



Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
60th Diamond Jubilee -

"Sharing the passion, looking back and embracing the future"

**FEATURE ADDRESS
BY**

HER HONOUR DEBORAH THOMAS FELIX
**PRESIDENT OF THE INDUSTRIAL COURT
OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**Andre Kamperveen Hall, Centre of Excellence, Macoya
Saturday 14th November 2015
6.00 p.m.**

Madame Chairperson

Mr. Stephen Williams, Acting Commissioner of Police

Ms. Ann Marie Alleyne-Daly, Deputy Commissioner of Police

Members of the executive of the T & T Police Service

Members of the First Division of the T & T Police Service

Members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

Women Police Officers

Members of the Media

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

There is a Chinese proverb which says that “women hold up half the sky”. In tracing the trajectory and the experience of women in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, this is not only true of the sky but certainly of this, the land of our birth, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the first admission of women into the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service comes at a pivotal

time in our country's history in terms of the development goals we have established for ourselves. These are of course in tandem with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), of which SDG 5 - to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls - and SDG 11 - to make cities and human settlements safe, resilient and sustainable – are directly relevant to our activity today.

Trinidad and Tobago has made remarkable strides with respect to these indicators and the result is that to be a woman in this era, in this country, in this region and in this world at this time in our history, is to be a witness to an as yet unfolding but very exciting history. More accurately, and much more than a witness, we are in fact the *makers* of history. In actively rebuilding and recreating our communities and our societies anew, we currently have what many women of yesteryear did not: *agency*. Simply put, the ability to direct one's future.

This, ladies and gentlemen, women of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, is what this anniversary signifies, as the progress of women in

all spheres is one of the most significant hallmarks of the 20th and the new 21st century. As women, you live in a time when you are more powerful and you are more recognized for your efforts than women who lived decades and centuries before.

The gains made, the dreams realized and potential fulfilled, are in many cases, far beyond that which was originally envisioned. As women who live in the English-speaking Caribbean and in a country where development gains in health, education and infrastructure have afforded a quality of life that has allowed our women and men to make their mark on their communities, their country, their region and the world, we have been bequeathed a boundless gift. It is left now for you as an individual and as a female officer to find yourself, know who you are, what you believe in and where you want to go.

I submit that perhaps no other area has the potential to advance you confidently in the direction of your dreams as education has and will

continue to. In Trinidad and Tobago, the statistics on tertiary education and university graduates tell the story of the consistent lead of women over men in education. We have been speaking about this for over the past twenty years with some amazement and a degree of wonderment almost as if it is the most remarkable phenomenon. It is in fact now the norm, not the exception and the time has come for it to be treated as such. Women achieving and excelling in their profession should not be interpreted as an aberration but as the reward of hard work and excellence.

As such, let us note today as the day when we agreed that when our first female Commissioner of Police is appointed, it would not be because she *happens* to be female but rather because she is the consummate Police Officer and will represent the best, brightest and every other superlative the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has to offer.

As women we must therefore guard against the tendency to marvel at our achievements as we sometimes unwittingly and unconsciously do.

Avoid the amazement at our success in education, law enforcement, health and wherever else. Let us press on and maintain our focus and bear in mind that when the men were leading in education and in every sphere of life no one was amazed: it was accepted as normal. So we as women should note our strides, be mindful of what we have accomplished against sometimes very daunting odds and less than perfect circumstances but don't stop to marvel. *Keep it moving.*

While we note with pride what women are doing and the progress they have made and continue to make, we of course want our men to be successful. Thus, as mothers, sisters, aunts and mentors, we should seek to continue to consistently encourage our young men to be leaders, productive citizens and partners in our march toward a more perfect union and society.

I cited the example of women and education for two key reasons. Firstly, the developments made with respect to women and education in the last 50 years directly parallel those of women in the Police Service. Secondly, the experience of women in the Police Service have

highlighted the importance of the other pillar of security: Human Security, which Education itself facilitates and which female police officers have played a central role in promoting.

In the case of the first, in order to put the achievement of this 60 year celebration of women police into perspective, we need to look at the question of gender in Trinidad and Tobago. I am sure if you ask men if women are treated equally by society a large number would say yes, while if you ask women a large number would say no. This is by no means an accident or mere product of flawed perception. It reflects the fact that many – some women included - assume there is little left to be done or achieved with respect to gender parity. Yet, there is.

Indeed, more women are qualified today and are participating in the workforce as compared to decades ago. In many instances traditional stereotypes persist and perceptions pervade the way women are treated in the workplace, the access women have to certain jobs, and in some cases, influences the application of the legal mandate of equal pay for equal work.

If we look across the wide spectrum of jobs in this country and examine the employment landscape, we find women almost everywhere, yet there is a widespread concern that they are still not treated equally in the workplace and that equality among the sexes at the workplace remains elusive. First there is the tendency to hire women to do jobs which are considered “trivial” or “minor” while we ensure that men are employed in areas which are perceived to be “important”.

Secondly, women still find themselves in far more vulnerable positions than their male counterparts in the workplace. Their employment remains concentrated in non-standard, low-skilled work with insufficient income. This has a deleterious impact on the sustainability of our families and our communities, where, although in many ways, we remain matrifocal, the traditional model is the family based on a male breadwinner. This model remains very prevalent although we have a rising number of single parents – typically women - who are the sole provider of a family income.

Moreover, women are very under-represented in senior decision-making positions. While today’s women are often highly qualified, they

remain under-represented at the top levels in business, and in leadership roles in organisations. Those who are at the top tiers are often regarded as icons and more insidiously, as exceptions. These women at the top usually have to be more qualified than the male, have a more impressive CV than their male counterparts and spend more time at work than their male colleagues.

In essence, they constantly have to over compensate to earn the position unlike the male counterparts who may earn it with a lot less effort.

I wish to emphasise that I am not advocating for a person to be guaranteed a job because that person is female. What I *am* saying is that when there are persons who are qualified and competent to be considered for a job, that women must have an equal chance as their male counterparts at the interview and throughout the selection process.

A wise employer who practices equality in employment creates a diverse workforce with employees who are capable with seeing things

through the lens of a male and from the viewpoint of a female. Diversity is always an asset to an organisation for as Stephen Covey, the noted motivational speaker observed,

“Strength lies in differences, not in similarities”

When we examine how gender plays out in Trinidad and Tobago, we see the imbalance in the workplace. There are members of society who will also not give the kind of recognition and respect for female police officers as they do their male counterpart. These women are professionals who were trained alongside men yet the perception is that they are not the real “macoy”. In our Trini parlance “They are not real police.”

I daresay that sixty (**60**) years ago that problem would have been even more inescapable. I am not a female police officer but I can envisage some of these situations where if the job required a female police officer’s intervention, people may have told her to call for back up or she may not have been viewed as a real police officer and consider her to be less competent. They may have even become flirtatious with the

officer during the course of her performing her duties, thereby trivialising the hard work she is doing and personal risk she has been placed in, depending on the circumstances.

The recruitment of women in the Police Service has also underscored the limited view of security that obtained prior to that landmark day in 1955. An examination of the early issues women police treated with provides us with a hint of this. Women police were trained to do all types of police work, but in the early days were specifically trained to deal with offences coming under the Children's Ordinances such as: Cruelty to children beyond control and Juvenile Delinquency.

For the first three years of existence there was no focus on specialised duties, and women police were posted to work in different areas of policing such as the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the Vice Squad, patrol around cinemas with a view of preventing school children from attending shows during school hours and patrols outside parks and schools.

Eventually, the Women Police Branch was established and Standing Order 93 came into effect. As a result of the formation of the Women Police Branch, separate units at Police Divisions and Stations were formed, and the introduction of a senior woman police officer at each Unit or Station became necessary. Female police officers were subsequently assigned to lecture at schools and organizations on Road Safety, Juvenile Delinquency, Child Abuse, and Drug Abuse. In addition, School Patrols form part of their main duties.

The senior woman police in the Out Division automatically assumed the role of Juvenile Court Prosecutor. I am sure some of you may remember when I presided at the Juvenile Court my prosecutors were female, namely Ms. Margaret Sampson-Brown and Mrs. Ferguson.

Also, with the introduction of female police officers, whenever there were reports of sexual offences their assistance and presence was requested for the taking of statements from the victim, taking victims for medical examinations and to the court.

Understanding the early days of female police officers and how their very presence and their work transformed the nature of policing, is critical to our appreciation of not only their trailblazing efforts and personal sacrifice, but also our awareness of the concept of Human Security. This term speaks to the truism we have always known and of which the African proverb – *It Takes A Village to Raise a Child* – reminds us. Human Security is viewing security issues not through the lens of the state-centric approach but rather also taking into account the security of individuals, their protection and their empowerment.

While the term came into use in an ongoing effort to expand the traditional definition of state security, I want to also expand on its use here as I think it will allow us to focus on the transformative nature of diversity in the Police Service. This is particularly relevant in view of the proliferation of leadership studies that have accompanied the trend toward more transformational leadership that emphasises empowerment and collaboration, traits traditionally associated with women.

While it is true that for a variety of reasons women excel across all fields at nurturing a competency they are traditionally thought to be better at, the more important competencies in understanding the transformative power of female policing and female police leadership, is the fact that women take initiative, display integrity and honesty and persistently drive for results.

When viewed in combination with the fact that the inclusion of female police officers brought an inevitable focus on social and community issues such as family law, juvenile matters and sexual offences that had hitherto been not afforded the level of attention they required, it points to an expanded understanding of what individual security means and how the absence of this can impact our efforts to create and maintain safer communities. For this, the women of our Police Service deserve our unqualified applause and our continued support.

On 29th August 1955, eleven women were recruited in the Police Service after they completed a period of training. Today, of the six thousand, six hundred and twenty two police officers, one thousand six hundred and twenty six are female.

Of these, there are twenty-six females among the First Division Officers – one deputy Commissioner; three Assistant Commissioners; three Senior Superintendents; eleven Superintendents and nine Assistant Superintendents. In addition, there are nineteen Inspectors; twelve Sergeants; and one hundred and forty-nine Corporals. Moreover, there are several females now heading strategic Divisions, such as the Tobago Division, Western Division, Mounted and Canine Branch, Financial Investigation Unit, Human Resource Branch and Finance Branch.

Evidently, Ladies and Gentlemen, the die is cast. There is no turning back and the women of the Police Service have made an indelible mark on not only the Service but also the wider universe of law enforcement and on the communities they have faithfully served.

I salute all members (men and women) of the Police Service for your sterling contribution to the development of law enforcement in Trinidad and Tobago, for the unsung work you have often done and continue to do in building and sustaining stronger, safer communities and for the

unqualified role you play in continuing to expand the concept of policing and the administration of justice. May you continue to move from strength to strength and may you always remind us of the timeless lyric of David Rudder's *Dedication*:

"Out of a muddy pond, ten thousand flowers bloom."

May God bless you.

I thank you for listening.