



Feature Address

by

The Hon. Philip J. Pierre

Prime Minister & Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Youth
Economy,

Justice & National Security

At The

CXC Top Performers' Awards Ceremony

"IN THE SPOTLIGHT"

National Cultural Centre

Barnard Hill, Castries, Saint Lucia

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Protocol Acknowledgements . . .

PROUD OF YOU

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening.

For those of you who have flown in to be here, I want to extend once again a very special welcome to Saint Lucia, the land of Sir Arthur Lewis, the land of Sir Derek Walcott, the land of the fastest woman in the world Julien Alfred, and the only country in the world named after a woman, the Helen of the West – let us allow Saint Lucia to inspire you.

We are here to celebrate the successes of our best and brightest minds. And judging from your line of questioning that I received when I last met them in the House of Parliament, the future leaders of our countries are present with us this evening.

Although it goes without saying, we must say publicly and profusely that we are immensely proud of your achievements. Your region is proud of you. Your country is proud of you. Your schools are proud of you. Your teachers are proud of you. Your communities are proud of you. And undoubtedly your friends, family, and parents are exceedingly proud.

Please understand and expect that greater expectations will be demanded from you. However, I want to let you know that you will never be able to please everyone because the values of people differ.

Our Nobel Prize Winner for Economic Sciences, Sir William Arthur Lewis said that the fundamental cure to poverty is not money but knowledge. You should be able to acquire as much knowledge and know-how as you can. Knowledge of the rich history of the Caribbean civilization.

As you pursue higher education always remember that education may acquire you fame and wealth but you should never forget where you came from – the people who assisted you in your path of progress, your parents, teachers, relatives and positive friends.

Many successful people believe that they did it all on their own. They will tell you they wrote their own exams, they studied hard, they fought their own battles, and so what is theirs is for them alone. Please do not embrace that attitude.

Everything that we enjoy today is built upon the hundreds of thousands of years of human continuity, growth, development and learning. We depend on people everyday of our lives, in some form or fashion. We depend on the successes of people who have gone before us, who did remarkable things with far less than what you have today. So, I urge you to be proud of your achievements by all means, but don't ever believe that those achievements are just for you.

So, to you, I again say congratulations. You have brought home the medals, the recognition. Show gratitude to those who helped you. Remember and show care to those around you and whom you can help. Give back but be weary of all the unwanted attention.

You should never believe that your brightness alone got you here. Ralph Gonsalves at the Prime Charles Lecture in Dominica, said ‘There are two kinds of brightness: the type that illuminates and the type that blinds.’ Your brightness needs to enlighten others. There are many others who were bright in the past but who did not enjoy the opportunities that you had, and they indeed sacrificed so that you may enjoy what you have today.

CARIBBEAN GREATNESS

In our Caribbean civilization we have built a number of fine institutions and outstanding people. We often refer to them as regional institutions, but they are in truth world-class institutions – as good as any other in the world. The University of the West Indies, world-class. Caribbean Examinations Council, world-class. The Caribbean Court of Justice that Saint Lucia recently joined shows confidence in our legal system, confidence in judges, and confidence that we can deliver judgments that can stand, world-class. We must be proud of your performances at CAPE and CSEC, world-class.

As the motto of the University of the West Indies reminds us, we are to be that light rising in the West. You must have confidence in yourself that you are the best in the world. Always see the glass half full and not half empty. Let optimism be your buzzword.

As a Caribbean civilization, we have proven that countless times before, and I am certain that will continue even more with you. This Caribbean drive and passion are driven by hundreds of years of struggle against oppression. We have been put through the furnace and have come out stronger than ever. So, in your own lives, don’t ever give up. Don’t ever feel you’re not good enough. Don’t ever feel you can’t be at the top. As the motto of my Alma Mater, Saint Mary’s College says, “*The Top is Reached by Striving.*”

Citizen Security

In Saint Lucia and the Caribbean we are seeing male underperformance, high dropout rates, and the rise of gangs and related crimes. This is not just one person’s problem or one country’s problem. It is everyone’s problem. We are witnessing this across the entire Caribbean. And it is a matter that you, our brightest minds, as well as our institutions like the Caribbean Examinations Council must put thought to and ask – what can I do to help? It is a struggle that we politicians and prime ministers have to face on a daily basis, and it is a matter we must solve if we are to sustain and grow our Caribbean Civilization.

And so to you whatever your pursuit, remember the purpose of knowledge. It must be for the betterment of our humanity and the betterment of our civilization. Whether you choose to pursue agriculture, finance, medicine, engineering or law, whether you choose to develop artificial

intelligence or produce works of art, whatever your pursuit, do it well, do it with passion, and do it for the greater good of all.

To the 2024 CXC top academic performers, congratulations! The world is yours to change. I want to end with a quote from the first Black American President Barack Obama he said,

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek”.

I Thank You