



COUNCIL OF LEGAL EDUCATION SECRETARIAT

Gordon Street, St Augustine, Trinidad. WI

Mr Reginald Armour SC
Chairman

Postal Address: P.O.Bag323
Tunapuna, Trinidad, WI
Tel: 1-868-662-5860/5835/1994
Fax: 1-868-662-0927
Email: chairman.CLE@hwlsedu.com
kimlin.leeyaw@hwlsedu.com

Chairman's Graduation Address, 2020

Graduands.

Firstly and on your behalf, permit me in the face of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to say thank you to the members of the Council of Legal Education who met into the late evening of Friday the 15th May, 2020, **virtually**, and who voted favourably on the unprecedented decision to amend our Regulations so as to allow Open Book Examinations. You were thus enabled to overcome that last critical hurdle, **Examinations**, and clear that hurdle you have!

A round of Applause to the three Principals of our Law Schools, Mrs. Miriam Samaru, Mrs. Carol Aina and Mrs. Tonya Bastian Galanis and the indefatigable members of the Academic Committee, including the student representatives from each School, for assisting Council in its decision on the final examinations. Mr Rudranath Maharaj and his team must be commended for the research paper on alternative models of assessment on which the recommendations of the Academic Committee were based.

With ingenuity and resolve, everyone adapted in immeasurable ways, with research and innovation, to enable Council to approve well thought out and well presented recommendations which have paved the way for your successful graduation.

On your behalf, I acknowledge and say thank you to all Registrars and Staff of the Hugh Wooding Law School, the Norman Manley Law School and the Eugene Dupuch Law School and, in particular the Teaching Staff at each who had to re-tool in unprecedented ways to bring you to this moment.

Less than two months ago, in my Welcome Address of September to our new and returning students of our three law schools I described the year 2020 as being **epochal, pivotal and inspirational**.

That description of the year 2020 is the more significant for you, as Graduands, as you step into the real life, cut and thrust, of a legal practice. I choose in these remarks to emphasise **Inspirational** to you because this year, like no other, our individual capacity to thrive and to realise opportunity out of adversity is unbounded. I was referring then, as I do now, to the pandemic and its challenges.

How, you are no doubt thinking, are you going to go about the day to day activities of building a legal practice, getting a good job, advising and representing your clients (in Court), addressing a Judge and a Jury, just simply making a living?

How, you may ask, are trials going to continue to be conducted into a foreseeable future impacted by this pandemic? Are you going to represent your client in the course of a trial in a court room, with all persons, judges, you and other lawyers, litigants and witnesses all wearing masks? How will the Judge, and Jury be able effectively and fairly to assess demeanour from behind the mask? “Demeanour”, the appearance and behaviour of the witness in giving evidence from the witness box, as opposed to the content of the evidence.

Yet still, are you going to be stepping into virtual hearings and court rooms, on-line? How effective is a virtual hearing to ensure that your client receives a fair trial?

The depth and quality of the training you have received at Council’s Law Schools has equipped you well to begin to embrace these challenges. Inspirational! You find yourselves on the cutting edge of a fast developing body of jurisprudence within which, as new Practitioners, you will become immersed. From your University and Law School experiences you will be helping the Judges to develop that jurisprudence, with a keenly attuned sensitivity for due process, the protection of the law and fairness.

Very recently a judge in Australia employed a fascinating turn of phrase to describe the profession that you are entering, faced with the challenge of the virtual hearing and the question whether the trial date should be vacated. He said *“In my experience the technology inhibits (if not prohibits) the **cadence and chemistry** - both between bar and bench, and bar and witness box - that personify well run cases. Those are traditional forensic benefits of which litigants ought not too lightly to be deprived.”* He vacated the trial date because in his discretion that cadence and chemistry could not be assured in the virtual trial to satisfy the requirements of a fair trial.

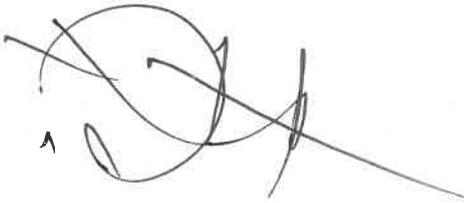
So. Graduands. Go forth into the *Cadence and Chemistry* of your professional life, advising and representing your clients with confidence.

Resolve, determination, hard work and ingenuity have brought you this far and have produced for us all this significant and successful graduation occasion. Continue to apply those qualities and be inspired by your challenges.

It gives me great pleasure to offer my personal congratulations to You, **The 2020 Graduating Class of the Hugh Wooding Law School, the Norman Manley Law School and the Eugene Dupuch Law School** and to welcome you all to the world of full fledged Attorneys at Law.

This is your moment, savour it. This is your challenge. Embrace it.

20th November 2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. T. A. Armour', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

REGINALD T A ARMOUR SC
Chairman.
Council of Legal Education