



Royal Bank

NEWS

Teens told to ‘follow your passion’

...call made by exemplars at JA/RBC student conference

Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, March 2018 – Follow your passion! That was the clarion call to 500 female students who participated in the 2018 Annual Student Conference (Female) hosted on International Women’s Day (March 8) by Junior Achievement of Trinidad and Tobago (JATT) in collaboration with RBC Royal Bank Trinidad and Tobago.

Held at Queen’s Hall auditorium, Port of Spain, the highly-energised session was sparked by dramatic, and inspiring, glimpses into life-changing experiences shared by members of an all-female panel of high-level achievers.

Feature speaker, Dame Pearlette Louisy, retired Governor General of St. Lucia, who noted that she was the first female Head of State in the English-speaking Caribbean, told the students that the story of her life was “achieving against all odds”.

“As a child, my mother always told me that whatever is your destiny, whatever is for you, not even the floodwaters can wash it away. Look beyond the constraints of the moment to the promise and hope of the future. I thought I didn’t have what it took when I was offered the position of Governor-General. Afterwards, people used to ask me how it feels to be a female Governor-General. I would answer that I really don’t know because I don’t know how it feels to be a male Governor General,” she said.

Titled “Understanding Me, My Value, My Opportunity and My Potential”, participants heard inspiring life stories and positive messages from a dynamic panel of presenters including women’s rights and children’s advocate, Diana Mahabir-Wyatt; entertainer Nikki Crosby; Avonnel Hector-Joseph, Team Leader, Is There Not A Cause; and Terez Lord, CARICOM Youth Ambassador (Trinidad and Tobago) and Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network Country Coordinator. The inter-active session was chaired by writer Franka Phillip.

The engaging presenters encouraged the secondary school students to be the architects of their own destiny.

"I feel privileged to have been part of this exercise. It was very inspiring. The presenters all spoke from their heart and told us how they succeeded in life in spite of experiencing great hardships. I have also learnt to value my peers and other females and that I can really be what I want to be," said Providence Girls' Form 4 student, Yelena Lee Young, who added that her career goal is to become a teacher in languages.

The support of RBC Royal Bank as the flagship sponsor for the student conference, which was lauded by Junior Achievement's Executive Director J. Errol Lewis, underscores the bank's investment in the development of young people, the empowerment of women and its commitment to diversity in nation-building. The Junior Achievement/RBC collaboration represents one dimension of the bank's corporate youth development platform, which is underpinned by its signature project, the RBC We Schools programme, which encourages youths to develop leadership skills, apply teamwork in pursuit of common goals and foster care for the community and the environment.

The Annual Student Conference is aimed at preparing young people to succeed in a global economy by providing them with knowledge, skills and meaningful exposure to inspirational mentors to reinforce their desire to be successful in life.

Using her comedic skills to the hilt, Nikki Crosby recalled the dismay she felt when she told her family and teachers that she wanted to do comedy. "They told me to do Math and English. In my report cards, my teachers wrote that I talked too much. Now, all these teachers have to pay to hear me talk," Crosby pointed out, to resounding applause. The acclaimed entertainer made a stirring appeal to the young females: "Go after every single thing you want to do. Find your passion, and when you find that passion, it will not be work for you after that. But don't let any boy throw you off your track."

Youth advocate Terez Lord, just 24 years old, called on the young women to be the "narrator of your own narrative". She told the attentive audience: "There is a call to action for us to get up and get going. We must get our foot in the doorway. We must take our seat at the table. We are in charge of our own destiny. Today, we have more women in decision-making positions. More women are breaking the glass ceiling. In our local context, as we observe International Women's Day today with its theme "Push for Progress", we definitely have something to celebrate with our first female President to assume office in a few days."

Explaining that her passion throughout her life was to ensure that children and women were not abused, Diana Mahabir-Wyatt stated that women were the "most endangered species" in Trinidad and Tobago. Disclosing that she was sexually abused at age 11, Mahabir-Wyatt said she was afraid to speak out and kept quiet for a long time. The experience, she added, galvanised her to become an advocate for the rights of women and children. "You need to support one another. Women will always be your most

effective and best support. Always speak up for your rights. Go after what you want to accomplish and what you want to be. And do it with passion,” she said.

Noting that she was distressed with the number of women murdered in Trinidad and Tobago so far for the year, ITNAC founder and Team Leader, Avonelle Hector-Joseph, said the country could not give up on anyone. “We all have important roles to perform. In my own little way, I realised that I could actually change the world. We must all resolve that we will leave this place better than we met it,” she told the young women.

Winding up the conference, JATT Executive Director, J. Errol Lewis, appealed to the students to “take what you have learnt here and apply it to your life”. He offered profuse thanks to RBC Royal Bank for its partnership in the organisation’s youth development programme, and also commended the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business, the management of Queen’s Hall and JATT Board members and staff for their sterling contributions to the Junior Achievement vision

JATT Chairman Anthony Pierre and Dawn Richards, Director, both attended the conference.

#