

Last week I suggested that a name is selected to remember an individual or place at a specific time due to the recognition of a significant action or achievement. Documenting this remembrance constitutes history. During the lifetime of the person or place, and action or achievement, it is our memory that keeps these pieces together. When forgotten or changed, history is dealt a fatal blow.

Chaguanas Government Primary School was dealt such a blow in 2003. The Ministry of Education accepted the protests over the dilapidated conditions of the then 67-year-old school building in St Thomas Village, and in September 2003 placed the students at a new school constructed at Orchard Gardens, Chaguanas, completed in June that year. From newspaper clippings, it appears that the new school was supposed to be called Chaguanas North Government Primary School, but residents of Orchard Gardens North Housing Settlement were upset that the primary school was built to accommodate the children from their more than 300 homes. It is clear that the Ministry recognised that another school was available and unoccupied, despite being built allocated for others, and took the expedient route. The original school was then demolished, the remains carted away, and the site has remained that way since.

I recall a few years ago, Queen's Royal College was in a dilapidated condition, and decisions had to be made. Would a decision to demolish been a part of the consideration? Of

course not! Funds were raised to construct temporary rooms / building, and the restoration of the original building undertaken in phases. Couldn't a similar approach been taken by the Ministry. Or, why were the students and teachers of the Chaguanas school not told that they were being temporarily located at the new Orchard Gardens North Primary School site until a new school was rebuilt at St Thomas Village.

Because of myopic decision-making by the Ministry, a significant portion of our history has been completely erased.

Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul is a world-acclaimed writer and the first Trinidad-born person to be honoured with the award of a Nobel Prize (for Literature in 2001). In 1989, Trinidad and Tobago awarded him its highest honour of the Trinity Cross (now called the Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago).

Sir Vidia attended Chaguanas Government School. He wrote, "*...every day I walked past these eternal-seeming things - to the Chaguanas Government School.*" And in another place, "*...they were teachers. One of them was my very first teacher at the Chaguanas Government School; I remembered her with adoration for years.*"

Mrs. Zaida Hosein-Rajnauth, former Head of the Public Service, Trinidad and Tobago between 2001 and 2004. Her primary education was obtained at Chaguanas Government Primary School. In fact, her father, Mr. Ibrahim Nazar Hosein was a principal at the

school. In 2004, Mrs. Rajnauth was awarded the Chaconia Medal, Gold.

Joseph Coombs represented Trinidad and Tobago at two Olympic Games, competing in the 400 metres. He was a 400-metre finalist in his second Olympiad in Moscow 1980. His 400-metres and 4×400-metres duels with Cuban star of the 1976 Olympic Games, Alberto Juantorena, at the CAC Games in Colombia in 1978, are well chronicled. Coombs attended Chaguanas Government School.

Ignatius Seveirano Ferreira heads the Furness, Withy and Co., group of 16 companies. Though born in Belmont, he grew up in Chaguanas, and attended the Chaguanas Government School. He is the recipient of the Humming Bird Medal Silver.

Dr. Lenny K. Saith, one of our early qualified transportation engineers went to Chaguanas Government School. He is former Managing Director of Trintoplan Consultants, as well as a former Minister of Planning.

Reginald Dumas received his early academic education at the Chaguanas Government School. He was the second child from County Caroni to win a Government Exhibition to secondary school (Queen's Royal College).

He has also been a Visiting Fellow at Oxford, and holds an Honorary Doctorate from The University of the West Indies. He was one of the first group of diplomats in the Trinidad and Tobago Foreign Service in 1962, serving Trinidad and Tobago in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and

North America. He left the Foreign Service in 1988 as Ambassador to Washington and Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States to become Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and Head of this country's Public Service. He has also represented CARICOM. He is the co-founder of the Trinidad and Tobago Transparency Institute. In 2004 the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, appointed him as his Special Adviser on Haiti. I have not seen his name listed among the recipients of a National Award.

Dr. Errol Furlonge received his early academic education at the Chaguanas Government School. He was the first child from County Caroni to win a Government Exhibition to secondary school (Queen's Royal College).

He served the Government as Chief Education Officer from 1974 to 1988, and as Permanent Secretary from 1988 to 1992. I have not seen his name listed among the recipients of a National Award.

Clarry Benn, retired Executive Director of the Unit Trust Corporation taught for a while at Chaguanas Government School. I was a student there at that time.

There are many others, I am sure, but these come readily to mind.

In 2006, the Mayor of the Chaguanas Borough, Dr. Surujrattan Rambachan, launched Volume 1 of "The Contributors – Profiling the Builders of Chaguanas." The last

three of the persons approve were included in that document. Volume 2 was also completed, but I do not yet have a copy. These are very important products in recognising and protecting our history, and I am grateful to Dr. Rambachan and the team at the Borough for this.

The Ministry of Education needs to develop strengths in preserving and protecting our educational history. They also need to develop cardinal bearing skills – I am still confused over the renaming of the Chaguanas Junior Secondary School and the Chaguanas Senior Secondary School. These two schools on Helen Street are east and west of each other. Yet, inexplicably one was renamed Chaguanas North Secondary School and Chaguanas South Secondary School.

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