



Office of the  
Prime Minister

## Remarks At Presentation Ceremony of the Eugene Dupuch Law School

Hon. Philip Davis, KC, MP  
Prime Minister of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas

Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2023

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Distinguished guests,

Esteemed members of the legal profession...

Friends, family, and members of the graduating of the Class of 2023, good evening.

It gives me great pleasure to address the next generation of Caribbean legal professionals.

Graduates, you deserve all the applause tonight. You've put in the work and now you are ready to take the next step in your journey.

Not so long ago, in fact more than a decade or so ago (give or take a few years), I was in your shoes. I was getting ready to be called to the bar and embark on a career as an attorney. I was not certain of what the future held for me, but I knew that I was very passionate about the law and wanted to be a part of the system of justice, to help those in need.

Until that point, I had worked at various jobs. Little did I realise it at the time, but many of the life lessons gained from working those jobs taught me much of what is required to be a successful lawyer.

My grandparents were subsistence farmers, so my first job was alongside my family, turning the coarse earth of Cat Island. If you don't want to starve, then you quickly learn that preparation is critical if you want to have a successful harvest.

And so it is at the bar.

It is not intelligence or flamboyant speech or good networking that determines success, but thorough preparation. As tempting as it might be, do not wing it.

Your clients deserve better.

And, as you build up a portfolio of successful cases, your career will be better.

After farming, I went on to work as a packing boy. It is the kind of job where some people show you great appreciation, but for many, you are almost invisible. It provided a great lesson in humility and patience, and above all, service.

My time in banking was brief - for me, mercifully brief - but the lifelong lesson I learned was about the importance of attention to detail.

Put the dot or the comma in the wrong place or in the wrong column, and someone could owe thousands rather than hundreds of dollars.

If you literally or figuratively have to balance your books every day to the cent, then you know that everything is in the detail, and you have to give it your fullest attention.

The lessons for life at the legal bar are clear.

Preparation is key.

A sense of service is critical.

And attention to detail is the difference between success and failure. For your clients, it may be the difference between rags or riches, the difference between incarceration or freedom, or the difference between shattered relationships or negotiated happiness.

In addition to the preparation, the humility and the attention to detail, all of these roles required the kind of work ethic which is part of the bedrock of the legal profession.

Do not be afraid of hard work.

Focus on the practice of law, rather than the business of law, by which I mean that your career will flourish in the long term because you are good at it, not because your hourly billings put a little pep into your step.

Graduates:

There is one particular note of caution I urge upon you tonight. Throughout my career, I have seen some lawyers attempt to set themselves apart from and above the rest of the working population.

To be a legal practitioner is certainly a distinguished undertaking, but at the heart of this work is service. You cannot serve by standing above the people you serve.

As a lawyer, as an elected official, and as a human being, I believe one of the most important virtues we can practice is humility. Humility allows us to see the world more clearly. Some believe that to be humble is a negative thing - that it somehow suggests a lack of confidence or ambition, but I see it as the opposite. To be humble is to discard the narrow focus on self, in favour of a much broader and better perspective: a radical appreciation for the world around us, and our part in it.

Be humble.

Stay humble.

Appreciate the world into which you are about to enter and understand that the best way to leave your mark as a lawyer is by using your passion for the law to serve others.

Over 25 years ago, I worked alongside a team of motivated colleagues to establish the Eugene Dupuch Law School to prepare lawyers to serve their clients, their community, and their country. If you take the lessons you have learned within these walls to heart, and apply them to your daily legal practice, I am sure you will find that you are more than adequately prepared for the next stage in your journey.

You have been equipped with the tools to succeed anywhere within the region.

In tandem with the Hugh Wooding Law School in Trinidad & Tobago and the Norman Manley Law School in Jamaica, this institution serves as a vital driver of regional development and inter-island understanding.

Our shared objective is to create champions of justice. Given the many great legal minds that have emerged from this institution, there is no question that Eugene Dupuch Law school has succeeded in creating legal practitioners who pursue excellence in their craft with a sense of social responsibility and dedication to the highest standards of ethics and professionalism.

As the next generation of Caribbean lawyers, you have an important role to play in upholding the rule of law in the region at large.

And so, I encourage you to seek out and forge connections with your Caribbean counterparts. These bonds will not only make you a better lawyer, but a better citizen.

One of the distinguishing features of great legal careers is that they have been characterised by women and men dedicated to keeping themselves at the forefront of legal knowledge and practice.

And so I say to you: commit to continuous learning; commit to your continuing professional development. As society continues to progress and develop, so too does the knowledge and practice of law.

Stay current.

Stay up-to-date.

And do so in service to the noble pursuit of justice, not just to enhance your business venture.

I promise you: in the long-run, it will serve you well.

You will truly be one of the champions of justice.

What you say and do has the power to change lives.

Let your conduct be a testament to your dedication to fairness, equality, and truth.

Proudly be part of the team of legal architects striving to promote a more equitable and just society.

Be mindful of the profound responsibility you bear, knowing that to be a lawyer means that, each day, you set an example to others in upholding the law, and, when needed, reforming the law for the betterment of society.

Let the profound words of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. guide and inspire you as you embark on your journey in law: "The life of the law has not been logic; it has been experience."

Graduates, as you forge ahead, let Justice Holmes' insight be a constant reminder to approach law not merely as a set of rules or a cognitive exercise but as a living entity shaped by human experience and societal evolution. May it inspire you to be empathetic, to understand the diverse experiences of the people you serve, and to truly commit yourselves to the advancement of society.

Congratulations to the administration, staff, and faculty of the Eugene Dupuch Law School on your 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Since 1998, your efforts have produced legal professionals of the highest caliber, such as our very own Attorney-General. You play a significant role in promoting both nation-building, and region-building.

Move forward in sincerity.

And I pray that you will always look back with pride at the decision you made to become a practitioner of the law.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.