

## **Kevin Greenidge: Press forward to be a better you**

Remarks by Dr Kevin Greenidge, Governor of the Central Bank of Barbados, to the 2024 Barbados Youth Advance Corps National Transformation Initiative (NTI) Advanced Initiative, Bridgetown, 30 August 2024.

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It's awesome to be here with you-the 2024 Barbados Youth Advance Corps National Transformation Initiative (NTI) Advanced Initiative-before you begin your technical /vocational programmes at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute of Technology, Barbados Community College, or BIMAP.

I want to share my story with and give you some words of advice that I hope will help you become the best you can be as you move forward. I wish to do this, not just because I think my story interesting, but because I know that I was once where you are now, and I hope my experience inspires you to be a better you as you open a new chapter. That's why I've titled my talk today: "Press Forward to Be A Better You" borrowing the NTI's "press forward" slogan.

Let me take you back in time. The year was 1985 and I was at the end of my first year in 5th Form, and I was about to finish Alleyne School without any certificates to my name. I was like many of you, unsure of what the future held. But I knew I wanted more. I assessed my situation and decided I needed to go to 6th Form at Harrison College; and of course, for that to happen I needed some CXC certificates, not just some but at but at least seven. I took a deep breath, marched into my principal's office, and asked for a second chance. And guess what? He gave it to me. He allowed me to press forward; I got eight ones and went off to HC.

From that moment on, I decided to pursue my dream of becoming an economist at the Central Bank of Barbados. I found out what I needed to do, planned, and went all in. At UWI Cave Hill, I pushed myself harder than ever, earning 20 As. It wasn't easy-I had to give up a lot of distractions-but it was worth it.

Here's what I want you to take away from this conversation: set your goals, have a vision and a positive mindset, work hard, give back, and lean into a brighter tomorrow. It might be tough now, but the rewards will be worth it.

### **Setting Goals and Achieving Them**

It's not every day that life offers a second chance, especially when it comes to education. This opportunity to start fresh is like being handed a key that can unlock a brighter, more promising future. Embracing this second chance means acknowledging the past but not letting it define you. It's about understanding that everyone makes mistakes or faces challenges that may set them back. What truly matters is how you rise up, seize this opportunity, and use it to better yourself. Second chances are rare and valuable, and they are a sign that you have the potential to achieve great things.

Taking advantage of this second chance requires commitment and a willingness to change. You need to understand that education is a powerful tool that can open doors to countless opportunities. It is the foundation upon which you can build a successful life, one filled with possibilities that might have seemed out of reach before. By committing to your education now, you are setting yourself up for a future where you can pursue your passions, contribute meaningfully to society, and lead a life that makes you proud. So, grab hold of this opportunity, work hard, and show yourself and the world what you are capable of achieving.

A crucial step in making the most of this second chance is setting clear and achievable goals. As CEO, I can tell you that setting goals is something I do every day. Whether it's for my day, my week, or my entire life, having goals gives me direction and purpose. Writing down your goals, internalising them, and constantly thinking about them will help keep you focused. Every morning, remind yourself of what you want to achieve. Visualise your success, sleep on it, dream about it, and then wake up ready to take steps toward making those dreams a reality.

This practice is a key part of pressing forward and becoming a better version of yourself. Life may not always be easy, but with a clear vision of where you want to go, you'll find the strength and determination to overcome any obstacle. Use this second chance wisely, set your goals high, and never stop pressing towards them! Remember, it's not just about being better than someone else; it's about being a better you than you were yesterday.

I have lived it. I have experienced it. When I was in school, I wasn't a top student. In fact, I struggled quite a bit. But something clicked for me when I saw a classmate of mine succeed. If he could do it, I knew I could too. I asked for a second chance, and I grabbed it with both hands, set my goals and worked hard to achieve them. And here I am today, standing before you as the Governor of the Central Bank of Barbados.

Don't just take my word for it, even Paul in the Bible speaks about the importance of having a goal and pressing on, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize..."

## **Embracing a Vision and Positive Mindset**

One thing that's helped me through life is having a clear vision and a positive mindset. I constantly visualised where I wanted to be and believed that I could get there. And you can do the same.

Imagine yourself reaching your goals. Picture yourself succeeding. Start each day telling yourself, "Yes, I can be the best cosmetologist, mason, artisan, whatever". You can be. Trust me, those positive thoughts will help you overcome any challenges you face. And I refer here to physical and people obstacles. Before I get out of bed on mornings, I do my affirmations. I reflect on how blessed I am and I give thanks for those blessings. I affirm that I am and who I am. Trust me, those affirmations help me to conquer the most difficult of situations, overcome adversities, and show me how to optimise the opportunities that present.

My staff here would tell you I practise positivity in thought, word, and deed by consciously choosing to focus on the good in every situation, no matter how challenging it may seem. It involves training your mind to see opportunities instead of obstacles, finding gratitude in everyday moments, and believing in your ability to overcome difficulties. In your words, aim to uplift and encourage those around you by offering compliments, expressing gratitude, and speaking kindly to yourself and others. Your deeds should reflect this positive mindset through acts of kindness, compassion, and support. Whether it's helping a friend in need, volunteering your time, or simply sharing a smile, these actions create a ripple effect, spreading positivity and making a real difference in the world. By aligning your thoughts, words, and deeds with positivity, you not only improve your own outlook on life but also inspire and uplift those around you.

## **Work Hard**

To be the best at anything, you've got to put in the hard work-there's no way around it. Trust me, nothing good and sustainable in life comes without hard work. Remember when I talked about the second chance I got from my principal at Alleyne School? I decided then and there that I would succeed, no matter what. So, I buckled down, worked hard, and kept my eyes on the prize.

Throughout my life, whenever I set a goal, I knew it wouldn't just fall into my lap. I had to earn it. That meant making sacrifices. When I was at university, I had a big goal: Although only 12 As out of 20 courses were required to be awarded first class honours, I wanted to get all As. To do so, I had to make some tough choices. I skipped the parties, cut down on the limes, and dived deep into my studies. I got 20 out of the 21 courses I took, and it happened because I put in the work.

Recently, a former central bank governor reminded me how I burned the oil at midnight and in wee hours of the morning to ensure I completed any work assignments. I am intentional or some may say intense.

There's actually a lot of research that shows how important hard work is for success. Ever heard of Malcolm Gladwell? He's an author who wrote a book called *Outliers*, where he talks about the "10,000-Hour Rule". Basically, to become really good at something, you need to practise for at least 10,000 hours. That's like putting in five hours a day, every day, for two years straight. Sounds intense, right? But it's true-successful people live by this rule. Even if you're naturally talented, you still need to put in the time and effort to master your craft.

Even the Bible has something to say about hard work. Colossians 3:23-24 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." In Proverbs it says "Do you see a man diligent in his work? He will stand in the presence of kings. He will not stand in the presence of the unknown". But it also says "All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty (Proverbs 14: 23:). In other words, give it your all, and you'll be rewarded. Pressing forward is easier.

So, if there's one thing you take away from this, let it be this: hard work should be your guiding principle. It might not be easy, but it will definitely be worth it.

## **Giving Back and Helping Others**

Now that I've reached a certain point in my career, I'm committed to giving back. That's part of why I'm here today-to share my story and help inspire you. I also founded the Kevin Greenidge Charitable Trust to support students who need financial help to achieve their educational goals. This is one of the most fulfilling acts in my life: helping others, sharing, contributing to people achieving their goals, helping them to press forward.

But it's not just about me-it's about you, too. When you reach your goals, remember to help others along the way. Giving back not only helps those in need but also enriches your own life. It is a most fulfilling and rewarding action because it connects us to a sense of purpose and community, reinforcing the idea that our achievements are most meaningful when they also benefit others. By giving back, we develop empathy, gratitude, and a deeper understanding of the needs around us, which not only enriches our own lives but also fosters a supportive environment where everyone can thrive. Success isn't just about what we achieve for ourselves; it's also about the positive impact we can make in the lives of others and our communities. As you press forward, give back in meaningful ways by volunteering your time to local charities, mentoring those who need guidance, sharing your skills and knowledge to help others grow, (sharing your knowledge helps you to cement all that you know) or simply being kind and supportive in everyday interactions. Even small actions, like helping a neighbour or supporting a cause you believe in, can have a big impact. By giving back, you will contribute to a cycle of positivity and success that benefits everyone, creating a stronger, more connected community. Again, a reference from the good book: "A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed".

## **Lean into A Brighter Future**

As you stand at the threshold of a new chapter in your life, I know it can feel overwhelming. There are so many challenges out there-peer pressure, crime, and even self-doubt. But here's the good news: you have the power to rise above it all. See all of these challenges as opportunities.

You've been given a second chance to improve your education. You can lean into a brighter future by embracing this opportunity with enthusiasm and determination, like I did so many moons ago at the Alleyne School, at HC, and at university level. You can start by setting specific, achievable goals that align with your passions and interests, ensuring you have a clear vision of what you want to accomplish. Investing time in your studies, seeking help when needed, and actively participating in class can help you make the most of your days at the BCC, SJPI or BIMAP. Beyond the classroom, you should explore extracurricular activities and vocational training that align with your interests, which can provide valuable skills and experiences. Building positive relationships with teachers, mentors, and peers can offer support and guidance, making the journey more manageable and rewarding. By maintaining a positive mindset, staying focused, and being resilient in the face of challenges, you can transform this second chance into a solid foundation for a successful and fulfilling future.

It won't always be easy, but with resilience and determination, you can achieve greatness.

## Conclusion

Thank you for letting me share my journey with you to show we are all capable of being better. A special thanks to the NTI for working with BYAC to conceptualise and execute this programme that gives our young people a second chance at life in an era when they face such uncertainties, difficulties and negativities. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, I got a second chance as a teenager and have proven through my success that people deserve another opportunity to be able to press forward.

To the parents in the room, I urge you to fortify your support for your children as they begin a new chapter. They are taking advantage of this second opportunity to improve their fortunes. They will need all the help they can get to stay on track and not falter. That support could be financial. Or it could be motivational or spiritual. Be there for them in good and in difficult times. You must be their biggest cheerleader. And you must show them they can achieve what may seem impossible, and encourage them to persevere and stay the course. Parents, you have a tremendous role to play if your children are to be the best they can be. They are counting on you. The BYAC is counting on you. I am counting on you.

And finally, to you students, this NTI/BYAC programme is like the mustard seed. It's small but could mushroom into something huge by unearthing or creating the many vocational and technical skills this country needs to build new industries or expand existing ones to propel Barbados' economic growth and development. So, students, this programme is not only contributing to your personal development but is also supporting national development

Seize the opportunity and in doing so I urge you to set your goals, have a vision, work hard, give back, and lean into the challenges; see them as opportunities. I believe in every single one of you. I know you have what it takes to achieve great things. So, embrace these principles, visualise your success, and most importantly, believe in yourself. The future is yours-go out and make it amazing and be the best you! As you hear the NTI say, just press forward.