

## **COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS OF AMBASSADOR THE HON. DR. RICHARD L. BERNAL AT NORTHERN CARIBBEAN UNIVERSITY, AUGUST 10, 2008**

The University of the Northern Caribbean has today bestowed on me a great honour for which, I am both grateful and happy. While service is its own reward it is gratifying to be recognized. Each of you has the potential to one day stand here and receive the accolade of an honorary doctorate. Whether you achieve this is largely in your hands and the dispensation of God.

Today marks a transformation in which you emerge a more educated person. This education is a platform on which to build because the enhancement of your knowledge must be a life long endeavour. Today and more so in the future the critical determinant of your success and your contribution to the development of your country is the quantity and quality of your knowledge. Learning is an art to be honed to furnish you with a refined, expanded and continuously updated knowledge base. More important than the knowledge of your chosen field which you have acquired at this great institution is the habit and practice of learning

Continuous learning is necessary because you embark on a world in which the only constant is change. The rate of change is going to be rapid because of the rapid emergence of new technology and the intensification of competition as globalization encompasses more aspects of economic, social and political life. This is a challenge to be embraced not to be feared or to be insulated from but to be seized. Change creates opportunities for those who have the skill, initiative and confidence. Your outlook must be not be adjustment it must be proactive transformation. Adjustment is a necessary but not sufficient condition. Personal and national development require more, it requires continuous learning.

Most of you have a major advantage is your quest to realize your full potential and that advantage is being Jamaican. What is unique about being Jamaican is audacity, the confidence that you can achieve anything you set your mind to do. Only Jamaica could have a bobsled team with no suitable climate or facilities. Audacity makes us good even at things we should not be doing. This audacity comes to fruition when combined with creativity and hard work.

Garvey was charismatic but he was tireless. Bob Marley was a genius but his work ethic was phenomenal. Sam Sharpe felt he could over throw slavery. Our success in athletics is not only about enormous talent it is about skilled coaching and dedicated hard work. Like Asafa, Usian and Veronica you can translate your talent in world class performance.

Achieving your full potential is not a self endeavour. You have a responsibility to contribute to the development of the Jamaica. It means that your self-development must not be selfish, it must lift others. Your development and that of Jamaica is going to

require finding solutions to new issues and long standing problems. Your mind set has to be audacity, skill and hard work.

Let me illustrate. We currently think of Jamaica as small developing country but this is going to change in the near future. You can only be part of this future if you have the right mindset. In today's globalized world economy we must see Jamaica not as physical place but as a nation without borders. Then Jamaica's economy is not less then 3 million it is more like 6 million, its per capita income is 2 or 3 times higher and it has a high skilled high income overseas sector. Jamaicans overseas are involved as consumers of Jamaican exports, as investors and through remittances. The GNP of the Jamaican nation would make it a mid-sized developed country. If you value the real estate owned by Jamaican worldwide then Jamaica has an enormous stock of foreign investment.

This has two implications for you. First, where ever you are and whatever you do you can be a part of the Jamaican nation without borders. Second, the future is not going to be what you expected and so you must be ready for unexpected change. For example, one day Jamaica will import sugar and bananas. The main exports are likely to be higher education, healthcare and retirement services. An international airport near Ocho Rios and Mandeville as an international centre of research and high education.

I have always believed that whatever the problem I could solve it and fix it. I try to improve, expand and update my knowledge every day. Work hard as I can, indeed when necessary I have worker harder. Whatever the task, get it done, tender no excuses and do it excellently. If you do this you will not have to seek opportunity and you will not have to ask for reward. This approach will be appreciated by those you work for, whether they are your employers or customers but unfortunately this mode of operation will not endear you to all of those you work with.

There is a price for doing wrong and there is also a price for doing right. Always do the right thing regardless of the cost. Always be willing to suffer the consequences for doing what is right. The sacrifice might involve financial lost, friendships foregone or resignation from an institution.

Combine your audacity with integrity, skills enhanced through continuous life-long learning and consistent hard work. I have lived by these principles and they have served me well. They will serve you well. I commend them to you.