

**The University of The West Indies
Cave Hill Campus**

**Celebration to Mark the 100th Anniversary of the Birth of Nelson Mandela and in
Acknowledgement of Nelson Mandela International Day: For Freedom, Justice
and Democracy**

Wednesday, July 18, 2018

7:30 p.m.

LT1, Roy Marshall Teaching Complex

Good Evening and welcome to The UWI, Cave Hill Campus.

I remember vividly, dancing, with a group of friends, as part of a much larger crowd, outside the South African Embassy, in Washington DC on February 11th, 1990. We were gathered to mark and witness history, the final release from prison of Nelson Madiba Mandela. Tonight, the University of the West Indies, joins you, in gathering here to celebrate the centenary of the birth of this African giant, this African king, who was the towering conscience of the 20th century.

In this small but powerful gesture, the University of the West Indies joins a national, regional and international community to pause and praise the abiding revolutionary spirit who has bequeathed to all humanity a legacy of justice and inspiration.

One hundred years ago today, Africa gave the world a son and a king who would rewrite African and contemporary world history. Nelson Mandela's famous observation that **EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD, coupled with** his exemplary life of a commitment to upend injustices, demonstrated for all humanity crucial lessons on leadership. His

life continues to serve as a beacon of encouragement for us as we implement the mission of this university. It is no coincidence that as we observe the 70th anniversary of The University of the West Indies this year, we have adopted the motto – 70 Years of Service, 70 Years of Leadership.

So tonight I am delighted to welcome you and to join with you in celebrating and commemorating the legacy of a man whose unwavering commitment to dismantling injustices and establish African inspired pathways to democracy, continues to inspire the global fight for freedom, equality and justice.

There are many lessons we glean from the life of Madiba Mandela. Although he spent over a quarter of that his life incarcerated and in isolation, 27 years locked away from his family and loved ones. In spite of his near 10 000 days of confinement and punishment as a political prisoner from November 7th 1962 to February 11th, 1990, this freedom fighter maintained an indomitable spirit beyond human comprehension, a spirit which underlined the virtue and value of persistence in any dedication to a just cause.

We remain humbled by his innate qualities of and tremendous capacity for compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation. Upon his freedom, he chose not to embark on a mission of vengeance and retaliation but to remind us through personal demonstration, and in his own words, that “great anger and violence can never build a nation”. Although his actions and views on civil disobedience and non-violence throws up some dichotomies, he cautioned that “we owe our children – the most vulnerable citizens in any society – a life free from violence and fear.”

The racist, unjust, South African apartheid regime robbed him of some critical years of his life. It was a dark period in which he was denied participating in the coming of age of some of his young children and mourning at the funerals of his mother

and firstborn. Yet Mandela would denounce and reject all forms of racism and choose not to be embittered by his personal experience. Today, some twenty-five years after he was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993, his incarceration remains the defining sacrifice by which many who oppose modern day racial, religious, political, and other oppressions measure their own suffering.

While his life demonstrated the use of leadership for the power of good, it was Mandela's preparation for that life of leadership which holds exceptional significance for us within the academy. We speak specifically of his high regard for education. Though he was born into a life of elite privilege, his regard for, and subsequent pursuit of tertiary education helps us in our quest to underscore the value of access to higher education as fundamental building blocks or stepping stones for those who wish to embark on a life of leadership and service. Indeed, our strategic pursuit of ensuring greater access to tertiary education remains one of the central pillars of our educational philosophy.

The University of the West Indies cherishes the memory and legacy of Nelson Mandela and the many positive attributes which his name invokes. It is for this reason that we chose to locate a Nelson Mandela Freedom Park in his honour within these campus precincts.

And while our stringent financial challenges have prevented us from completing that social and recreational space in a manner befitting his memory, it has brought us great joy that the grand-daughter of President Nelson Mandela, Ms Ndileka Mandela, was able to join us for the official opening of the park in March 2018.

Of course, we remain optimistic that our corporate and philanthropic partners assist us in completing this project and present to the citizens of Barbados and this region a facility for relaxation and intellectual engagement on issues such as

integrity, good governance, commitment to social progress and speaking truth to power.

We intend for the park to become an idyllic setting to facilitate peaceful reflection, stimulate spiritual renewal and intellectual regeneration. As I indicated at its opening, I wish the Mandela Park to be viewed as a space for public reasoning and for engaging with the thorny issues affecting Caribbean life.

Ladies and gentlemen, while tonight it is tempting to reflect at length on the life and legacy of the great man, Nelson Mandela - Madiba - Tonight we are in a celebratory mood.

So once again, welcome to the Cave Hill Campus and this evening of celebration to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Nelson Mandela. I know you will thoroughly enjoy the evening's presentations. I certainly look forward to mingling with you in our reception area afterwards where we may continue our conversations about His Royal Highness, Madiba Mandela and what he has given to the world.

I thank you.

Professor V. Eudine Barriteau

July 18, 2018