



## **Address By**

**Mr. Kenneth Gordon**

Chairman, Integrity Commission of Trinidad  
and Tobago

on the occasion of the

***Launch of Primary and Secondary  
Schools 2013 “Do Right Champions”  
Competition***

At the  
Queen’s Hall, St Ann’s.

Thursday September 26<sup>th</sup> 2013

I am very pleased to welcome you this morning as we come together for the 3<sup>rd</sup> DO RIGHT CHAMPIONS Competition for Primary and Secondary Schools.

We are most appreciative for the on-going collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Division of Education Youth Affairs and Sports of the Tobago House of Assembly. They have been very supportive and we publicly thank them for their valuable assistance.

We also thank First Citizens for their enlightened support. They have provided the prizes and awards which are essential for the success of the Competition and we hope that the relationship between First Citizens and the Commission will be a continuing one.

The Integrity Commission is now committed to making the DO RIGHT CHAMPIONS Competition an on-going fixture of its yearly calendar for we have an immensely talented body of young people in this country who must be mobilised to build high standards of behaviour and to promote Integrity as a way of life.

My young friends it is not uncommon today for those of you who try to do the right thing to be ridiculed and even harassed by school mates who have found life to be so much easier when they make their own rules as they go along: sometimes to test how much they can get away with; whether it is with someone else's property or otherwise sometimes by disrespect; or by downright rudeness. Many who play that game are forced to learn the hard way but only after much pain. That's why we are delighted by your presence here this morning and seek to emphasise the importance of developing Integrity in your lives. That word Integrity combines qualities of truth, character, consistency, and principled behaviour and cannot exist in the absence of strong personal discipline. It represents a way of life which many talk about but few live even in our extra ordinarily talented Society and at the highest levels. Now we must change those few to the many.

We must make it a commitment to advise and guide others where we can but ultimately to do whatever we have to do to uncover those who do the wrong thing. We must also emphasise the important role that our teachers play in lifting the quality of conduct in our schools for they see so

much more than you think they do about behavioural patterns. The Integrity Commission will shortly be meeting them to seek to expand their support for further collaboration.

It is apparent from the quality of short stories, poems, drawings and scenarios produced in the various Districts that the variety of backgrounds from which students come play an important role in their levels of preparedness and that this must be taken into account. With the guidance of teachers, consideration is now being given to undertaking a survey which will give a snapshot of school performance by Education Districts. We expect such information to deepen our reach and the effectiveness of our collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Tobago House of Assembly.

Let me share with you a comment made by our panel of judges for the CHAMPIONS Competition held in 2011. Some 1,400 entries had been received and the panel which comprised retired teachers and Curriculum officers reported that in some instances students did not have a firm grasp of precisely what the term Integrity meant. A special appeal has therefore been made to teachers to more fully explain the concept and eliminate

whatever uncertainty may exist. They also expressed concern about undue influence from parents and even plagiarism of some of the material submitted. There was tracing, photocopying and borrowing from existing publications well beyond the students age group.

We therefore appeal to parents: to limit any assistance you give to your children who submit entries to the DO RIGHT CHAMPIONS Competition to guidelines only. To go further than that would be unfair and counterproductive for your child must be made to clearly understand that Integrity is something that makes you do what is right even when there is no one watching. So parents please if you must assist limit your assistance to guidelines only.

And this prompts me to refer to two recent questions which were posed to me by the Editor of the weekly Catholic News which referred to an earlier public statement I had made. The relevant extract of her E-mail states: "The question really is Integrity and if he or she does not have it he or she should not be an Integrity Commissioner in the first place. The simple fact is that try as we might we cannot legislate for integrity. What is integrity? And how is it obtained?"

My response which I now share with you was “There are many and varied interpretations of Integrity. Much depends upon the context in which the word is used. The statement “we cannot legislate for Integrity” was used to reinforce that integrity cannot be obtained by Rules or Regulations or by Enforcement of any kind. Integrity is really a way of life that is a living commitment to do the right thing in all circumstances and at whatever personal cost.

My answer to the second question: How it is obtained? May appear even more simplistic but you have asked for my personal guideline which is “First make the personal commitment and then pray to the Almighty each day for the guidance and strength to do the right thing.

So much remains to be done but I am assured that our building generation is up to the task. You are the future of our country which you must increasingly learn to respect and love without apology. Your role in promoting Integrity is an important part of Nation building.

We must do whatever we can to Build our Nation and not ever have any regrets or apologies about trying to do so.

Let me end by proudly referring to a recent incident which has come to our attention.

A young fourth form student Pet-Joe Caines of Belmont Secondary School found a wallet that would have been so easy for him to keep. Pet-Joe who has 8 siblings and lives in the Sea Lots area resisted that temptation and made it his business to find the owner of the wallet by presenting it to his School Principal. This was done quietly and without fuss and it was only by chance that this matter came to our attention.

Today we want to present a letter of appreciation and thanks to Pet-Joe Caines together with a small token from the Staff of the Integrity Commission for this outstanding example of integrity. We have called it the DO RIGHT AWARD AND WE SALUTE Pet-Joe Caines for this excellent example. I ask you to stand and let's all give him a healthy round of applause.