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Hugh Wooding Law School
Graduation Ceremony 2015.

Response on behalf of the Graduates

It is an honour to have been selected to respond on behalf of the 2015 Graduating Class of the Hugh Wooding Law School. Graduates, today we take our final shuttle ride from the Law School. This time there will be no stopping at Bates Trace, Gordon Street, Sine Flates or SAL hall. This shuttle has four stops and they are;

1. Reflection Road
2. Gratitude Gap
3. Success Street
4. Determination Drive

First stop: Reflection Road

Two years ago, we all commenced our tenure at the Hugh Wooding Law School, very uncertain of what the experience would yield. One thing we were certain of was that we surely looked the part. The gentlemen all looked circumspect in their freshly tailored suits and sharp haircuts and the ladies donned in their shinny new payless stilettos, Sacha- perfect faces and Wonderful World pearls.

The classes begun and assignments quickly came. With our anxiety increasing steadily, so too did our migraines and acid reflux as our workload piled up.

I can safely say on behalf of my colleagues that because of our assignments we not only received academic training but also physical training. At the Hugh Wooding Law School the fastest students were not only seen on our annual Sports Day but on every other Thursday at about 2:29 pm rushing to the office to hand in an

assignment. We would have to agree that Andre Sharpe from 6B, deserves a gold medal for his customary sprints towards the 2:30 finish-line. Regardless of what group you belonged to, as long as you were late you could depend on Sharpe to get your assignment in on time.

Then came our first year exams. The trauma experienced during that time will live for years to come. Even today some of us are still looking for extradition on the Criminal Practice and Procedure exam and no past paper could have prepared us for the melting pot of issues that were raised in each question of that unforgettable Evidence paper.

Upon advice from our predecessors and lecturers alike, we braced the stormy seas of Second year like diligent sailors chanting the mantra “ I must not fail ethics”. Ethics, that single course that was able to make the most confident law student question his or her intelligence.

Regardless of whether you were privileged enough to have maintained 20/20 vision throughout your previous four years of studying law, you couldn’t help but squint at each ethics question in search of the other five issues that you missed. As the Honourable Justice Weekes often put it “ Every word in the question is placed for a reason”. Her words rang true during the ethics exam, where many attempted to use context clues to determine the meaning of the word “pirogue” which, in spite of our endless leisure readings, most of us had never seen before that day.

And what about Mock trials; the tears, frustration and nervousness. Yet Hugh Wooding Law School produced some of the best mooters, participating and excelling in several competitions such as Margaret Forte Mooting Competition, The Stetson International Environmental Mooting Competition, The international Commercial Mediation Competition, Hamel Smith Mooting Competition, Price Media Law Competition and the annual CCJ Mooting Competition.

While we reflect on the struggles, we must also remember the good times; the activities hosted by the SRC, like the talent night, cocktail, games night, divali show and Sports day (Remember how the Staff's march pass left us in awe). How can we forget our island nights where we had the esteemed opportunity to embrace each other's cultures and cuisine. The famous pepper pot from Guyana, curry from Trinidad, Macaroni pie from Barbados and callalou from the OECS.

It is here that Lifelong Friendships were formed and Bonds forged; and for some, where life partners were met, whether in the library, by the table tennis board or in the classroom.

The memories that we created at the Hugh Wooding Law School remain dear to our hearts and undoubtedly can never be replaced.

Next stop: Gratitude Gap

I must acknowledge the persons who have been fundamental in shaping our law school experience and who have contributed in even the minutest way to our legal training. To those persons we are forever indebted and would like to express our sincere gratitude.

To the Principal and Senior Staff, thank you for ensuring that our journey here was a smooth one.

To our lecturers, tutors, staff of the legal aid Clinic, the administrative staff, our librarians, caretakers, security personnel and shuttle drivers, we say a hearty thank you. Under the pressures of the unforgiving workload, we may have neglected to show you the appreciation that you ought to have received. Today we say that we are grateful for your commitment, dedication and patience.

It would be remiss of me not to specifically single out one special person who was instrumental in the success of several students seated here today- Mrs. Holdip, thank you for being a beacon of hope to us, for being that source of inspiration when we were at our nadir. A visit to your office was like an oasis in the wilderness of our despair; you always revived our spirits with your words of encouragement and little sweet treats.

We must also specially thank a legal luminary, Justice Ventour, from whose unwavering support and guidance many of us benefitted. The principles you impressed upon us will remain with us as we form part of this noble profession; the most significant being to hold firm to our integrity.

To our family members and loved ones who are beaming with pride today; our biggest motivators and loudest cheerleaders; thank you for the love and support throughout this journey. We are grateful for the moral support and even more so financial support. This evening we are pleased to share the joy of our success with you. As Kevin Durant tearfully said when he accepted his 2014 NBA MVP award “mom you’re the real MVP”. Graduates lets give a round of applause to the MVP’s behind our success, our mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, spouses, siblings, and even children.

To our colleagues who became extensions of our families, thank you for being there for each other, for sharing all that you had; precedents, ideas and even food. We lived by the mantra that teamwork makes the dream work. At this point I take a few moments to say a big thank you to my group, 2B. It was a bumpy road for us being from 6 jurisdictions, studying our own law while cramped in one classroom but we never left each other’s side. Further, in the spirit of brotherhood I pause to remember our colleagues from 2B who are from the island of Dominica, we pledge to do all that we can to assist you in your strides towards restoration post Tropical Storm Erika.

Most importantly to our Heavenly Father we say thank you for maintaining our sanity and allowing us to see the closure of this phase and the beginning of a new phase. Without him, none of our accomplishments would be possible.

We are now at Success Street

Fellow graduates, today marks the end of our formal training. We have overcome many obstacles at Law School, had many seasons of preparation and are now fully geared up to fulfill our mandate. This journey was especially difficult for working students, overseas students and those with familial commitments. Today let us celebrate our success; let us give ourselves a round of applause.

However, we must remember that success is not final and so as we embrace the sunset of today's success, let us anticipate tomorrow's sunrise with as much fervor and passion as we did two years ago, when we entered the hallowed walls of the Law School. We must also remember the measurement of success is not by what grades you attained or how much you will make, but how many lives you positively impact and the legacy you leave.

Finally this brings us to our last stop; determination drive; on this road there are no dead ends.

Graduates we are not finished yet! While today is an accomplishment, the journey still continues. Most of us will be entering the workforce, some of us for the very first time. We will soon learn that legal practice is an entirely different arena. The transition will not be easy. Nevertheless, we are confident that Hugh Wooding Law School has equipped us with a solid foundation that will enable us to tread forward on this new path.

Some of us will be pursuing further education at premiere learning institutions within the region and around the globe. Whatever the course we choose to follow,

let us remember at all times to demonstrate resilience, moral soundness, humility and honesty. Proverbs states that a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold. In this vein, it is my hope that the name of each graduate here becomes synonymous with the words diligence, humility and integrity.

Richard Devos said, “ If I had to select one quality, one personal characteristic that I regard as being most highly correlated with success, whatever the field, I would pick the trait of persistence. Determination. The will to endure to the end, to get knocked down seventy times and get up off the floor saying, Here comes number seventy-one”. It is determination that allowed us to take those first few steps into the realm of law. It is determination that allowed us to continue, even after being wounded several times. And it is determination that has enabled us to walk out of this building tonight as attorneys- to- be.

And so I admonish you, my fellow graduates to go forth and carve an indelible mark in the legal profession in your respective jurisdictions. Never assume you know it all. Be open to counsel and guidance from seniors. And be sure to balance your career and your social commitments. After all, all work and no play certainly makes Jack, not only a dull and uninteresting fellow, but an equally unfulfilled one as well.

Now allow me to leave you with these final words. Steven Keeva once said, “Law is one of the great healing professions. While medicine heals the body and clergy heals the soul, law heals societal rifts”. Therefore I charge all of you today to be healers; healers in your homes, healers in your communities, healers at your workplaces or within the various learning institutions, healers wherever the winds of necessity may take us. For it is in the healing balm of justice that our democracies are built, and our peace and freedoms preserved.

I thank you.

Liz Joseph