

Good morning, Principal, Vice Principal, Members of Staff, Specially Invited Guests, Parents, Students, and especially, my Fellow Graduates. I am Shayne Ramdath, the valedictorian and proud representative of the graduating class of 2022. Seven years ago, we thought we had reached the pinnacle of success, didn't we? Passing for our first choice school\_ Naparima College. As I stand here today, and reflect on our journey, I must say that it has been one guided by light and love as through this institution, we have become so successful and continue on towards even more achievements as some of us have moved to the world of work and others are concentrating on furthering our education.

It's unbelievable to think that 7 years have gone by so quickly, it seems as though it was just recently that we all entered naps for the first time. I fondly remember our first day, we all just sat quietly in our respective seats, waiting for the first bell to ring, at 730 in the morning! We were all so shy, so scared to leave our seats and go outside of the classroom. The classroom was filled with silence, this is most likely the quietest we've ever been in our time at naps. We seemed so out of place, that a then form 2 student had to urge us to leave our classroom, otherwise we probably would have spent another 20 minutes sitting in awkward silence.

This awkwardness quickly faded, and we became the loud, outgoing Napsmen that we are, and love being today. We quickly integrated into the naps culture and soon began partaking in traditions such as shouting "half day "after a student received any achievement or walking to the Lewis street ground or carpooling to Mannie Ramjohn stadium to watch our prized Naparima College football team in action. Our loud nature also got us into a bit of trouble: in form 3 it was common practice for an entire class to be made to stand outside the classroom. It became a habit that the classes of 3P and 3S especially enjoyed. I may or may not have caused the class of 3P to be put out a couple of times.

Another part of the Naps culture that became a major part of our life is our cohesion, commonly referred to as "being our brother's keeper". This was especially evident in our form 4 and 5 business subjects which often are split into 2 separate classes. Here, similar coursework was given to both classes, but at separate times. Coincidentally, the class who took the exam after did extremely well. This item of culture also extended even when we couldn't attend physical school due to the pandemic. When it came to correcting homework over Google meet, it may or may not have been common practice for homework to be divided between students and compiled on the class WhatsApp chat. Many thanks are to be given to one student who allowed my class to prosper with this. He has specifically asked me to refer to him as wonky in my speech.

While this speech so far has been focused on humour, I must speak seriously for a bit. The pandemic gave our class a major disadvantage. We have had to adapt to online classes for 2 and a half years, multiple delays, and restructuring of our examinations, and lived in fear of contracting the dreaded covid-19 virus, which has taken more than 6.5 million lives. It certainly was not an easy time, but we did prosper. I think you, my fellow graduates, must

congratulate yourself on this. Even if we may not have all achieved that we had aimed to attain in the CXC exams, we have done exceptionally well, and I am certain that better is yet to come.

We have had many successes throughout our time in Naps, from being victorious in many chess tournaments to having people represent our national sports teams and even many scholars. We owe these successes to our parents, family, friends, and the staff and supporters of Naparima college.

To the Administration, librarians, office staff, maintenance staff, past students, and especially, the teachers, you all have ensured that Naparima college can convert shy adolescent boys into men of good character (character). You all have provided an excellent education, both formal and informal, and have given us a place where we can express and enjoy ourselves. During the pandemic, you all devoted your time to assist us and learned so many new skills just to ensure that we would continue learning in a safe environment. The class of 2022 extends our deepest gratitude to you all. You truly gave your best to inspire us to illuminate our own paths with determination and persistence.

To the parents, you've cared for us, provided for us, sacrificed for our benefits and gave us a haven from life's stresses. You've done your best in raising us and have allowed us to grow into these fine young men. You all have stood by us for 19 years, through all our trials and tribulations, and for this, the class of 2022 extends our deepest gratitude.

I personally want to thank my parents and teachers for all that they have done for me, and in doing so, enabling me to stand on this podium and give this speech. Mrs. Gyan. Mrs, Pardasie, Prof. Manohar, Mrs. Nandlal, Mrs, Trehan, you all have made a huge impact on me and I cannot thank you all enough for what you have done.

To us, the graduating class of 2022, we should be celebrating our victory. We now move on to different avenues, be it work or further education, and must face new challenges. Our lives aren't going to be similar, but we will all face difficulties of some form, and it is imperative that we take what we learned from naps and implement it to be triumphant. I urge you to continue to "walk gently and lightly on your path and leave a trail of lights so that others may find their way."

I thank you.