

**INAUGURAL ADDRESS AT THE INDUCTION CEREMONY AS PRINCIPAL OF THE
UWI OPEN CAMPUS, THURSDAY MARCH 16, 2017 AT 6:00 pm, BEST WESTERN
BELIZE BILTMORE, BELIZE CITY, BELIZE**

Protocols

Chancellor, I first wish to thank you and the Vice Chancellor for entrusting this exciting and wonderful Campus in my care. It is a dream that I did not have, but take it on with joy and humility. I also wish to thank my colleague Pro Vice-Chancellors and Principals for being here, for their strong show of support, not just by being present but in all our interactions from day one. Please allow me to single out my colleague Principals. Professor Archibald McDonald of Mona, who was an encouraging and supportive boss during my exciting days at the Western Jamaica Campus and is now a supportive colleague Principal. Professor Copeland you and I are the new kids on the block and I look forward to attending your Induction in the near future.

To my Sister Principal Professor Eudine Barriteau I acknowledge your presence in a very special way. VC in your International Women's Day message you spoke of the University's commitment to gender equality as reflected in our 50% female leadership of the campuses. And indeed it brought to mind that years ago, right here in Belize, I was asked to present a paper on "Women in Higher Education" during an International Women's Day conference. I entitled that speech "Make Your Firsts Last" and proposed that, while we often celebrate the first woman who achieves a breakthrough, it really is only when we have evidence of the continuity of that breakthrough that we can claim true gender progress. I therefore celebrate being the third female principal of the Open Campus and salute my predecessors, our first female Principal Professor Hazel Simmons McDonald and our second Professor Barriteau , as well as former Deputy Principal Professor Vivienne Roberts and current Deputy Principal Professor Julie

Meeks for their role in ensuring that we are making our firsts in the Open Campus last for a long time!

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, today I feel young again, in fact I feel like 16 which was the first time I had a formal public speaking role as the class Valedictorian of my high school in Jamaica Holy Childhood High. Despite the scores, maybe hundreds of public appearances that I have done since then, it is that experience that comes closest to the feeling that I have today as I am inducted for my official commencement as Principal of the Open Campus today.

Like then, I must confess that initially I was at a loss about what to say, but like then I sought guidance from three wise men who shall remain nameless. Their advice had three perspectives:

- Remember when Pope Francis became Pontiff he asked all people to pray for him in recognition of the fact that he could not do it alone
- Speak of your journey and what has prepared you for this role
- And finally: just do you Mom!

Today I will take the advice of all three wise men and base my address on three important C principles

- Community
- Commitment; and
- Conchs

Indeed, it has taken several communities to raise this child and at the risk of sounding like an Academy Award winner, I want to start my story of gratitude by thanking God for His guidance, His love and for always holding me and my family in the palm of His hands.

As many of you know, whenever I am asked where I come from it is not a simple answer. Born in Venezuela, grew up in Jamaica, adopted and embraced by Belize. You can imagine the conversations I have had with Immigration officials over the years when going through the US in particular!

I want to pay homage first to my Venezuelan roots - to my father Jose Rafael Arrieta, who although not being a part of my upbringing, influenced my love of languages, Spanish music and dance. I honour him for having the good sense to marry a beautiful Jamaican girl Dorothy Deanna deSouza whom I have been blessed to have as my mother. To my mother I give all my gratitude for taking me home with her to Jamaica where I had love, opportunities and family support and affirmation. I thank her for the sacrifices that she made to ensure that I got the education that she thought I deserved, for giving me what I needed materially, spiritually and emotionally and for helping to mould me into the person I am today. I thank her for also teaching me about leadership and its importance through her own amazing career as a business owner for over 40 years dealing with more than 500 employees in her garment manufacturing business. She was my boss for four years when I ventured out of Academia to work in the family business and she taught me more about leading people wisely, fairly but firmly, than any of my MBA courses at UWI or even the renowned leadership guru John Maxwell. She taught me what a strong woman is and that true character is built from within but shines with or without external validation.

To my maternal grandparents I owe a tremendous debt. My grandfather Ronald deSouza taught me to have an inquiring mind as his answer to all my childhood questions was always "look it up" while pointing to the bookshelf of Encyclopediae that he constantly kept up to date - for the young people in the audience that would be like

Google! He taught me to speak up and was well known for putting me to stand on a table from the age of 4 or 5 to engage in "big people" conversation, much to the amusement of his friends. But most of all, and maybe my biggest debt to him is that he passed on to me his love and knowledge of cricket which is an invaluable skill in this region and a requirement when conversing with my Vice-Chancellor, although I must confess that I still have major difficulties with understanding "silly mid-on and silly mid-off".

My grandmother Frances, taught me that class had less to do with social status or money and more to do with grace in the face of adversity, compassion to others, self-respect and dignity and the importance of holding your family close to you, she also was my Geography, History and Culture teacher and taught me the name of every parish, river, town and village in Jamaica. I am eternally grateful for the love of my Jamaican community and happy to have my sister/cousin Rhonda, and her family Paul and Rhon Paul here today as well as my little sister Wendy , a sister of another mother and father.

Chancellor, it is an accepted fact that the UWI has done more for regional integration over its 70 years than any other institution and I am a perfect example of that. Without The UWI I may never have found Belize, or perhaps it would be better to say Belize may never have found me. I am blessed to be a part of the outstanding Longsworth family, thank you Gary, Buzzy, Harry, Betty, Laura and the extended family.

To the products of that regional integration Brad and Marissa Longsworth know that I am so proud of you, of your decisions in life and of your commitment to giving back to this region having benefitted from the excellent education of schools in Jamaica, BVI and Belize and strong undergraduate and postgraduate training at the UWI's Mona and Barbados campuses, they are proof of the outstanding graduates that our University turns out and that my commitment to this UWI goes beyond words.

Thanks to my dear friends who are here Kay, Mala, Ernesto, Bev, Marcelo. Maria , my University of Belize family and the people of Belize for giving me a home, love and true friendship in a country that I am proud to call mine as well.

If my communities of family and friends are the foundation of my stability, values and core principles then it is the Community of the UWI that I must thank for my academic, intellectual and activist formation. Arriving at the Mona Campus in the then Faculty of Arts and General Studies, the intellectual vibrancy of the UWI was a heady experience. My Faculty was full of stars, established ones such as Sir Roy Augier, and rising ones such as Hilary Beckles, Gertrude Buscher, Lal Narinesingh and Pauline Christie and over at the Faculty of Social Sciences we had Trevor Munroe and George Beckford; in Medicine the legendary Professor George Alleyne and the up and coming surgeon Archibald McDonald. There was no doubt that I was where I belonged and from that day, except for two periods of a total of 10 years because of family commitments, I have never been physically apart from UWI but in all the 37 years of association as student , lecturer and administrator The UWI has always been in my heart.

Why you may ask? It may be because as a young Lecturer of Latin American Literature I saw how this University brought together young and brilliant minds from all over our region like that of my former student and now friend Ambassador Gillian Bristol of Grenada who is now the Director of the Latin American Caribbean Centre at UWI and here today. It could be also because as a young Administrator , the depth and breadth of knowledge of the University's history and Statutes and Ordinances of my then Registrars filled me with awe and delight, despite the long meetings and minute taking (so Sherry, Wendy, Lois and Souzanne I feel your pain).

It certainly was because I had the good fortune to work first as an Assistant Registrar and then as Executive Assistant to one of the most brilliant scientific minds of our region, Professor the Hon Gerald Lalor, whose vision and foresight were ahead of his time as it was he who fathered Distance Education via technology or UWIDITE which would evolve into our powerful online modality in the Open Campus. It was Professor

Lalor who introduced me to that strange new tool called “email” and who struck fear in everyone's hearts when he dared to dig up the revered Ring Road to install something called "fiber optic cable" to ensure that one day every staff member would have a computer on their desk: A vision dismissed by many who thought it would have been wiser to invest in more books for the Library. Look at us now!

The UWI has always been a beacon for me because as part of that leadership team at Mona I had the guidance and example of Professor Marlene Hamilton as Deputy Principal who showed me how important caring for all our students and alumni was and who, along with Professor Elsa Leo Rhynie modeled how women could survive and thrive in leadership at UWI. And it certainly was because having worked under 5 Vice Chancellors, Preston, McIntyre, Nettleford, Harris and now in this post under the inspirational leadership of Vice-Chancellor Sir Hilary Beckles, I learnt how crucial visionary leadership of our University is for the region's growth and development, for building prosperity and a just society for our citizens.

So Chancellor, it takes loving and supportive communities to build commitment, and I am grateful for the outstanding support I have been blessed to have in my life that built my commitment to the development of our region and the UWI in my early years at the University.

However, I must confess that it was right here in Belize as Resident Tutor for the School of Continuing Studies that I discovered my passion , and solidified my commitment to the UWI. It was here that I finally and fully understood not just the role but the transformational power of Higher Education and of the University of the West Indies for all our Caribbean people. It was then that I truly understood what our founding fathers meant when in 1948 they spoke of building a Caribbean intellectual class. The School of Continuing Studies founded at the birth of the UWI was the technology used for decades to go beyond the walls of the traditional idea of a University and provide access to persons in the underserved communities to create a way into formal higher education. The work of legendary Resident Tutors such as Vernon Leslie here in

Belize, Beverly Steele in Grenada, Edith Bellot in Dominica, and Bradley Niles in Barbados helped me to understand the power of community outreach, of being “intellectual guerillas” in the trenches of our communities and the power of commitment not to a job but to a noble cause of changing lives .

Coupled with the growing power of Internet technology and the strong foundation laid by Lalor in UWIDEC as well as our historical collaboration with other tertiary level Colleges, the evolution of the Open Campus under the visioning of the then PVC Lawrence Carrington was not only necessary but inevitable. I say inevitable, Chancellor because I have discovered an amazing fact. Thomas Friedman in his 2016 book "Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's guide to thriving in the Age of Accelerations"¹ , points out

"There are vintage years in wine and vintage years in history, and 2007 was definitely one of the latter. Because not just the iPhone emerged in 2007—a whole group of companies emerged in and around that year. Together, these new companies and innovations have reshaped how people and machines communicate, create, collaborate, and think”

He goes on to cite the formation of Hadoop which made the emergence of big data possible, Facebook, GITHUB, The Android platform, Pay Pal and many other technological leaps in 2007. But Friedman missed one -the emergence of the UWI Open Campus as the University's strategy for growing online learning and increasing access as a key pillar of the 2007-2012 Strategic Plan. The UWI was definitely in the right playing field with this decision.

Officially operational in 2008 the Open Campus has had to face a phenomenon that no other Campus has had– that of being born at the start of one of the longest and deepest

¹ Friedman, Thomas (2016), Thank you for Being Late: An Optimist’s Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations”, Penguin Publications.

recessions to have hit our region. Despite the financial difficulties, the commitment of my colleagues to our mandate of expanding access and leading innovation has been unwavering. My predecessors have fought to find funding to plug the gaps where our Governments have been unable to help. Through our Canadian grant hard fought for by Principal Simmons McDonald and our hard working leadership team, the Open Campus has moved from a handful of programmes online to over 80 programmes and hundreds of online courses. Enrollment has doubled since 2007 to approximately 6000 online students each year and countries who prior to this could only send one or two of their citizens to a UWI Campus now have hundreds of persons studying degree programmes right up to the doctoral level on their own soil. Our Sites have grown their mandate to provide lifelong learning in their communities and enrolled over 11,000 students regionally in short courses and continuing and professional programmes.

Indeed VC the Open Campus has been ahead of the curve since its antecedents in providing the flexible and lifelong learning approaches in education which are precisely what the new knowledge economy demands, so I am indeed proud to be a part of this forward looking Campus and salute the foresight of the University in launching this Campus which can now be styled the UWI's "Weapon of Mass Instruction".

But as we look forward Vice Chancellor we know that the UWI has a new and aggressive Triple A strategy of Access and Alignment and Agility to be launched this year. In the Open Campus we are acutely aware of the low enrollments in Higher Education in our region approximately 13 % here in Belize, lower and higher in other parts of the region but overall totally unacceptable. We live in these communities around the region and we see that the rapidly flowing waters of innovation and creativity are threatening to swamp our societies. We see the growing tides of social inequality and economic stagnation moving people to a place of despair and desperation. Vice Chancellor, as you have said there can be no economic growth without concomitant social growth or as Friedman also says in his book, we have to build floors for our people so that they don't build walls of hopelessness!! We live in these communities where we see the lack of access to a higher education stymying creativity and

innovation and halting the progress of brilliant entrepreneurs. This is a seminal moment where our commitment as a Campus and as a University, our full intellectual resources, our hearts and our minds must come to the fore in forging a new day for our region, infusing hope and vibrancy back into our societies across the region.

For that reason Vice Chancellor I move on to my last C - this symbol of the conch shell - a symbol that is recognized throughout our region from Belize to Barbados from Trinidad and Tobago to Turks and Caicos. This is a symbol of resilience, it is a symbol of struggle, it is a symbol of community; it is a symbol of a call to action that our ancestors in each one of these Caribbean lands used to bring our communities to action. We make the call and we hear the call. Yes we see the rapids ahead but as any canoeist in the Ruta Maya Race recently held here in Belize will tell you, we cannot decelerate, we cannot slow down as the only way to survive the rapids is to paddle faster and be ahead of them. Chancellor, I and the 503 team members of the Open Campus, many of whom are watching tonight from 16 countries across 3,000 nautical miles, will answer this call to action. We are prepared to serve and to lead, to be the glue that binds our excellent University together as my CFO likes to say, and to help to transform our region , revitalize our Caribbean and beyond with access to the vast knowledge that is produced by our University.

We commit to creating spaces in our communities for the University to intervene in developing young innovative minds, to develop our students well, to work with Governments, Industries and other sister tertiary institutions such as our colleagues here from The University of Belize to forge a future of hope and prosperity for our Caribbean people here or wherever they may be. We put our talents and our knowledge to the service of our people through this University. And Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, colleagues in the UWI and most especially my dear colleagues in the Open Campus, I thank you most sincerely for your faith and trust in me to serve and to lead as your third Principal. It is a trust that I honour and cherish so I respond to the blowing of the Conch shell that heralded our entry into this Hall - I am ready, we are ready!

I thank you.