad and Tobago and for you as you fulfill your destiny and play an active and leading role in the future of our country.

First of all, we must be fully a part of the information age, which I know is no challenge to you. We must create, acquire, adopt and apply Information and Communications Technologies in new and innovative ways. We must be among the leaders on the information super-highway but at the same time we must use the technology in ways that would benefit the people of our country to enhance and improve their lives.

As young people, many of you may get carried away with technology – the iphone, facebook, twitter. But the real challenge is how you utilize the technology in the right way to enhance the lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Our country, like you, must become the best we can be in every sense of the word – more competitive, more business friendly and have more university graduates in diverse fields that any other country of our size and population. We must be fully into the service sector and our knowledge workers would be sought by the world.

In fact, I see a day when all the Fortune 500 companies, universities and Group of Seven countries will have agents in

Trinidad and Tobago trying to compete for the services of our brightest and our best. I see also a country which can afford to retain and properly remunerate our brightest and our best.

I see a country where public goods and services are of the highest quality and accessible to all our citizens at the lowest possible cost and in the shortest possible time. I see us voting or starting any government transaction – passport, birth certificate, marriage licences even – at any government office or from our phone.

I want to see our senior citizens relieved of worries about their future and free of the debilitating diseases that now make their few remaining days a torment and a tribulation.

I want to see our engineers put down infrastructure that will serve the needs of the future and not have to depend on roads or bridges that are inadequate even for the present.

What I want to see, in fact, is that you here today join the many citizens who have used the scholarships and opportunities provided to them by the Government of our country to better themselves and our country. What I want to see is that you return to help us deal with the problems not of

the past or present but to anticipate and manage the future of our country.

I want to see a group of leaders who will take the reins of leadership from this present generation and take our country beyond our own vision, confined as it is by our present limits, to heights of achievement and endeavor that we cannot now imagine.

Every successful nation – the United States, Britain, China as well – has each experienced in its history a great leap forward, a time of critical mass that propels it from the earth to the stars and I see in you here today that potential, that possibility and that power to change this country.



You have been born and you have grown up at a time when more scholarships are available than ever before. Even though the cost of University education has increased enormously, you have been able to earn the opportunity to get a Tertiary Education at absolutely no financial cost to you and your parents or guardians. You have benefitted from the vision of a government with a goal and a plan.

That plan, though simple in its essentials and pragmatic in its approach, reaches far into the future. We have identified the skills we will need for the sustainable development of our country. We may not yet know the exact numbers but we

know what is missing in the puzzle. The future will always be a puzzle since it is evolving and changing all the time.

The major product of national development is change. But we do have a sense of what we will require as absolute necessities. The scholarship system is now linked to our plan for sustainable development. Our scholarships will be for areas of study that are vital to national development. In other words, you are the future.

You've heard my dreams and my vision. You're on the threshold of a new life. You've got a passport to a new world and about to embark on a voyage of discovery and self-development. You will discover truths about yourselves that

you have never known and you will have your assumptions and illusions tested as they have never been tested before. Yet, in all, you will find it exciting, exhilarating and extremely challenging.

You will now have time to build your own vision and to be clear on what you want and how to get it, where you want to go and how to get there, who you want to be and how to become that person.

My staff, the Scholarship Division, and the Executives including the Permanent Secretary, will always be here for you. It is not just our job or our duty to serve you, but it is a joy to be part of the nation-building process and to be

charged with the responsibility for providing the next generation of nation builders and shapers.

I want to thank the parents and guardians here for handing over to us for a little while the products of your own genius and to entrust us with their care. You have done very well and have as much reason to be proud of yourselves as you are of these young achievers.

Scholarship winners, I would like to ask you to stand and give your parents a round of applause.

The test of parenthood is how well your children can behave, perform, interact and deal with other people and with

difficult situations when you are not with them or close enough to help or even rescue them.

The joy of parenthood is not just the achievements of your children so much as the fact that they retain the values you embedded in them and carry these values, these truths, this way of life, this way of looking at things, wherever they go and that they pass them along to their children. This is true immortality- our children and their children going forward in life on a foundation of principles and true parenthood.

Ms. Gillian Lucky in her unique style and wisdom has told you about your duty to our country. I will not even try to venture into territory that Gillian has already traversed.

What I would like to do is to challenge you to follow the advice that Polonius gives to his son Laertes in Shakespeare's Hamlet. Any literature scholars here? Any of you know the quote I am talking about? In Act One, Scene Three, Polonius says to his son who is going away,

This above all: to thine own self be true,

And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not then be false to any man.

Farewell, my blessing season this in thee!

So, like Polonius, you have my blessing and the blessings of all here as we bid you "Bon Voyage."

But, at the same time, I want to remind you of what Laertes replied to his father. He said, “Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.” That is respect and that is what we must all retain, not just for our parents but also our teacher, our elders, our peers and even those who are younger than we are.

Finally, I want you to always remember that need for humility which will take you more places and much further than you can imagine.

As I close, I pray that God will continue to guide you on this journey. I pray that God will bless your parents & guardians with the wisdom to continue to support you through this

life's journey and most importantly, the courage to keep you on the straight and narrow path, ultimately leading you to become the passionate patriots contributing to the development of our blessed nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

May God bless our Great Nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you.