Welcome Remarks

International Women’s Day 2020 Lecture

By

Her Excellency Paula-Mae Weekes
President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Friday 06 March 2020
7:00pm

Walcott Warner Theatre
ERROL BARROW CENTRE FOR CREATIVE IMAGINATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
CAVE HILL CAMPUS

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus and to the Walcott Warner Theatre of the Errol Barrow Centre for Creative Imagination. This evening, I am especially honoured to welcome tonight’s distinguished speaker, Her Excellency Paula-Mae Weekes, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. I should state, “Welcome back home to the Cave Hill Campus” to our esteemed Cave Hill Campus Faculty of Law alumna. We are indeed pleased to have you back with us at the Campus to deliver what is sure to be a stimulating and awe-inspiring lecture to commemorate International Women’s Day which falls on Sunday, March 08, 2020.
As we mark International Women’s Day; a day in which we celebrate the social, economic, political and cultural achievements of women around the world, I am delighted to note that our esteemed speaker, this evening, Her Excellency Paula-Mae Weekes, is the first female President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. In attendance at this evening’s lecture is Barbados’ Governor-General, Her Excellency Dame Sandra Mason. Her Excellency is the second woman to serve as Governor-General of Barbados, the first was Dame Ruth Nita Barrow, for whom the Institute for Gender and Development Studies: Nita Barrow Unit, at the Cave Hill Campus, is named.

This evening’s lecture is being held in Barbados, where Prime Minister, The Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, in 2018 became the first female Prime Minister of Barbados. Barbados for the first time in its history has a female Governor-General and a female Prime Minister in office at the same time. I wish to pause to offer apologies on behalf of Prime Minister Mottley who is unable to attend this evening’s lecture. She, however, extends well wishes for a successful event.

For the historical record, I must also add that The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, has, for the very first time, a woman as its Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal.
Persons who object to International Women’s Day, point to these achievements by women and wonder aloud, “What more do women want?” The President of Trinidad and Tobago is a woman, the Prime Minister of Barbados and the Director of Public Prosecutors, the Principal of the Cave Hill Campus and the list goes on.

However, the vast majority of victims of domestic violence are also women, the majority of workers receiving minimum wages are women and many households with one parent and several dependent children are also headed by women. This is why I am particularly intrigued by the title of Her Excellency’s lecture, *Realising Women’s Rights in the English-Speaking Caribbean – Mirage or Actuality*,

The commemoration of International Women’s Day seeks to call attention to conditions affecting all women and not only those of us who are more visible, more privileged or occupying the height of state or governmental power. Women should be presidents, Governors-General, Attorney Generals, Prime Ministers and Professors. As we bask with pride in the achievements of outstanding, exceptional Caribbean women, let us remember we cannot achieve either gender equality or gender justice if we focus only on the
achievements of women as leaders and ignore the concerns of women as workers. We have to be concerned about the achievement and aspirations of women in all aspects of life – in technology, in the workplace, in the arts, in health, in places of worship.

Gender studies has also been incorporated into the work of the Centre for Resource Management and Environmental Studies (CERMES) at the Cave Hill Campus. Last year, the Gender in Fisheries Team (GIFT), coordinated by CERMES, hosted the Women in Fisheries Forum to celebrate International Women’s Day 2019. The Forum was organized to address the lack of information needed for assessing and comparing the differing roles and socioeconomic contributions of women and men in fisheries. This was the first of its kind, where a cross-section of women gathered together to discuss gender equality in the fisheries industry in Barbados and GIFT and CERMES continue to advance this pivotal work in gender and fisheries.

In October of this year, the Cave Hill Campus will host the inaugural Gender Forum as a critical aspect of the 15th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 15) to be hosted by Barbados. Barbados’ hosting of UNCTAD marks the first time that a small island developing state (SIDS) will host an UNCTAD conference. The Cave Hill Campus will play a pivotal role in
informing discussions on gender concerns in the context of trade and development. Please note that although UNCTAD has been held every four years since 1964, UNCTAD has never had a Gender Forum before. The Campus is honoured to join the Government of Barbados in making history.

The Nita Barrow Unit of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Cave Hill Campus, is therefore pleased to host this evening’s lecture, which will advance knowledge on issues of gender in the Caribbean. I therefore wish to welcome you, once again, to what I know will be a stimulating lecture by Her Excellency Paula-Mae Weekes, quintessential Caribbean woman, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and, most importantly, esteemed Cave Hill Campus alumna. Welcome!

Eudine Barriteau

March 06, 2020