



# OFFICE OF THE CONTRACTOR-GENERAL

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION BY THE

CONTRACTOR-GENERAL

GREG CHRISTIE

*“Key Leadership Qualities”*

**University of the West Indies  
Mona School of Business  
2010 Graduate Awards Ceremony**

Wednesday, November 24, 2010

Mr. Douglas Lindo – Master of Ceremonies, Professor Evan Duggan – Executive Director of the Mona School of Business (MSB), Dr. Mark Figueroa – Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of the West Indies, Ms. Minna Israel – Chair of the Board of Directors of the Mona School of Business, Distinguished Members of the Academic and Administrative Staff of the MSB, Outstanding Graduates of the MSB, Students, Parents, Other Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening to you all.

When I received the invitation from Professor Duggan a few weeks ago, to address this special ceremony, I deemed it to be both an honour and an esteemed privilege to have been so considered.

Indeed, I believe that it was about a year ago that I had received a similar invitation from Professor Duggan, but due to the pressure of work then, I was unable to accept same. I am, therefore, very happy that I was able to say yes on this occasion.

As a graduate and a former law lecturer of the University of the West Indies, I am very proud this evening to be on the soil of the main campus of our region's premier tertiary institution as we honour the Distinguished 2010 Graduates of the Mona School of Business.

Above all, however, I am very grateful and humbled to have been provided with the opportunity to say a few words of encouragement to these outstanding ladies and gentlemen who no doubt will be among the future Leaders of our beloved country, Jamaica.

As Top Achievers, you have distinguished yourselves at the Mona School of Business by excelling in the School's 2010 Examinations.

Many of you who are here tonight will receive Special Awards for outstanding performance in a wide variety of programme concentrations, for attaining distinctions, for the demonstration of outstanding performance in Ethics, for excelling in the School's Venture Challenge Competition and for achieving academic excellence in certain specified disciplines of study.

Special Awards will also be made to the chosen few among you who have been singled out for The Best Academic Performance, The Best Performance, The Most Outstanding Performance, Outstanding Leadership and, of course, The Most Outstanding Student.

You have, therefore, by your accomplishments, demonstrated the tradition for which the Mona School of Business has become known nationally, regionally and internationally – that of excellence and of producing some of Jamaica's finest and most outstanding post graduate students and potential business leaders.

Tonight, we must therefore salute you and pay you homage.

Like those of your fellow graduates who have excelled and have gone before you, you have made the Mona School of Business, the University of the West Indies, your Professors and Lecturers, and your Families, justly proud.

In demonstrating your superior academic and business skills, you have proven that you are seized with the makings of certain invaluable and indispensable qualities which, if they are nurtured and harnessed, will set you well as you embark upon the national, regional and world stages as our Leaders of tomorrow.

Today, in Jamaica, we have come to witness a distinct blur between what is right and what is wrong. In many instances, behavioural patterns which were previously considered to be the exception have now morphed deceptively into the norm.

What were once regarded as acceptable standards of decency, values, ethics, morality and discipline, have now fallen prey to a Society that has seemingly lost its sense of direction – a society that many feel is bereft of strong leadership and positive role models in most, if not all of its spheres.

Our Country yearns and cries out for young Leaders who are willing to stand up for the right things.

You, who, by your presence here tonight, have demonstrated the ability to excel, must now exude qualities of good leadership, not so much by reference to academic standards but, as you leave from here, by your demonstrated attitudes and actions at the work and business place.

I believe that there exists a potential, which is inherent in all of us, to achieve great things, inclusive of positions of leadership and great influence.

It is, therefore, against this background that I would want to talk to you tonight about some of these qualities of great Leadership – qualities which I will challenge you to embrace and to go forth and display in no less of a brilliant and distinctive fashion as you have exhibited by your exceptional performance in your recent Examinations.

Almost three years ago, while addressing Champion College's Top Achievers in the 2007 National CSEC and CAPE Examinations, I spoke on the topic of Leadership. Regrettably, many of the things that I said then are still applicable today, since very little has changed for the better in our Society between then and now.

So let us begin.

First, I must exhort you to become Leaders for change.

As the great American President, Harry S. Truman, once said:

***“Men make history, and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better”.***

In the political sphere in Jamaica, we need politicians who are prepared to lead the change for a new political dispensation – a dispensation which places the interests of the people and the country first, versus doing that which is politically expedient.

We need political leaders who are strong on ethics, integrity, principle and discipline, and who are prepared to promote systems of good governance in government by ensuring transparency, accountability and the due adherence to the Rule of Law in the affairs of the State. We need political leaders who will hold true to the solemn oath which they have taken to uphold the Constitution of Jamaica.

In the Public Sector, we need bold new leaders who are prepared to be like the distinguished and honoured public servants of old. We need Senior Public Servants who will stand up for what is right in their stewardship and management of the day to day activities of our Country’s Public Sector Agencies.

In the Private Sector, we must cultivate leaders who will be change agents for implanting a new mindset in the management of the Jamaican business enterprise – Business Leaders who will be mindful of the fact that the bottom line is not the only line, but that there is also a critical and indispensable place for ethical practices in every element of any commercial undertaking.

To become true Leaders, you must always do what is right ... not what is popular or what is expedient.

A great American of Jamaican lineage, the former United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, elaborated on the subject in another way when he had this to say:

***"Leadership cannot be a popularity contest. Trying not to offend anyone, or trying to get everyone to like you are sign posts on the road to mediocrity. Leaders who are afraid to get people angry are likely to waver and procrastinate when it comes to making tough decisions or choices. Leaders who care more about being liked than being effective are unlikely to confront people who need confronting. In short, they won't challenge the status quo”.***

But what does all of this mean?

1. It means, for example, that a true Leader would not hesitate to resign from his job on a matter of principle rather than remain and become a participant to that which he knows is ethically wrong.
2. It means that a true Leader would not hesitate to summarily fire or discipline one of his most indispensable or productive employees or colleagues, if the employee

or colleague has violated a work-place procedure or principle which demands such action.

3. It also means that a true Leader would not retreat from pressing home a position which he genuinely believes is a principled and ethical one, even when he is confronted by substantial, widespread and/or unexpected opposition.
4. It means, too, that a true Leader is a person who will take an ethical or principled position on a matter even when he knows that same is likely to alienate him from his colleagues or supporters, or make him the subject of ridicule or criticism.
5. It also means that a true Leader will never be scared to confront that which needs confronting or to say that which needs to be said, even if doing so will result in a “rocking of the boat”?
6. Finally, it means, as Tony Blair, the former British Prime Minister, once said, that ***“The art of leadership is saying no, not yes. It is very easy to say yes.”***

To become a true and successful Leader, it is imperative that you must establish for yourself a set of basic values from which you must never depart in your dealings with your fellow man or colleague.

Let us talk about some of the ones that I would regard to be paramount.

You must be honest, truthful, kind and fair. Integrity, character, self respect, respect for others, and your strict adherence to the highest possible ethical standards must be the benchmark of everything that you do.

In doing what is right and ethical, you must at all times be forthright and fearless, never straying off course, never succumbing to what the misguided may deem to be the praiseworthy thing to do, and never allowing yourself to be intimidated by your detractors.

Indeed, you should never fear to act when you must act and, conversely, you must never act out of fear when you should not act.

You must always be strong and courageous, but at the same time you must be humble and eschew pride and arrogance.

You must practice self-discipline and self-control, remembering, as you must know by now, that without hard work and discipline, it is difficult to become a Top Achiever.

As Joseph Addison, the English poet and politician, once said, ***“self discipline is that which, next to virtue, truly and essentially raises one man above another”***. So with faith, discipline and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve.

Be wary of associating yourselves with unsavoury characters or persons of ill-repute. If you are in doubt about the pedigree of an acquaintance, then do as the Japanese Proverb wisely recommends: *When the character of a man is not clear to you, look at his friends.*” Should you fail to heed this warning, then you too will risk being judged by the company that you keep. Innately, you know what is wrong and what is unprincipled. So avoid it.

As you practice and inculcate the virtues of a true Leader, you should expect to become a potential victim of anger, jealousy, hate, vindictiveness or even the occasional conspiracy. As it has been said, *“people with courage and character always seem sinister to the rest”*.

When you do all these things, and despite the opposition that you will no doubt encounter along the way, you will, over time, develop strength of character. You will grow in self-confidence and, inevitably, you will become an inspiration to your peers, your subordinates and your superiors alike, and you will earn their respect.

At the workplace, and in your professional endeavors, whatever they might be, you must always seek to be the consummate professional. You must cultivate a superior work ethic – one which has no place for mediocrity or failure.

Let the pursuit of excellence be your goal in everything that you do. This has been described as doing the right things right by selecting the most important things to be done, and then accomplishing them 100% correctly.

To be a successful and effective Leader of any organization, particularly large ones, you must be highly organized in the preparation and execution of your daily work tasks. If you are unable to organize your self, your work and your documentation, you will be unable to effectively multi-task and to spin on a dime when the situation requires it, which it will inevitably and invariably do.

One key element of being able to effectively and to efficiently execute your tasks in a highly multi-tasked environment, is to delegate and to do so effectively. However, at the end of the day, you must remember that, as the Leader of your organization, the buck will stop with you.

Consequently, this means that you must surround yourself with competent managers who share your values and your high sense of accomplishment, and to whom you can confidently delegate critical tasks.

In doing this, it is more likely that the systems that you have set in place to ensure that the delegated tasks are satisfactorily executed on your behalf, will work. Remember, it was President Reagan who said that, as a CEO, **“you should trust but you must also verify”**.

In your work perspectives, you should try to be forward looking and forward thinking. You should train yourself and your mind to think about every potential eventuality that is likely to occur from a given course of action, and weigh the relative pros and cons which are likely to arise from each.

Thereafter, you will find that it will be easier to develop and to activate the most appropriate route to take, having thought of all the possible eventualities and having set in place the requisite contingency plans. If you do this, you will always be one or even two steps ahead of the game – and ahead of the competition. I call it the “**Tree-Trunk Principle**”.

As future business Leaders, you must also encourage yourself to think creatively and out of the box. Set definitive goals for all that you would like to accomplish and then develop realistic time-based, step by step plans, to secure your objective. Constantly audit your progress so that you can make the requisite adjustments to ensure that you remain on track.

Listen keenly and carefully to others, and pay due regard to constructive criticism, but ensure that you come to your own considered and informed views.

Make your word be your bond. This is critical. A man who fails to keep his commitment will fast lose the respect of his colleagues, his co-workers and all those who interface with him.

To be an effective Leader, you must also bring to bear, at the work place, the same values that I have alluded to before – that of honesty, truth, fairness, respect and unimpeachable ethical conduct in all that you do.

In your dealings with your colleagues, co-workers or those who may report to you, remember that one of the hardest tasks of leadership is understanding that you are not what you think you are, but what you are perceived, by others, to be.

Accordingly, you must lead by example, always doing that which you would want others to do. Faithfully and openly comply with the very rules and procedures which you have set in place for others to follow. If you stick to this simple principle, you will be surprised how effective you will become in motivating your staff, your colleagues or your supporters.

Be flexible in the discharge of your own work obligations, always giving more than is expected of you and always giving your best. At the same time, however, you must be unrepentantly inflexible on issues of principle and ethics.

In this vein, and in particular, you must be aware of becoming an unknowing participant to suspect, unethical, improper, irregular, unlawful or illegal practices. Some of these are likely to be carried out in the name of savvy business practices or business expediency, or passed off as that which is “OK” or acceptable to others.

Do not countenance, give succour to, nor become an accessory to indiscipline, or to disrespectful or unbecoming conduct. Remember that you must strive, at all times, to be the standard bearer of not only what is right but what is perceived to be right.

As true Leaders, you must also ensure that, by your conduct, you will become role models, mentors and exemplars for your peers.

Perhaps there are fellow students who are among you here tonight, who are yet to graduate, or co-workers, who are looking up at you as examples of what they would like to become. You must understand this so that you will continue to motivate them by what you do, what you stand for, and what you accomplish after you leave here.

You must also remember that you are now the product of a fine, great and noble institution – one of Jamaica’s best, and one which has a rich and exceptional heritage.

Your Professors, Lecturers and Tutors, your school administration, and your Families, through the sheer dint of dedication and commitment, have painstakingly nurtured and supported you to such amazing levels that we are able to honour you here tonight.

In the circumstances, I am sure that you will agree with me that you owe them all a deep debt of gratitude and you must not let them down.

As you go forth tonight, I must, therefore, wish for you God’s speed and all that’s best in your future career endeavours.

Be forthright, courageous, persistent and fearless in not only doing what is right, but in standing up and speaking out for what is right.

You should do this no matter what the cost may be, for there are too many of us who are seemingly content to confine our views about the ills of our society to the secure walls of our living rooms and our porches.

Regrettably, there are not many of us who are prepared to publicly call a spade a spade, for fear of being branded, criticized, ostracized, victimized or ridiculed. No one, it seems, wants to be seen as “rocking the boat” or challenging the status quo.

So we continue, day in day out, to mind our own business, oblivious to the injustices which are being meted out to the less fortunate among us, and seemingly not caring about the breakdown in law and order, the breakdown of our good governance structures, and the rank indiscipline which has now permeated almost every nook and cranny of the Jamaican sociological order.

As future leaders of our beloved country, I can only, therefore, exhort you to be agents for radical change and to carefully consider the thought provoking words which are often attributed to Edmund Burke, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Irish statesman, political theorist and



philosopher, who is alleged to have said that: **“All that is necessary for the triumph of evil, is for good men to do nothing.”**

Make the pursuit of excellence, integrity and character, your guiding lights, remembering that *“of all the properties which belong to honorable men, not one is so highly prized as that of character”*.

Develop and maintain an abiding faith in God so that you will also be spiritually guided and comforted.

If you do all these things, there will be no goal, objective or ideal that you will be unable to achieve. There will be no obstacle or impediment that can stand in the way of your quest to become a true, exemplary and great Leader.

You will soar to the highest of heights and you will continue to make us and your country extremely proud of you.

**Thank you.**