



OFFICE OF THE CONTRACTOR-GENERAL

SPEECH BY THE

CONTRACTOR-GENERAL

GREG CHRISTIE

“Essential Qualities of Good Leadership”

**Ceremony of Recognition for Campion College’s Top Achievers in the
2007 CSEC and CAPE Examinations**

Thursday, April 3, 2008

Mr. Anton Thompson, Vice-Chair of the Campion College School Board, Mrs. Maria Jones, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Mrs. Grace Baston, Principal of Campion College, Vice Principals, Distinguished Guests on the platform, Top Achievers and Aspiring Leaders, other Distinguished Guests, Parents, Students, Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening to you all.

When I received the invitation from Principal Baston, 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 should perhaps confess to you that since having been appointed Contractor General over 2 years ago, I have received numerous invitations to speak at public engagements, but this is the first one that I have been able to accept.

As a Campionite, I am indeed very proud to be in your company this evening. In particular, I feel singularly privileged to be here with you as we honour Campion's 31 Top Achievers in the 2007 CSEC and CAPE Examinations.

Above all, I am very grateful and humbled to have been provided with the opportunity to say a few words of encouragement to these outstanding young ladies and gentlemen.

As Top Achievers, you have distinguished yourselves nationally in the CSEC and CAPE Examinations. You have placed first, second or third in a variety of subject areas, among your peers, across the length and breadth of our Country.

You have, therefore, by your accomplishments, demonstrated the tradition for which Champion College has become known nationally – that of excellence and of producing some of Jamaica’s most outstanding high school graduates.

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

Like those of your fellow Championites, who have excelled and have gone before you, you have made your School, your teachers and your families proud.

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

Today, in Jamaica, we have come to witness a 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 good role models in some 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.

But what is it, exactly, that will get you started on this road to becoming a great Leader? Is it true that Leaders are born and not made?

I do not think so.

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 unequivocal fashion as you have done in your outstanding performance in your recent Examinations.

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*”.

Implicit in this, is that you must seek to lead by example. Do not follow ... lead! You must always do what is right ... not what is popular. Tony Blair, who recently demitted office as Britain's Prime Minister, put it this way: *"The art of leadership is saying no, not yes. It is very easy to say yes."*

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"*.

To become a true Leader, it is also 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. 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 popular thing to do, and never allowing yourselves to be intimidated by your detractors. You should never fear to act when you must act and, conversely, you must never act out of fear when you should not act.

In your perspectives, you should try to be forward looking. You must encourage yourself to think creatively and out of the box. Listen keenly and carefully to others, pay due regard to constructive criticism, but ensure that you come to your own considered and informed views.

You must always be strong, confident 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 weary 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.

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 and the setbacks 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 and you will earn their respect.

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

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. In addition, you should bring to bear 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 co-workers, and those who may report to you, remember that one of the hardest tasks of leadership is understanding that you are not what you are, but what you are perceived, by others, to be.

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. Beware of becoming an unknowing participant in suspect, improper, irregular, corrupt, unlawful or illegal practices, some of which are often carried out in the name of business expediency or passed off as that which is *'okay'* 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 and others.

I am sure that there are many fellow students, who are among you here tonight, who are looking up at you as examples of what they would like to become. You must understand this so that you will never let them down.

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

Your teachers and your school administration, through the sheer dint of dedication and commitment, have painstakingly nurtured you to amazing levels of national and regional prominence, such 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, and your parents, a deep debt of gratitude.

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, persistent and fearless in not only doing what is right but in standing up for what is right.

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 all extremely proud of you.

Thank you.