

**Dinner And Awards Ceremony 40th Anniversary – José Martí School
Jamaica Pegasus Hotel
Saturday, January 14, 2017
7.00 P.M.**

SALUTATIONS

Chairman of the School Board, Mrs Patricia Fisher

Principal, Rev. Dr. Austin Wright

President, Past Students' Association, Mrs Marlene Lambert

President, J.T.A., Mr. Howard Isaacs

Excelentísimo Embajador Bernardo Guanche Hernandez

2. “Fué obligago aceptar su invitación generosa para celebrar contigo esa ocasión memorable.”

3. Who can believe – 40th Anniversary already?

And yet – the fierce and vitriolic attack, driven by the bitter ideological divide in the revolutionary 70's is still fresh –

but indelibly etched in our minds.

We have come a long way since then.

The gifts of Cuban schools, which were rejected by some, have now become part of the cornerstone on which so much of our present educational edifice has been built. So much of Jamaican dominance in the Sprints is due to one of them - G.C.Foster.

In these days, as we reflect on differences of the past, it is not that those in the vanguard for change have abandoned our fundamental principles and objectives. We are delighted that those who opposed it have now seen the light of day and are prepared to face the reality.

4. How welcome and remarkable it is that both sides of our House and Senate could pay due homage and well deserved tributes to

- El Comandante – Fidel Castro
- Delegation to Havana led by Prime Minister and Leader of Opposition

Tonight we salute the one and only Fidel who ranks among the greatest Leaders of our generation for his leadership in the Third World, his generosity and vision.

History has absolved him.

5. José Martí – embodiment of the struggle by the people of Cuba, Caribbean and Latin-America for freedom and sovereign independence.

School was conceived and designed to reflect the finest.

Boarding

Work Study Programme

Field – classroom.

“Trabajando y estudiando para ser el hombre (la persona) total.”

6. Not the night to be divisive – prefer to be charitable instead and therefore attribute no sinister motive to the drastic changes in operations of school – which occurred in 1987.

Let me therefore ascribe them to a reduction in the financial flows to the education sector as a whole.

Our education system has to generate skills for the workforce of today –

Hence – location in the centre of our industrial heartland.

- justifies the decision to focus on its role as a Technical High School.
- The fine example – adoption by Wisynco Group of Companies – should be commended
- It should be emulated.

8. Groups like Wisynco confirm my own rejection of the notion that corporate businesses should concentrate on profits only and ignore the social good.

In fact, they thrive on the social collaboration of human beings to succeed. Neither employers nor managers can succeed without trained workers in their factories or commercial operations.

They therefore have an enlightened self interest to invest in education. Governments should drive the locomotive, but they cannot undertake the journey alone. All of us must become engaged – including alumni who must give back something to their Alma Mater in return.

9. It is now widely accepted –

- International Lending Institutions
- Rating Agencies
- Business Community
- Increasing portions of the citizenry

Sound pillars for economic growth are in place.

At the same time –

- The fear of violent crime has never been more intense.
- The spread to areas which were once renowned for being peaceful.
- The high incidence in the capital of the tourism industry – which still represents the greatest potential for expansion and employment.

10. Those at the helm of the renewed drive for accelerated economic development, have reiterated the view that it will never be achieved and sustained in separation from what obtains within the wider borders of the society.

Hence, their emphasis on fighting crime and improving our Justice System.

It is evident that the economy thrives best in a field of social collaboration – that structure of interpersonal relations which defines

- the obligations, expectations
- that fosters the trust and confidence which exist among our people
- which reflects our habits, customs and ethics.

11. To attain the ideal to maintain the proper equilibrium, will involve the state, the church, the private sector, the labour movement and civil society working in harmony together.

But the greatest catalyst in all of this must be our education exposure and output.

Your Vision Statement “Success for a lifetime” is underpinned by your eloquent and holistic Mission Statement –

“To ensure that students are educationally grounded and empowered to strive towards excellence as innovators and entrepreneurs;

With the creative ability for economic and social development in a changing society.”

If we could fulfill those aspirations what a remarkably proud, peaceful and prosperous nation Jamaica would be.

What an impressive galaxy of stars you have produced.

Time to blow your own Trumpet.

12. I attended the farewell in Santiago – Antonio Maceo.

In this final tribute of farewell, one Speaker after another revealed what Fidel meant to them and pledged to continue the struggle –

What stands out most all the way home and today in my memory of that historic and solemn Ceremony – over one million people – The discipline.

13. Some advocate tougher laws, which would abrogate existing human rights. There is no doubt that there are areas where the urgency of legal reform is compelling.

New provisions which seek to prevent crime, penalties which befit the severity of the crime deserve urgent legislative action.

But in all of this, let us never encourage or allow those who are responsible to enforce the law being able to break it with impunity.

14. Whether it is a prayer for divine guidance – the Scripture –

“Faith without works is dead”

I will never relent in the cry for Values and Attitudes to be regarded as the cornerstone.

Dare we hope that Jamaica has reached that level of political maturity where we accept that a range of policies and programmes are so vital to the health and wealth of our country that consensus is imperative and partisan bickering is forbidden?

What matters most is not the name or title or who started it.

What we need is to fashion a new social culture which recognizes that discipline and mutual respect are at the very core of whatever we seek to do.

15. Tonight, as we celebrate this 40th Anniversary

(i) “Ask the Cuban Ambassador to convey:

Nuestra gracias en abundante al Presidente Raul Castro, su gobierno y el pueblo entero de Cuba para ese regalo sin precio.”

(ii) Congratulate the diligent students, beneficiaries of the experience and balanced education, who have passed through this noble institution and are now contributing in a meaningful way to the growth and health of our nation.

(iii) Renew the Pledge - “To be disciplined, diligent and earnest at work and studies so that the skills acquired will enable all its graduates to make a worthwhile contribution and foster the growth of our nation.”

Venceremos.