



The **SUNSHINE** Awards®



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Mt Hope Secondary School 50th Anniversary Celebration

The Anchorage Hart's Cut, Chaguaramas. Trinidad.

Saturday October 22, 2022

Feature Address

By

Gilman T. Figaro, Sr.,

Chairman and Founder, The SUNSHINE Awards



Master of Ceremonies. Thank you for that introduction.



A Pleasant Good evening to all:

Dr (The Honorable) Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, Minister of Education

Other officials of the Ministry of Education



**Mr. Patrick Edwards, Former Ambassador and High Commissioner
of Trinidad and Tobago**

Principal, Staff, Students and Parents of Mt Hope Secondary School

Other Luminaries



Members of Mt Hope Secondary School Alumni Association

Members of the Media



Ladies and Gentlemen



I bring greetings to you from the SUNSHINE Awards Organization.



I am honored to be invited to deliver the feature address at this 50th Anniversary Celebration of Mount Hope Secondary School, a milestone that future students will reflect on, even before they qualify for membership of this distinguished Alumni Association. As an alumnus myself, I can recall when I delivered the feature address at St. Benedict's College, La Romaine (my alma mater), 50th Anniversary Celebration in 2006. I could never have anticipated that it was a dress rehearsal for this one. I am a firm believer that we are guided and prepared for special moments in our lives by our Good Lord, long before we are faced with any task at hand.



So, brothers and sisters, my assignment tonight is a very special one not only because I am speaking at a milestone event but also because the Alumni Association of Mt Hope Secondary School, has bestowed on me the honor and privilege to stand before you as your Feature Speaker.



It is often said, that the most important people in a child's life after its parents, are the teachers that child will experience during his or her journey to be qualified in a particular discipline or profession. Education therefore, can be defined as an enlightening experience, or the process of receiving and sharing information that was previously unknown. In this context, education is really an investment in society, so that the dividends can be a better world where people of various cultural heritages can co-exist in peace and harmony: and **dreams** can become realities.



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In the early post-independence period, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago embarked upon a program, to broaden access to secondary education to include a wider cohort of students, than was previously the case. This represented a substantial investment for our society and the world at large. In that context, the establishment in 1972, of the Mt Hope Junior Secondary School, now Mt Hope Secondary School, was one of the pioneering institutions of that initiative. The school was founded under the Principalship of Mr. Clive Grayson, a noted mathematician and one of our national footballers.



However, education and its intrinsic components of critical thinking, problem-solving and societal commentaries are more pronounced today than in the past. It reflects a giant step forward in societal consciousness and the deepening and broadening of education from **Dr. Eric Williams** revolutionary theory in his *“Capitalism and Slavery.”* The journey continued through to the Mighty Sparrow’s calypsoes, *“Education”* and *“Dan Is the Man in The Van”* to the current campaign for *“Reparations.”* They all mirror the evolution and broadening of cognitive and creative thinking in our society. Members of the Alumni Association of Mt Hope Secondary School, are now living this change in education through their own offspring.



I can vividly recall that the sales profession in this country 50 years ago reflected the occupation of former students whose performances academically were not regarded as one for higher education. Today, there are colleges and universities in the United States and Europe, offering students four (4)



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and five (5) year programs in sales, and upon graduation they receive a Bachelors or Master's Degree in sales and/or marketing. This transformation is the reflection of the value of education in a post-industrial and digital world.



In this context therefore, one may be inclined to pose the question, ***"Is the educational system preparing our children and grandchildren for the digital world in which we now find ourselves living?"*** Professor Michio Kaku, an American theoretical physicist and well-known popularizer of science and forecaster of technological developments, predicts that **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** will play a major role in the digital revolution that is rapidly changing, how we educate future generations and how we live.



Professor Kaku has predicted that students will not have to rely on their memory when taking examinations; all they would have to do is blink, because the brain will be digitized and memories will be uploaded. Medical doctors are already using Robots as assistants. The robots will eventually speak various languages.



The auto industry is already using **Artificial Intelligence** in New York City and California, testing driverless cars. Nevertheless, in spite of these technological advancements there are, given the nature of human beings, just as many threats stemming from the desire for power, envy, racism, and wars which can destroy the world. So, the challenges that educators and incubators of knowledge are faced with today, are preparing their students to live in this global village not just to survive but to exceed all performance targets and protect the world, as well as ensure that all peoples,



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regardless of cultural background, religion, race, or politics can enjoy the world they inherit. It is often asked, ***“What kind of world will future generations inherit?”*** However, you perceive the world to be, I am extremely optimistic because the younger generation absorbs knowledge and adapts very quickly.



Your Principal of Mt Hope Secondary School, Mrs. Lisa-Marcella Henry-Legall was proud to inform me how her school has shown signs of meeting the challenges of the times. For example, its academic performance in the Caribbean Secondary Examination reflected the following: of the students taking Food Nutrition and Health, 100% earned Grade 1 with distinction, 23% earned Grade 1 with distinction in mathematics, 55% earned Grade 1 with Distinction in Science, 95% of the students taking English earned Grade 1 with Distinction and 75% of the students taking Literature earned Grade 1 with Distinction.



In the field of sports, we see the same trend, the under 17 Boys team, is the current reigning basketball champs in St George East, and the under 16 girls are leading in the current Netball and Basketball Tournaments. May I also add, that in the performing arts, in 2019, Mt Hope Secondary Boys and Girls performed the spoken word at the President’s House. You may recall that the veteran calypsonian, the late Sedley Joseph better known as Penguin, who was a member of the faculty followed the trail that Dr Hollis “Chalkdust” Liverpool, the Co-founder of the SUNSHINE Awards Hall of Fame created, for teachers to sing calypso, while continuing to teach. Penguin won the Calypso Road March in 1982 and won the Calypso Monarch in 1984, two very important and attractive events of



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*the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, which contributes millions of dollars to the local economy from tourism and nationals living abroad. Also, the **SUNSHINE Awards Hall of Fame 2012 inductee, Merle Albino DeCoteau** founded the Mt Hope Students Steel Orchestra in 1974 which won the music festival in 1975.*



Mt Hope Secondary is also deeply involved in its community. Every Ash Wednesday, the students demonstrate character and courage by embarking upon a community walk giving messages of hope to members of the community. The students write their own messages of encouragement, upliftment, family and relationship with God, for distribution in the community. They also utilize the **Hope Express**, which is the **Mt Hope Students Newspaper**.



Here is what we can most certainly conclude, from all these accomplishments and activities, Mt Hope Secondary School places great emphasis on **“human development,”** a required ingredient that is of paramount importance to facing the challenges of our world, a world that is constantly being revolutionized by technology. But we must not be daunted. We must keep in mind that the only thing constant is constant change.



What is outstanding about the 50-year journey of Mt Hope Secondary is this: At the Junior Secondary School, most of its students’ parents or guardians, could provide only the basic requirements for a secondary education. Today, many of your alumni are business owners, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and performing artists, just to name a few. Mt Hope Secondary was able to promote the mindset that poverty was not their



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destination, but the impetus to propel them forward to achieve their life's goal.



The Trinidad and Tobago society, like most others, is built around institutions: Religious, Educational, Sporting, Banking, Business, Political etc. Without them, society would not be truly organized, for each one contributes to the upliftment of society and a continuation of our ideals such as family, morality, friendship, and Godliness.



Today, my brothers and sisters, given the 50-year journey of Mt Hope Secondary, the members of its Alumni Association are fully aware that they stand tall on the shoulders of the founding Principal, **Mr. Clive Grayson and his teaching and administrative staff**, as they excel in every one of those institutions with a commitment to leave the world better than they met it.



It means therefore, that the current Principal, **Mrs. Lisa-Marcella Henry-Legall**, the former Principals, the present and past teachers, all the students past and present, the parents past and present and the community of Mt Hope are to be congratulated for their work and contribution to society and our world.



Congratulations to all who kept the school's flag, with its noble ideals, flying high for the past 50 years. We look forward to reading and hearing about the future achievements of Mt Hope Secondary School, as Trinidad and Tobago, and indeed the wider world, embrace a new paradigm of progress and development.



On behalf of the SUNSHINE Awards Organization and on my own behalf, **I thank you for giving us HOPE**, that those who



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pass through the portals of your institution will work toward the shaping of a better society and a more just and equitable world that we can all enjoy.

Thank You and may God richly bless you.



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