

## **Transcript - Prime Minister Rowley delivers the Feature Address at the School Improvement Project (SIP) Rally**

The Worship, the Mayor of Port of Spain, Councillor Keron Valentine, my Cabinet colleagues, the Minister of Education, Mr Anthony Garcia and the Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Dr Lovell Francis, my other Cabinet colleagues, members of Parliament, all Principals, teachers, Permanent Secretaries, other functionaries, parents and of course the most important resources of Trinidad and Tobago, the most important people here today, children of the greater Laventille area.

You have to go pass good, go pass better to be the best and Laventille is the best.

We all have different talents, we are not all the same but we are all very valuable. You see, when the Ministry of Education put this program together, somebody said because I am the Prime Minister I must have a full range of activities on the stage. So I couldn't decline, I had to carry out instructions. So at this point in time I am required to sing. I can't sing and I can't dance but I could talk. So I want to talk to Mr Hinds that the next time he tells you that poem about Jim, Mr Hinds, leave out the part where the lion eat Jim. At least you could have left that to our imagination because today we brought the children here to go home with memories, memories that will stay with them all the time but it might be important for them to know that if you run away in a zoo in this world that is a jungle, like Jim, the lion could eat you. That is the moral of that story.

But I am particularly pleased today to see so many of you here and to see that your teachers and your parents made it possible for you to be here to enjoy a day away from the classroom and the school environment. A day that will stay in your memory because you did something different. Because when you do something different sometimes, the very fact of it being different stimulates you to remember it. So today you've come from the hills of Laventille all the way down to the mangroves of Beetham, from Belmont to my tower, to South East Port of Spain, to gather here as a group of primary school students who we do not believe are too young to be impressed that life in Trinidad and Tobago is to be acknowledged and valued. To those of you who are in secondary school, where you embark on this journey of learning for tomorrow and preparing for the profession that you want to be. I heard that many of you would like to be something that we would like to find out. "Who wants to be a teacher?" "Who wants to be a doctor?" "Who wants to be a Nurse?" "Who wants to be Prime Minister?" "Who wants to be a computer technician?" "Who wants to be a good citizen of Trinidad and Tobago?" "I am proud of my country Trinidad and Tobago!" "I am proud of my Laventille home!"

So you see, if you believe all that you just said, we are on the right track. We know that everybody in Trinidad and Tobago and outside of Trinidad and Tobago know of and about Laventille largely because of what you do there, who lived there, what goes on there, so you well known. So today some things might not be happening right, a lot of things will be happening right. But if it is that you want to make that place called Laventille the place you want to be proud of, some things will have to change and that's why you are here. I am holding out to you young people here today in the Grand Stand that you are the change that will come to Laventille, you are the change. If you agree with me and believe that you will be that change, let me hear you say "I am the change, I am the future" and just in case you might forget that, let me tell you what we are going to do. Mr Hinds, Mr Leonce and myself, we have agreed that you will be allowed to wear that pledge on your chest, wear it proudly. So we are going to make it possible to make sure that every one of you who was here today will get a t-shirt pointed "I am the change" and you will wear it in Laventille and in Trinidad and Tobago. We give you that promise. So sometime later on you will get your t-shirt saying "I am the change" because change is on the way.

All of you know me as the Prime Minister but I wasn't always the Prime Minister. I was like you, just like you, probably even worst off because I started out way back across the waters in Tobago. But of course I wasn't from the town in Tobago, I was from a village away from the town in Tobago and that's as far away as you can get from where I am now in front of you in the Queens Park Savannah. I came from Mason Hall in Tobago. We were so far away in Tobago that people used to laugh at us because we didn't have a sea. Everybody in Tobago has a sea you can walk to, Mason Hall doesn't have a sea but we had the mountains, we had the rivers and we had a great future. But then when I came from Tobago as a little boy about your age, primary school age, to meet my mother, she was living in Laventille so I started off my Trinidad life in Laventille. So you see I was on my way by way of Laventille. And then we moved from Laventille to Morvant. "Do you know where Morvant is?" "Do you know where Coconut Drive in Morvant is?" "Do you know where Cosmo Street is? That's my street." So I know just like you the nights and days in Taporite Street, Matapal Street, up and down to Never Dirty that was home. But nobody knew then that that was a home of a Prime Minister. The same way we don't know exactly who, but I know somewhere in this gathering today is an Olympian, is a test cricketer. Is a national footballer, a national netballer, a doctor, a lawyer, a plumber and maybe at least 1 Prime Minister. I know that because Laventille has always produced and you will keep on producing for Trinidad and Tobago.

So today I want to take you back to our foundation as a nation. We became a nation in 1962 and the Prime Minister at that time, Dr Eric Williams gave our country our nation at birth, those 3 words that kept coming up over and over here today; discipline, production and tolerance. Discipline tolerance and production in that order. It was not by accident but by very deep thought and great promise that those 3 words were given to us as our nation's watchwords.

They were meant for me who was your age at the time, it was meant for those who came soon after and is meant for you now. Those 3 watchwords are still as relevant and as valuable today as they were in 1962. Discipline- and it means that you at the individual level, whoever you are, wherever you are, whatever you intend to do, that is where you are in control. You are in control of and you are responsible for your own personal behaviour so you can subscribe on your own to be discipline. The word tolerance means that you will recognise, respect, be patient with others who may not look like you, who may not sound like you, who may not be going in the same direction like you, who may not have come from the same place like you, tolerance means respecting other points of views, other persons, other locations.

If we are to survive as a location, as a people, as a family, as an individual, we have to be productive. So it does not matter whatever your profession is, wherever you end up in the national economy, you are required to be productive. But you cannot be productive if you are not discipline and if you are not tolerant to be able to work with others and for others. So to be a productive person in a productive nation we have to be a disciplined person and a disciplined nation and to do so we have to learn together, we have to work together. It was a symbol of the beauty of this nation where today a Laventille school group of Afro-Trinidadian students came on this stage and gave us a scintillated production of an East Indian dance only in Trinidad and Tobago you will see that. And that we find in our National Anthem, the country where we will be disciplined, we'd be tolerant, we'll be productive. We also say every creed and race find an equal place.

Laventille students your parents have very high hopes for you, your teachers are working very hard and have very high hopes for you, your government has very high hopes for you and this nation is depending on you. Where there is indiscipline, it will require resources to deal with it, so every act of indiscipline whether it is breaking a window or taking up a gun, it requires a consumption of resources to respond to it. Every act of indiscipline requires an extra dollar or two to respond to it and the corollary is that every hour of good discipline, every life of a disciplined person, we save resource to do other things. You young people let nobody tell you what you should want to be in this country, you must tell yourself that. Once you set that target for yourself let nobody tell you that you can't get there because of where you came from. You set out to demonstrate that in your life, as in my life, is not where you come from, it is where you want to go and how you set out and intend to get there.

I want to leave with you today, your promise to me to be the change in Laventille. Because if you grow up to be the change in Laventille then what you are saying here and what you are saying to me today, is that you, this generation of young people lined up here in the Savannah today, you are saying that the country will be different, the country will be better, because you, this generation, the next generation present here with us and the ones to come, you have decided that you will be different.

It's important that you make that commitment because you burst with pride when you hear of those from your district who went before and accomplished success of one kind or another on the sporting field, in education, in art and in culture, you feel that pride but you have a responsibility to set out to do that too so that those children who will come after you will call your name and identify your success as their sense of pride as a location, as a community, as a nation. That is your responsibility. Your responsibility is to let your parents be proud of you, your community be proud of you, your teachers be proud of you and every other child born and living in Laventille coming in the future will be proud of you from how you have conducted your life.

So go forward today wearing in your heart and on your chest, that commitment to be the change for the better, be the future for the better and when you do that I would know that I would have brought you here today to remind you that you are the most valuable assets of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. Be the change for the better. There are some things that you and only you can do and those things you must do for yourself starting with being disciplined, having an ambition to be better and not having anybody put limits on what you can become because of where you happened to have been born or where you are growing up. There's nothing available to other children elsewhere in the country that will not be available to you.

So today I want to thank Mr Garcia and Dr Lovell Francis and the Ministry of Education for taking me up on the challenge of bringing you here for the simple reason of focusing your minds on yourself and your future and for heightening this responsibility of the State to the special circumstances of Laventille. Special people need special attention and Laventille you are getting and will be getting that special attention.

So today, whether you are from Belmont, from the hills of Laventille down to the valleys of Never Dirty, down to the mangroves of Beetham, to the streets of East Port of Spain, over to the hills of San Juan, let me hear you say "We are being the change". I want to hear you say the word "Change" "I am not afraid of change" "I am a proud citizen of Trinidad and Tobago" "Laventille here we come!"

Thank you, enjoy the rest of the day and go forward and make Laventille and Trinidad and Tobago proud.