

**REMARKS**

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE HAZEL MANNING  
MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

**UWI Lecture Series**

**EDUCATION AND EMANCIPATION**

**Friday 27<sup>th</sup> July, 2007  
School of Education  
6.00 p.m**

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Dr. Sandra Gift – This evening’s guest lecturer

Faculty members of the History Department

Members of the organising committee for the

Freedom Road Project

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Members of the Media

Ladies and gentlemen

This evening we make another stop as we journey along Freedom Road. I thank the History Department of the University of the West Indies for inviting me to bring some brief remarks on this occasion.

This journey began in April and someone who was with us then deserves to be remembered now for his contribution to the development of our consciousness, our heritage and our history.

Shall we stand for a moment of silence in memory of the late historian Dr. Fitzroy Baptiste.

[PAUSE]

Thank you.

Tonight on Freedom Road Dr. Sandra Gift will lead our reflections on Emancipation and Education. Dr. Gift has had a long and vibrant connection with the Ministry of Education as the Secretary General of The Trinidad and Tobago National Commission of which I am now the President.

As such I have been able to more readily appreciate the role UNESCO plays in the global education context, and the possibilities offered by our National Commission especially for its work with schools in the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network and with UNESCO Clubs, which will host a **Freedom Road** seminar for students in Tobago from August 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>.

Observances such as these serve to remind us that over the last 200 years, our ancestors put significant energy into education, each generation making tremendous sacrifice to educate the next. Their sacrifice we must never forget.

We must also ever remember that many who did not themselves have an education through schooling, were in many ways, more educated in *human feeling and thought* than many schooled persons of today.

However, our ancestors understood the importance of formal schooling, and encouraged by missionary zeal and support, saw future possibilities - possibilities and hope for a better life, a better world.

In this crucible of time and need was born the Church-State system that we have today and which we continuously work to preserve and strengthen.

Today more than ever we need to keep the dreams and expectations of the ancestors alive. As we look towards 2020, the Ministry of Education has the mandate to ensure that the innovative and caring spirit of the ancestors that nurtured this land and to ensure that the values they held dear continue to be transmitted.

Indeed a daunting task, but one that I took up with the challenge of leading the education reform for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I knew no one agency could do it alone, so we pressed ahead with the rallying cry, “*Education is everybody’s business,*” which is now virtually our mantra. Many of the policies introduced have been designed to open up possibilities for everyone to participate.

Today I am pleased that these policies are in place and that our Head Office staff, our staff in the districts and our staff in the schools are implementing them.

- We have established a website which now requires support to develop its interactivity and enable us to share widely the steps we are taking on our journey to a quality seamless education system.

Using modern technology to break communications barriers is a pioneering task in the Ministry of Education and constitutes a major *shift* in the way we wish to do business. Another shift in communications occurred in 2006 when we introduced PUBLIC CONNECT as an annual series of consultations to gain feedback and strengthen stakeholder participation.

PUBLIC CONNECT 2007 is due to take place shortly as we open up discussion with students, teachers, parents and stakeholders about our journey to a national model for a seamless quality education.

We have also made *shifts* in the curriculum and its assessment to:-

- Emancipate student learning from the narrow track to which we have been accustomed and
- Promote social cohesion through a new curriculum component that focuses on Diversity.

The new curriculum has within its core subject areas, the Visual and Performing Arts, Physical Education, Technology Education. In addition, Cabinet has mandated that History be taught at all levels.

Students can now do these new core subjects at CXC and CAPE. This curriculum shift *liberates* the human potential by acknowledging the *validity* of all human gifts and talents.

We know only too well the correlation between student success and a quality start in life. Equity is therefore a major concern. *The shift* to a well designed and resourced formal early childhood care and education sector is but one way towards improved student performance in the long term.

In making this shift to formalise the ECCE sector Trinidad and Tobago is now out front in the region in the area of early childhood care and education

But perhaps *the most significant and liberating shift* we have made is with respect to school governance, based on a cluster of policies that are changing our education system from a highly centralized one system to a system of *School Based Management*.

School Boards are now in place in all government secondary schools and we have begun the process for the primary and early childhood levels.

Through school based management, schools are encouraged:-

- To establish Student Councils, thereby providing an avenue for young citizens to practice democratic principles and
- To develop programmes for parent, community and student involvement in school governance.

The Ministry of Education supports School Based Management through the establishment a system of Heads, Deans and Senior teachers; the provision of substantial sums of money directly to school management and an increased spending limit for Principals

However School Based Management is strongest and works best:-

- When communities take ownership of their schools
- When the business community and parents get involved and
- When students' voices are heard, for while the Ministry makes provisions and supports, it is the involvement of stakeholders, that will strengthen truly strengthen School Based Management.

To use the imagery of the late Bob Marley, schools and their communities must now emancipate themselves from the mental slavery that puts total reliance on 'the Ministry.'

Over the past five years as we have diligently implemented the recommendations of the Education White Paper 1993-2003 in the context of the Millennium Development goals and this has significantly altered our education landscape.

In order to enable greater understanding of the changes and bring clarity to the work so far, we have put these policies together in a document we call the National Model for Education in Trinidad and Tobago.

The National Model is a framework which sets out the commonalities emanating from the new policies designed to promote greater equity and inclusion in the system, while at the same time recognising and allowing for individuality.

Its guiding philosophy is that our education system must be both a liberating mechanism and a unifying force.

The draft document on the National Model and supporting policy documents on Quality, Standards, Curriculum including Reading and our performance on the Education For All goals, all form the basis of PUBLIC CONNECT 2007.

We must therefore link our emancipation with education in a manner that gives us the cutting edge in what is being called globalisation - an assertion that our history can negate.

Since our Caribbean society was born of a past wave of globalisation, possibilities exist for us to be on the cutting edge through an enlightened understanding of the experiences of our ancestors and the Transatlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans.

And so, I look forward to Dr. Gift's presentation as an important step along Freedom Road. It is my hope that we will all be motivated sufficiently by the retrospective she will give and the awareness of the reforms taking place to join forces and ensure that our young citizens can walk that Freedom Road.

In closing, I wish to commend the History Department of the University of the West Indies for the Freedom Road initiative and look forward to the other stops on the journey to August 23<sup>rd</sup> when we commemorate the bicentenary of the Abolition of the Trade in enslaved Africans.