

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES



**CEREMONY FOR THE INSTALLATION
OF THE
VICE-CHANCELLOR**

Address by

**Professor the Honourable Rex Nettleford
OM, FIJ**

Saturday, March 6, 1999

Assembly Hall, Mona Campus

6:00 p.m.

The University of the West Indies



INSTALLATION ADDRESS

by
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CHANCELLOR

I wish, first of all, to express my gratitude to the many persons throughout the region and beyond who have sent me expressions of goodwill on my appointment as Vice Chancellor. I truly marvelled at the extent of the response, wondering whether they were hailing a denizen of Jurassic Park or thinking I was the new don on the corner of what a chat show host who shall be nameless reportedly referred to as an 'intellectual ghetto.' I wish to extend similar thanks to my colleagues here in the University for the welcome support that they have given me at all levels of encounter over the past few months since I have assumed my new duties. I say thanks to our team of Campus Principals, other Pro Vice Chancellors and Deans, to our Lecturers, Professors and Heads of Departments, to our Senior Administrators, Student Officers and the wide range of support staff in Campus and Non-Campus territories whose contribution has been as vital as any to the survival of this institution over the past 50 years.

CHANCELLOR,

As the University of the West Indies enters its 51st year of service to the Caribbean region, we take stock of what has been accomplished over half a century. We naturally take pride in having produced some outstanding graduates – Prime Ministers (some six of them now rule the waves), distinguished scholars (including scientists, social scientists, historians, linguists and men and women of letters), outstanding doctors and lawyers and teachers, as well as internationally acclaimed creative artists (a Nobel Laureate among them) who have all brought glory to the Institution. But we are equally conscious that we will have failed in our mission if the society, as a whole, does not reflect significant changes for the better because of our strategic presence in its midst. So, this is indeed a time to ask questions of what is or **should be** expected of us.

Are we turning out graduates who understand the whole concept of service? Are we about to produce future leaders who are able to bring to their various tasks a creative mind and a determination to lift those who have not been as fortunate, and who need help to develop a better sense of self-worth, and a confidence that will enable them to contribute, in their own unique ways, to the improvement of the place they are expected to call home?

“In content” goes the argument, “university education offers excellence in a limited field, incompetence in most others”. The question, Chancellor, is, Is this true?

The answer may well be neither true nor false. The clue may well lie in the fallacy inherent in the view that different types of knowledge are mutually exclusive. What is impatient of debate is the logical priority that the capacity to **think** must have over all other capacities since every human act, from keeping within a budget to handling people, is an act of intelligence. And in the knowledge-economy, the future lies with the intelligent. Unless people in our region can approach all the information in the global information society, with the ability to analyse, select and incorporate relevant parts into their existing knowledge-base, we may as well be content with being hewers of wood and drawers of water while the **thinking** is done elsewhere. If ancient Greece is reason and Africa is deemed to be passion (with Asia in some non descript location) we of the Caribbean had better learn that such a division of labour is a luxury we cannot afford. The University, as an institution of growth and an instrument of developing mastery over our destiny, is clearly here for good reason.

The University of the West Indies is presently on a path to increase the numbers of students who can enter the institution, as the present percentage of the population with this opportunity is unacceptably low. On the threshold of the Third

Millennium, increased access of West Indians to higher education is undoubtedly a desired avenue to an appropriate knowledge-base for meaningful participation in the growth and development process.

I share the hope of my esteemed predecessor, Sir Alister McIntyre, that the estimated 2 percent needs to inch its way as quickly as possible to at least 10 percent of the age cohort eligible for higher learning. For only an educated citizenry can produce a growing economy in 21st century society. Only an educated citizenry, creative and imaginative, can sustain the growth especially when outside assistance is no longer there for the asking. WTO's, NAFTAs, G-7's certainly present a particular challenge for the intelligentsia of the South of which the Caribbean is an integral part.

The UWI must now be seen as part of an articulated educational system operating within and beyond national and regional boundaries. There are, of course, limits to how far down that system a university, *qua* university, can go. But I invite colleagues to desist from resisting the inevitable and creatively engage, instead, the inescapable by:

firstly, deepening and heightening the commitment to distance education as a priority and bring into the loop of UWI's outreach the entire academic staff and thus afford to the increasing willing numbers greater access to quality university education;

secondly, taking greater interest than now exists in the sustained high quality of feeder sources – the secondary and primary schools – thus giving to the university's departments and institutes of education challenging and distinctive roles to perform and thirdly, by working out rational mechanisms of accreditation and articulation between tertiary level institutions region-wide, joint degree arrangements, and continuing collaboration in the

efforts by the Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions (ACTI) to get the Associate degree relate to levels of matriculation or advanced entry into the UWI.

So, the vision of the University of the West Indies must be what Sir Alister so graphically once described as the hub in a network of tertiary institutions, rather than as an elite entity precariously perched at the apex of a stolid hierarchical pyramid as of yore. Lest some objectors would wish to hide behind the invocation of “**standards**”, let me hasten to say that the maximisation of strengths is here the operational principle rather than the proliferation of half-baked institutions disgorging on to an unsuspecting populace half-baked skills useful for sprinting but disastrous in the long-distance running which is the challenge of transforming self and society from underdeveloped dependency to integrated self-reliance.

My own view is that higher Education must have as its goal, the production of the integrated human being as a graduate or post-graduate fully equipped to cope with the contradictions of the 21st century world, with the ability to eke order out of chaos, stability out of turbulence, meaning out of nonsense, harmony out of the cacophony of dissonance. The interconnectedness of all knowledge must therefore be grasped. The centrality of modernity’s science and technology must accommodate the sensibility of the ancestral humane bodies of knowledge, while the student in the humanities must acquire a science sensibility that is not “**higher science**” as science now is to most of our people. Values and Attitudes, Ethics and a new spirituality are all part of my own vision of a constructive, creative, integrated textured human being which Caribbean society, as elsewhere, will need for its journey along a path of human-scale development – in other words, a person duly prepared for creative engagement with a particularly unpredictable, kaleidoscopic 21st Century. Scientific rigour and ethical rigour are by no means mutually exclusive.

And here the location of the student at the centre of the learning process as inspirer, beneficiary, effective user of research and teaching, is critical. The student-friendly university is likely to be the one to benefit from a committed alumni fellowship willing to give material and spiritual support to its alma mater. But before that, must come the genuine caring and compassion on the part of the teacher in preparing the student for working life and the mentoring which has become more important in these socially dysfunctional times.

CHANCELLOR,

It is nowhere in our Strategic Plan that students should be seen as adjuncts to the activity of professors who see themselves as agents of continuity while students merely come and go. Our active thrust into Research studies (a vital priority) was never meant to ignore students in such endeavours. Indeed, one should hope that we will link our teaching and research to development, and bring the student into the entire process of generating new and appropriate knowledge for our survival. For seeing students as passive recipients of what we as teachers learnt decades ago may prompt from them the now legendary remark of an undergraduate to his professor after a lack-lustre lecture "*Life is short but boredom makes it longer*".

The research component of higher education's remit must be closely related to the lived reality of the communities that institutions of higher education are meant to serve, without relapse into a pedestrian provincialism or a stifling narrowness of vision. And the specificity of one's own historical experience and contemporary reality should be the subject of investigation, (empirical and scientific, phenomenological and imaginative), of analysis, and of explanation on the road to the universal principles that underlie the human condition manifest on planet earth.

The richness of human knowledge has been fed over time by the discoveries of peoples, individuals, and situations born of different specific conditions. It is time that the Caribbean muster enough confidence as creative contributors to that process.

We have to ensure that there is continuing improvement in the relevance and the quality of our offerings. Also, we owe it to the people of the Caribbean, who provide the resources for our existence, to ensure that the products of this institution are young men and women of integrity, men and women of honour, men and women who graduate with a sense of purpose, and a burning enthusiasm to make, in their own special ways, a significant difference to the well-being and advancement of the mass of our people. For this is the mission that must concern us for the next fifty years. And I am honoured to be part of the process. There is no place for mindless bhutooism and coarsened sensibilities parading as roots.

As with students so with senior colleagues – in treating with each other. We need more generosity of spirit, more tolerance in discourse, more tuning into each other's strengths rather than into each other's weaknesses.

CHANCELLOR,

You more than anyone else know that there is a great deal to be done to prepare our people for safe landing in the 21st century and the need for resources to ensure that we can position ourselves strategically in a new world order which is still not designed for the likes of us, is becoming more critical. We ignore all this at our peril. Even now we are accused of many shortcomings in the quest.

We are often accused that the curriculum does not offer training in the basic skills of oral communication, creative thinking, goal-setting, team work, negotiation, dispute resolution, self

esteem and managing oneself, all of which are necessary for purposeful living. Too much emphasis, we are warned, is being placed on regurgitating information to pass examination rather than on the application and manipulation of the information received, to suit requirements. Worse still, the institution is blamed for being too ill-prepared to inform public policy as is deemed necessary.

But I call on contributing governments not to lose faith in their regional university and in our own vision of human resource development. I call on contributing governments never to do unto this institution what none of them would have the IMF do unto them – i.e. divest it of muscle, blood and vitals leaving it to skeletal uselessness. We are aware of the capacities of governments to do otherwise. Indeed, many within and outside the University are not aware of the self-denying ordinance embraced by contributing governments which have voluntarily absented themselves from the Appointments Committee to which they have charter membership, thus making good our claim to academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Long may this laudable absence last! Such civilised restraint is the hallmark of sophistication and an understanding on the part of our beleaguered politicians of the democratic governance that is the common hope of our post-colonial Caribbean.

We have been let out on a world that is ripe with contradictions. The complexity of complexity is the norm. But is all this cause for surrender or desperation? Certainly not! It is, instead, a glorious opportunity of **“diffusing the dark”**, **“cancelling the doubt”**, and providing **“a shining antidote to the pain”**, as one great West Indian poet poetically puts it. For as creatures of the passing half a millennium we have the ability to cope with such contradictions in the Americas which have been tenanted for all of 500 years by millions of disparate souls whose sense and sensibility have been honed by the varied historic encounters between old civilisations on American soil. This is

as true of the United States, and Canada, of Central and South America, as it is of the Caribbean.

Let us join Derek Walcott, and try to understand the basis for the hope that is antidote to the our much murmured despair. "There is a force of exultation, a celebration of luck," exults Walcott, "when a writer finds himself a witness to the early morning of a culture that is defining itself, branch by branch, leaf by leaf, in that self-defining dawn, which is why, especially at the edge of the sea, it is good to make a ritual of the sunrise." Such musings came both from Walcott's imagination and from his intellect informed by his knowledge of West Indian history and reality, and nurtured on this very campus of the UWI.

As I have said elsewhere, many of the UWI's early scholars understood that "a university is a living organism that draws its nutrients from the society it serves and that cloistered isolation in an ivory tower by scholars who see their remit exclusively in the past rather than correspondingly in the present, itself tomorrow's past, is a recipe for irrelevance". In seeing the University of the West Indies as a continuing creative response to the challenge of change we need to remember that "In free democratic societies the generally accepted criteria for assessing the vitality of a university are its record of research based on rigorous intellectual enquiry, its academic standards through teaching of sustained high quality, and contributions to knowledge, and its capability for disseminating knowledge through outreach programmes and publications." I certainly understood that new universities, as the UWI was in my time as a student here, had "to search out ways of meeting these requirements while at the same time furthering social cohesion, increasing the region's capacity for the productive application of science and technology, for self-understanding and for self-expression through modes that are deep-rooted in the culture of the society." It is fair to say that without the vision and the activism of Founding Fathers and our early teachers, the

provisions for a new governance of the UWI into the 21st century might not have been possible.

Through the pressure of history and contemporary reality we are yet again facing the option of recourse to intellect and imagination.

All men and women of action, of vision, of proven grit, guts and stamina at whatever level they function, must now be served by the force of intellect and imagination, underpinned by a sense of history. It is in this sense that the University of the West Indies can happily reclaim its central role in making it possible for the future Caricom Caribbean to build up the capability for self-development and the capacity to respond innovatively and sensitively to the unpredictable shifts of change in a world in doubt at end of century.”

CHANCELLOR,

Can we do it? We had better! We have no choice. Such is the agony and such is the challenge. I certainly think we can. And why? Because thanks to our forebears and a history of struggle and resilience, we have the light. For as Lorna Goodison, the Jamaican poet, has said :

“We have the light
Only who gave it
can put it out
We have light
Diffusing dark
cancelling doubt,
even when the point
of the poisoned sword
injects venom and dark,
a light running
like mercury
through the veins

is a shining antidote
to pain.
King of Swords
You are no more
We have light
You see
We have light”.

Join me then, dear colleagues, alumni and friends from the wider society as co-pilots in effecting a safe landing and making the journey. If nothing else, we have light.

I thank you.

Programme

Prelude: The National Dance Theatre Company Singers

The Academic Procession will commence at 5:50 p.m.

THE ACADEMIC PROCESSION

The Marshal
Council of the Guild of Students
Members of the Guild of Graduates
Academic and Senior Administrative Staff
Members of Senate
Members of Council

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM The University Singers

The Company is requested to remain standing as the Chancellor's Procession enters

THE CHANCELLOR'S PROCESSION

The Chief Marshal
The Public Orator
The University Registrar
The Pro-Vice-Chancellors
The Campus Principals
Chairmen, Campus Councils
The Vice Chancellor
The Mace Bearer
The Chancellor

When the Chancellor has taken his seat, the Company is asked to sit.

CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS

The Chancellor will formally open the proceedings

INSTALLATION

The University Registrar will ask the Chancellor to install as Vice Chancellor

**Professor The Honourable Rex Nettleford, OM, FIJ,
BA Lond-UCWI, MPhil Oxf, Hon. DLitt St. John's & Conn.
Hon. LDH Hartford & CUNY, Hon. LLD IWU,
Hon. Fellow, Oriol College, Oxf.**

GREETINGS AND RECOGNITION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF UNIVERSITIES

Guild of Students
Guild of Graduates
School of Continuing Studies, Non-Campus Countries
Cave Hill Campus
Mona Campus
St. Augustine Campus

THE VICE CHANCELLOR WILL ADDRESS THE COMPANY

THE UNIVERSITY SINGERS

THE NATIONAL DANCE THEATRE COMPANY

THE UNIVERSITY SINGERS AND THE NDTC SINGERS

RECESSION

The University Processions retire in reverse order.
The Company stands.

THE PANORIDIM STEEL ORCHESTRA

GREETINGS

on the occasion of the

INSTALLATION

of the

VICE CHANCELLOR

FROM THE CHANCELLOR

Your Excellency, the Governor-General and Lady Cooke, the Right Honourable Prime Minister P.J. Patterson, Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Vice-Chancellor, Members of the University, Ladies and Gentlemen.

In Universities, to a unique degree, are tradition and innovation co-mingled. So it is with us today. This is a special and unique occasion to celebrate a special and unique occasion in the history of the University – the appointment by the council of the first graduate of the University to the Office of Vice-Chancellor. We have described it as an installation; but that does not do full justice to the occasion; for our Vice-Chancellor has not merely been 'installed' in the office of Vice-Chancellor since last September; he has been installed in this University since 1953. That is why the occasion of this ceremony – why it is special – why it is unique. It is a celebration of Rex Nettleford's monumental contributions and achievements culminating in his appointment as vice-chancellor.

So the formal and the unconventional will be conjoined – as we do honor to one in whom those attributes are so harmoniously blended. You will share with us the ceremony of installation; hear greetings from students, graduates, the University's non-Campus centres and from the three campuses; and you will revel in these sentiments of joyous celebration conveyed in song and dance. Together they speak for all of us and for a wider community beyond the confines of this hall.

I hope, however, I may be allowed a word of my own in the records of this ceremony:

As the University of the West Indies celebrated its own 50th anniversary last year, Professor Nettleford marked his own milestone here where, in one incarnation or another, (save for a brief sojourn at a provincial institution in Britain), he had been since 1953-45, of

those 50 years. To a unique degree, UWI has been Rex and Rex UWI – a co-mingling now consummated in his Vice-Chancellorship.

So, today, a joyous salutation – rather specially so on this Mona Campus that has seen a first graduate son progress through the groves of academe, from undergraduate to Vice-Chancellor. It is a small miracle to do so without collision – or getting lost. It is the measure of Rex Nettleford that he did so with uncommon naturalness and grace, without giving offense or incurring antipathy. He has reached the top without ever seeming to climb.

I convey to the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of the University community – and on behalf of the community of the Caribbean of which he is so quintessentially a symbol – our congratulations on his many-splendoured achievements, of which this most recent seems but a natural continuum. The University of the West Indies is proud of its new Vice-Chancellor and pledges in turn its support for him as he takes UWI over the threshold of the 21st century.

These are not new words, or new sentiments for this occasion. I spoke them at the Vice-Chancellor's first graduation ceremony in his new office. I repeat them now, because that which comes from the heart comes best in its pristine form.

Your presences here confirm your own sense of celebration in the achievement of Professor the Honourable Rex Nettleford who, as he would have wished it, always remained 'Rex'.

Let the ceremony begin.

The Hon. Sir Shridath Ramphal

FROM THE GUILD OF STUDENTS

Who is better poised to lead a West Indian University, than a West Indian of the truest sense.

Professor the Honourable Rex Nettleford has distinguished himself as a quintessential West Indian, the truest 'Caribbean Man'.

Brewed, bred and refined at the University of the West Indies, Professor Nettleford brings to the Vice Chancellery a Uniqueness that the best of orators among us cannot quite capture.

His aura of dignity somehow couples with a most natural disposition, which I can only characterize as – "Nettlefordian".

A student right here on Mona Campus asked me in amazement, "Is that the Vice Chancellor?". She was indeed surprised to see him moving around the Campus almost as if he were still a student.

I was not surprised for in his years at the University and most markedly, in the position of Vice Chancellor, Professor Nettleford has made a most significant investment in the University's most precious commodity – The Students.

As the Professor himself often asks, "What would this University be without the students?"

And therefore today it gives me the utmost pleasure on behalf of the 18,000 plus students of this burgeoning University to bring greetings, congratulations and best wishes to Professor the Honourable Rex Nettleford, a Renaissance Man, a Caribbean Man, the Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies.

**Deke Cateau, President
St. Augustine**

FROM THE PRESIDENT, GUILD OF GRADUATES

Chancellor, Governor-General, Prime Minister, Ministers of Government, Members of the Diplomatic Corp, Members of the Academic Community, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Guild of Graduates, I wish to congratulate Rex Nettleford on his elevation to this high office in the University.

The Guild is always proud of the achievements of its members but we are especially proud of this particular achievement by one of our members, a graduate of our own University, becoming Vice Chancellor.

Rex, the journey from Bunkers Hill to the position of Vice Chancellor with stops at Cornwall College, the University of the West Indies, Oxford University and the National Dance Theatre Company, has prepared you well for the awesome task of leading our University into the new millennium. The landscape and vehicles along this journey have provided you with the mental capacity, the academic rigour, the cultural sensitivity, as well as the leadership and people skills that you will need for accomplishing this task.

The Guild wishes you success, happiness, good health and God's richest blessings, and pledges its support to you as you enter the stage for yet another outstanding performance in your illustrious career.

Dr. Neville Ying

FROM THE SCHOOL OF CONTINUING STUDIES, NON-CAMPUS COUNTRIES

On behalf of my colleagues in the Non-Campus Countries, I salute our new Vice Chancellor, Professor the Honourable Rex Nettleford and applaud his worthy elevation to this prestigious, even if challenging university office. That we are present here in significant numbers is eloquent testimony of our esteem for the man, and delight in his preferment for this position. This University has to be proud that one who is truly its own as student, teacher administrator and opinion leader now stands at the helm. We in the non-Campus Countries, are even prouder that our own leader for upward of two decades has climaxed his career as Vice Chancellor of this still great institution. We take none of the credit but join most enthusiastically in the plaudits.

To speak of the inspiration and model which Professor Nettleford has provided for us as a scholar would be superfluous. But what I feel compelled to observe is that a consummate artist himself and scholar of culture, Professor Nettleford has done much to encourage and promote the cultural arts through the UWI extension programmes in our countries: and this is one of his and the University's important outreach legacies.

Incumbent politicians are wont to pronounce that they are running on their record. I take the analogy no further, but based on our experience of the industry, productivity and administrative caring of Nettleford, and indeed of his international stature, we proclaim, Sir, that under your leadership, UWI is in very capable hands as it enters the new millennium.

Although I dare not speak for them, I am confident that those sentiments will resonate with ringing satisfaction with Ministers of Education and other leaders in the Non-Campus Countries who are familiar with the Vice Chancellor's agility of

mind and searching wisdom clothed in eloquent language.

It is against this backdrop of confidence that I bring you blessings and wishes of success from these other countries of the archipelago which the UWI serves, as you raise the curtain on a new challenge in a hitherto highly successful career.

On behalf of my colleagues, God bless you and in the words of the poet James Beuy, "Walk well".

Dr. the Hon. Howard Fergus

FROM THE PRINCIPAL, CAVE HILL CAMPUS

Chancellor,

On behalf of Campus Council and Academic Board, Cave Hill, I have the honour to bring greetings to Vice-Chancellor, Professor the Honourable Rex Nettleford. The Chairman of Campus Council, Sir Neville Nicholls, has asked me to convey his regrets that he is unable to attend on this occasion.

We at Cave Hill, hail the Vice-Chancellor as the first alumnus of our University to hold that office. We recognize that the Vice-Chancellor has already brought honour and distinction to the University as an outstanding scholar, and that he has done so over a long, productive and most illustrious career.

We are confident that the University will benefit from his able leadership at this time. Vice-Chancellor, we extend heartiest congratulations and best wishes for a successful and rewarding tenure.

Sir Keith Hunte

FROM THE PRINCIPAL, MONA CAMPUS

The journey from Bunkers Hill to Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies is a route not marked on any road-map in Jamaica. Tonight we honour one who has made that journey, through hard work, scholarship, a capacity to step up to all the challenges of life, 'with all its complexities, and a willingness to approach every problem as an opportunity to learn and to grow. Perhaps most importantly, we honour a man who, while moving from a small country village to the international arenas of the world stage, has never forgotten the place that nurtured him, and those who helped to make the journey possible.

Rex Nettleford is a shining example of what education should mean in a region such as ours. To his mother, and his teachers, and his mentors along the way, we give thanks, because they all conspired to produce a man who has always believed in his own worth, and who knew that he was here to be the best that he could be.

Someone once said that our purpose in life is to wake up every morning and say "How can I help?" This has been the way Rex Nettleford has lived his life, and this is what the society needs to adopt as a mantra if we are to survive, and if the education provided in this institution is to make a difference.

So tonight, we have a new star in the pantheon of the University of the West Indies, and he is our star. The new Vice Chancellor comes from among us. We cherish him. He is the son in whom we are well pleased. We wish him all that is good, and we at Mona pledge our strong support under his watch.

Professor Kenneth Hall

FROM THE PRINCIPAL, ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS

Chancellor,

I bring greetings from the St. Augustine campus of the University of this historic occasion.

Professor Rex Nettleford, who today is to be formally installed as Vice Chancellor of our regional university, is a man of rare distinction. He is an outstanding intellectual whose spoken words and writings have edified very many persons of all ages, of varied circumstances, in several institutions and in many countries, for no fewer than four decades. But it is as a man of culture and artistic accomplishment, Chancellor, that he has most touched the lives of Caribbean people in the region and its diasporic communities in Europe and the Americas, giving joy, pride and hope – embodying and celebrating our collective possibilities.

Rex Nettleford is of UWI. He came to this institution of higher learning as a student somewhere close to its beginning and never left. He is a familiar sight, walking jauntily or driving with dash and swerve on the Mona campus. He is equally familiar at St. Augustine, and elsewhere in the Caribbean. In Professor Nettleford, we have a Vice Chancellor who like his illustrious predecessor, Sir Alister McIntyre, knows UWI intimately – its idiosyncrasies, weaknesses and strengths, a Vice Chancellor who loves this University, and is unreservedly committed to its growth as a regional institution of higher learning and research, in furtherance of Caribbean development.

We at the St. Augustine campus, know that Professor Nettleford's elevation to the post of Vice Chancellor is richly deserved. We are convinced that it will redound to the benefit of the University. I am pleased and proud to have the

opportunity to extend our congratulations and to pledge the support of the St. Augustine campus.

Professor Compton Bourne

