



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

FEATURE ADDRESS

**THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND
SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE JENNIFER BAPTISTE PRIMUS

**CARIBBEAN CONFEDERATION OF CREDIT UNIONS (CCCU)
YOUTH CONFERENCE**

“CHANGING THE FUTURE THROUGH YOUTH CO-OPERATORS”

HYATT REGENCY TRINIDAD

Friday 15TH June 2018

SALUTATIONS

- Mr. Hally Haynes – President, Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions (CCCU) and fellow CCCU Directors
- Ms. Denise Garfield – General Manager of the CCCU
- Ms. Andrea McKenna James – Acting Commissioner for Co-operative Development
- Mr. Joseph Remy – President, Credit Union League of Trinidad and Tobago
- Teachers
- Students
- Mentors
- Members of the Media
- Fellow Co-operators
- Ladies and Gentlemen

A blessed Good Morning to all and Assalamu-Alaikum, to my Beloved brothers and sisters in Islam, who today are celebrating Eid Mubarak. Indeed you, my Islam brethren and sistren have endured during this time which only through innate perseverance, faith and discipline that you can celebrate today. We the people of Trinidad and Tobago join the Muslim Community in their completion of the period of Ramadan and pray that the joy emanating at the conclusion of this extremely symbolic sacrificial period may add to the value of the lives of all the citizens of this blessed nation.

As we begin today's proceedings, I am deeply honoured to address everyone gathered here today, particularly those who are poised to shape our future socially, economically and financially, our young people. Make no mistake young people, today, this moment; this occasion is all about you! I found it quite insightful that this Convention chose to begin with our youth under the theme of "*Credit Unions: The Power to shape the Future*", it shows the Credit Union Executive Body share my sentiments that it is the young people who are the movers and shakers of our society. To you young people present today, the task I place before you may be a herculean task, but I feel assured that you will be able to carry the mantle; not only for the Credit Union Movement, but for the whole of Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean and by extension the world.

Not so long ago, as a young person myself, I too had a desire to shape the future in which I wished to exist. Through persistence, prayer and an inert drive, I was able to deliberately contribute to a brighter tomorrow for myself and coincidentally, a better nation for you, young people to live in. And yes, the Credit Union Movement was one institution through which I obtained vital personal development and sharpened my professional competence. It was the Credit Union Movement that helped found *my* future as it was right here, within the constructs of the Credit Union, I formed many of my good traits that I continue to embody today. And believe me when I say to you, good traits formed at youth make all the difference in our lives! But how do we form these traits? My experience has certainly been that through the fear of God, obedience to my parents, honouring my elders, preserving my modesty and practicing humility, I have been able to enjoy the best that life has to offer and have come to realize that youth is not a time of life, it is a state of mind and I am indeed forever young!

My fellow young co-operators and credit unionists, your time make take many mistakes and missteps but your approach must be deliberate, strategic, and purpose-driven and never depart from sound values and principles. As Minister with responsibility for the Credit Union Movement in Trinidad and Tobago, I can comfortably say to you that you are on the right path. You are on the path of a Movement that is changing lives on a daily basis: the lives of persons with

disabilities; the lives of people stricken by poverty and marginalized by class; the lives of young people like yourselves who are seeking their place in this world. I therefore challenge you to live consciously and be aware of what surrounds you in this Movement. And as you young persons say...stay WOKE!

In Trinidad and Tobago, the Credit Union Movement has 132 active credit unions with over 600,000 persons controlling over US\$2 billion in assets. And yes I said 2BILLION US DOLLARS. Regionally, there are 299 Credit unions with over 2.2 million people controlling over US\$6.3 billion in assets and worldwide, across 109 countries, 68,000 Credit unions serving over 235 million people and controlling over US\$1.7 trillion in assets. That's even better than winning the Lotto which is an estimated 5.5 million!

In an era where constant change is changing even more constantly, the challenge to you to bring about change is to stay relevant. Relevance in how you think, relevance in the talent you possess, relevance in the creativity you exude, it is this difference shared with others that matters. It matters the most as you seek to achieve a distinct marking in a world that asks for diversity. While the world calls for diversity, I speak to three pillars that I believe is essential for success. 1 - Education – without a solid foundation the future is not sturdy, 2 - Co-operation – learning to work with others is critical to one's overall development and 3 – Ambition – without the drive to succeed you will not

achieve. I feel somehow that these words will not resonate with this audience here without a hashtag before it! So I repeat, the pillars for successfully shaping your future are hashtag #education, hashtag #co-operation and hashtag #ambition. Let me hear you'll say it now. *INVITE AUDIENCE TO REPEAT Excellent! Once you are able to pair these pillars with the purity of a sound character, your future and our world is destined to be a greater place!

My fellow co-operators, young and young at heart, the power of youth is the common wealth of the entire world. No segment in any society can match the power, enthusiasm and courage of young people. It is also often articulated that knowledge is power. Now ladies and gentlemen, just imagine combining the power of youth with the power of knowledge. This combination will surely be one to revolutionise. As young co-operators, you are also fortunate to be part of a global movement which promotes education, training and information as its core principles and with any progressive society these ideals illustrate that education empowers; education transforms; education develops; and most importantly education rewards! When paired with values which build character and solidarity we can build a movement. Even as Malcolm X articulated, "Education is the passport for the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepared for it today" Young co-operators, chase your dream and your future! Hashtag #education.

Technology has helped form a modern world of close relation. This can in no short measure be attributed to the impact which technology has made on our existence. Relationships are formed between people on the opposite side of the world within seconds either through the click of a button or the touch of a screen. How many messages have you sent in the last half hour? When did you last update your status or check for status updates? We now take for granted the differences and distances which have been established over centuries and view ourselves as one global people on a common platform called technology. It is on this basis that now more than ever, youth of the world should have standards and ideals in common. It is now more than ever, that youth should actively seek out common bonds. It is now more than ever that young people should co-operate. Hashtag #co-operation.

I often observe the paradox of our modern day existence; a world with the highest levels of connectivity in its history, yet with the greatest levels of greed, individualism and cutthroat capitalism ever experienced. The time is now to shape your future, my young co-operators. And co-operation is the key. It is the chisel to break through the barriers which block unity. Do not miss any opportunity to co-operate. Remember life is short, youth is finite, and opportunities are endless. Once you have found the intersection of where your passion and purpose meets potential for world-shaping positive impact, form a team which can help you realize the future you desire. And there is no better

place than where co-operation is put in practice, your Credit Union Movement. A Movement which continually illustrates that co-operation is always more powerful than competition.

Youth co-operators, the pillar of ambition is critical to your future world. Some describe ambition as a path to success. Others describe it as a passion of a great character, but all link it to persistence and perseverance. Let me ask all the young people here today, what is your ambition? Before today, even before this very moment, have you given it any thought? If not, I challenge you today to find yours! Hashtag #ambition. And this ambition does not reside in the verses of any rap artiste! We can each define ambition and progress for ourselves. The goal is to work toward a world where expectations are not set by the stereotypes that hold you back, but by your personal passion, talents and interests. Be a warrior when it comes to delivering your ambitions. For, a man's worth is usually equated to his ambitions. However, you must remember that big results require big ambitions and therefore the amount of change you experience is always based on the ambition you possess. So I challenge you to be bold in your national ambitions. If you desire to win the fight against poverty within the next decade, your ambition must be to educate the masses and find co-operative ways to combat this social ill. If you desire to improve moral standards in government and society to provide a strong foundation for good governance, your ambition must be to practice good governance as a co-operator and offer

your service when provided with the opportunity. If you want to shape the future through credit unions and co-operatives, your ambition must be to live by the values and principles which create the credit union difference. As a fellow co-operator driven by my own ambition and desire for change, I now challenge you young co-operators and credit unions to find your ambition. Hashtag #ambition.

It would be remiss of me in closing, not to pay homage to the excellent programme put together by the organizers of this event as a stride in the right direction toward building the sustainability of the Movement. I have also taken note of the relevant topics for discussion, particularly one surrounding social media and its impact on youth. I have always said that, like it or not, social media is here to stay. Social media is changing the way we communicate and the way we are perceived, both positively and negatively. Young people, it is instructive to remind you that every time you post a photo, or update your status, you are contributing to your own digital footprint AND personal brand. Likewise, your conduct, as a reflection of what your priorities and values are, reinforces your brand. So, be sure to build a positive brand for your present AND your future! AND be responsible, circumspect with your education via social media platforms, because the information you get from social media is not a substitute for academic discipline at all. Further I encourage all you young co-operators to utilize this occasion not only to learn, but also to network for a

greater future. I extend all the best wishes to this Youth Convention and also to the wider convention which will be rolled out on the shores of Trinidad and Tobago, finally after a wait of over twenty years. I anticipate that the outcomes would far exceed any of our expectations and know that this event would begin the work of deliberately shaping the Credit Union Movement of the future as the seeds of education, co-operation and ambition will bear in the hearts and minds of the future generation.

And in closing, I leave you with the words of T'challa of the blockbuster movie Black Panther "In times of crisis, the wise build bridges, while the foolish build barriers. We must find a way to look after one another as if we were one single tribe." Today we are the foundation for the Credit Union tribe.

The Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions (CCCU) deserve to be congratulated heartily for agreeing to the hosting of this Youth Conference. May God bless this Conference, the Convention and all of its leaders. May God bless the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. May God bless the Prime Minister, Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley and all leaders of Government across the Caribbean diaspora. Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow co-operators, my dear young people, I thank you.