

## Inaugural Address

As the Fourth and first Female Principal of the University of the West Indies

Cave Hill Campus

Violet Eudine Barriteau

Chancellor, Professor, Sir George Alleyne, Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr The Right Honourable, Keith Mitchell, the Honourable Ronald Jones, Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Chief Justice of Barbados, The Honourable Sir Marston Gibson, other members of Cabinet, Vice Chancellor, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, Chair of the Cave Hill Campus Council, Sir Paul Altman, members of the Platform party, President of the Senate, Her Honour, Senator Kerry Ann Ifill, members of the Diplomatic corps, members of the Senate, President of the College of Science, Technology and the Arts of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr Gillian Paul, Vice President, Dr Camille Samuel, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Dr Arthur Potts, my Cave Hill and UWI colleagues and students, members of the Grenada Association of Barbados, head master of Ellerslie, Major Brathwaite and Members of my school's Alumni Association, friends who journeyed to be with me today, ladies and gentlemen, members of the media, my family, my brother, Wilbur the Elder, my son Cabral, my sisters, nephews and nieces, and all members of the Barriteau clan, and the ones who could not be here physically but are with us on the web, my beloved Sister Edna, my nieces, Shon and Michelle, and my nephews, Cliff and Dax, to all of you, good evening. Thank you very much for being here. I am especially delighted to welcome dear friends from Grenada, South Carolina, Anguilla, St.Lucia, Trinidad, Jamaica, and of course, Barbados. I am humbled and honoured that all of you have taken the time to join me and witness my induction as the first woman and fourth Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal of this beautiful, blessed Campus of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill by the sea.

Chancellor, I enjoy hills and I love the sea. How could I not? I became conscious of myself, as a girl, a young child, attending the St. Patricks Roman Catholic School and playing on a pasture that was really at the top of a cliff called Leapers Hill, Sauteurs, in the parish of St. Patricks, Grenada. My early childhood was dominated by cliff top views of the Caribbean sea, and they were exhilarating. The little girl has grown up, but the Hill and the Sea remain inextricably linked in my Caribbean story. They continue to be inviting to me. The Hill and the Sea constitute powerful, geographic iconography for my leadership of the Campus.

As a dedicated and determined Caribbean woman, I am very honoured to serve the University of the West Indies and the region with this appointment as Pro Vice Chancellor and Principal of the Cave Hill Campus. As the first woman to serve in this capacity, I recognise the significance of this appointment and I am humbled to join all the women who have served the University of the West Indies with distinction, sometimes with recognition and often without. I am fully aware that there have been other women at Cave Hill and our sister campuses, who possess the leadership qualities and experience to have been appointed Principals. To all those who served and who paved the way, and who continue to give of their best, on my own behalf and on behalf of all those to come, I say thank you.

I have been blessed with the good fortune to succeed one of the University's most visionary leaders, Vice Chancellor, Professor, Sir Hilary Beckles. The positions I have held and the experiences I have gained in the University's senior management came about because Sir Hilary invited me to join him in doing the University's and the people's work. I thank him for the confidence he placed in me, especially in having me serve as Deputy Principal of this Campus for six years. I am honoured to continue to serve as a key member of the University's Executive Management team under his expansive leadership.

Chancellor, I may be on the hill, but I do not stand alone at the summit. Cave Hill does team work well. I am blessed to be surrounded and supported by a dedicated, proficient and professional management team and fully bolstered by a committed cadre of faculty and staff throughout each and every section of this Campus. Chancellor, Cave Hill is in good hands, not because I have been chosen to lead. No, it is because of the men and women of Cave Hill, who willingly join me in ensuring that we fulfil the University's mission and mandate.

Chancellor, at times, the Campus occupies the public's imagination with imagery and metaphoric references that are simultaneously contradictory and compelling. Contradictory, because some times we are an elitist clique, gliding through our ivory tower which sits imperiously on our hill. On other occasions we are intellectual cave dwellers, undertaking our esoteric, abstract research and not bothering, according to this version, of coming out of the Cave to become sufficiently involved with the life and rhythms of our societies.

All of this is compelling, because whether we are portrayed imperially or hermetically, we respect and pay attention to the public's perception of the University of the West Indies. We have no choice. We are morally bound to listen to our stakeholders on whose behalf CARICOM governments also act. The Grand Anse Declaration of July 1989 reaffirmed and enshrined the region's commitment to the indefinite continuity of the University of the West Indies. We are therefore duty bound to embrace that contradictory duality. It belongs to all who constitute the Cave Hill Community. Yet, even as I accept what is reflected back to us, I would like to offer some aspects my vision on how the Cave Hill Campus defines itself in this unique Caribbean space.

Yes, we claim and bestride our Hill, but not within an ivory tower. We will work to ensure that the public understands that the Cave Hill Campus serves as an academic beacon reflecting the

University's light to illuminate new pathways of educational opportunities for all our citizens. By holding fast to that vision, I am endorsing the words of the Right Honourable, Errol Barrow who, on the selection of the site for the Campus, is reported by Sir Philip Sherlock as stating, "I wanted a more impressive site, one that stood out like a beacon, and there it was, within easy reach of Bridgetown, . . . It is the only Campus with a sea view"(Institutional Accreditation Self Study Cave Hill 2013: 7).

As the premier academic institution in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, the Cave Hill Campus seeks to reenergize the research for Caribbean development agenda. This will take many forms. For example we intend to fully explore the rich potential of the resources of the Caribbean sea, including the as yet, undetermined value of the Sargassum seaweed.

Chancellor, it is well known that the Campus is navigating some turbulent financial waters. But I am Captain Fred's, a fisherman's daughter and **I am not afraid** of rough seas. However, let me hasten to add that I do prefer placid waters. As Joan Armatrading sings, but I paraphrase, "Tides and waves have kept me, kept me going, but I am longing for the calm, I am looking forward to coming into dry land," and I too, long to touch the dry land of financially solvent shores.

In spite of the turbulent currents and the current turbulence, the Cave Hill Campus does not and will not represent or tolerate intellectual darkness, isolation or retreat from engagement with the issues confronting our societies and region. Our Campus is an indelible and intrinsic part of the educational infrastructure of Barbados and particularly, the Eastern Caribbean. Not only are we here to stay, we are here to offer increasingly vital strategies and solutions in the ongoing improvement of life and societal wellbeing within Barbadian and Caribbean societies. Whether it is the Campus, through the Faculty of Social Sciences, taking continuous professional education into Bridgetown, supporting the Institute of Gender and Development Studies in its 18 days of

activism programme against domestic violence, or examining the governance structure of West Indies Cricket, when called to serve our societies and region, the Campus or I will respond.

The already, ongoing activation of my vision for the Cave Hill Campus is centred on four intersecting mandates. The first is to educate Caribbean citizens in a learning environment that promotes student centredness and is committed to a culture of quality assurance. In the process we assist our governments and corporate sectors in satisfying their human resource needs. With our second mandate we are working with the Barbados government to return the Campus to financial solvency even as we continuously develop and pursue new initiatives to strengthen the Campus' financial viability. Vigorously pursuing the international student market while growing the English as a Second Language Programme are examples of the latter strategy. Our third intersecting mandate is to conduct research aimed at contributing to the continuous well being of Caribbean societies. The Campus intends to be at the forefront of generating ideas to improve and add value to Barbados and the Caribbean. I believe the University of the West Indies must function as the region's think tank, and the Cave Hill Campus embraces that role.

The Cave of this Campus serves as an incubator to nurture new programmes and possibilities that will redound to the benefit of Barbados and the region. Within this fertile ground of our Campus, we will ensure that the seeds planted by my predecessor, and new seeds of knowledge and entrepreneurship that are being germinated, tended by our dedicated faculty and staff will soon bear fruit. And so it should be, since we are all custodians of the higher education enterprise entrusted to us by our governments and people. We offer our best and prepare the ground for the next generation of Campus leaders, recognising that facilitating their success, guarantees the UWI's legacy and the continued growth of our beloved Cave Hill.

Chancellor, in the new year, the Campus will submit plans for the redevelopment of the Dukes lands generously bequeathed to the Campus by the Edgehills, and again we record the University's appreciation for the generosity of the Edgehill family. Under the unwavering leadership of Professor Leonard O'Garro, Director of the Centre for Food Security, the Campus will seek approval for the creation of a science park for agricultural business and entrepreneurship. We have already secured some high value agri-business ventures. These have already been identified and committed and we will share more information on these in the new year.

Chancellor, the Cave Hill Campus is a beautiful campus with a panoramic view. We have had very beneficial and necessary infrastructural expansion in many areas. However we accept, the basic infrastructure of the Faculty of Science and Technology has not changed in the fifty - two years of the Campus. Our renewable energy programmes and many of the new programmes offered in the FS&T are in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Our science and technology infrastructure, particularly our specialized laboratories have not kept pace. The Campus needs to address urgently the infrastructural renewal of the Faculty of Science and Technology for the ongoing supply of critical research and development skills for Barbados and the region.

Chancellor, I am committed to implementing our vision to ensure that the Cave Hill Campus remains at the forefront of creating ideas and products to improve Barbadian and Caribbean societal well being. Our researchers are the ones on whom the region is depending to help to generate new products and stimulate economic recovery in our countries. In that regard, we intend to provide the Campus with a modern Faculty of Science and Technology befitting the pursuit of the disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The University must fulfil its mandate to oversee the critical connection between what obtains at the University and national and regional performances in the STEM disciplines in the secondary and primary school systems. Faculty, but especially students, need smart, interactive science classrooms, state of the art labs and specialized resources to deliver the University's mandate to the region in scientific and technological education. The process has begun. Professor of Plant Biology, Sean Carrington leads a committee which is investigating first, towards recommending to the Campus the requirements for a thoroughly modern facility in Science and Technology.

Chancellor, Colleagues, specially invited guests, family and friends, my Caribbean journey began on the cliff top of Sauteurs, Grenada and seemed to have come full circle by now placing me at the leadership pinnacle of the UWI, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. Eilerslie Secondary School laid the foundation for my climb to the Cave Hill summit and I remain eternally grateful to my teachers, especially Alfred Trotman, Yvonne Clarke Forde and many others, for their investment in my secondary education. The Mighty Gabby serenaded us with Bridgetown Early Saturday morning. As Mabel's daughter, I and my tray knew Fairchild Street Bus terminal on Friday evenings. Under my leadership the UWI Cave Hill Campus will go further into the Barbadian community even as we deepen our relevance in serving the wider Caribbean. I am humbled by this opportunity to serve and give you my word, Chancellor, with God's guidance to uphold the responsibilities of this office. Ladies and gentlemen, family and friends, I thank you.

Violet Eudine Barriteau

December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015