



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

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October 6th, 2019

MEDIA RELEASE

MEDIA SENSATIONALISM, HEADLINES AND THE CRUMBS OF CONTROVERSY

I am forced, yet again, to respond to what appears to be a deliberate attempt by a media house to discredit and/or malign both myself and perhaps the office in which I sit, for the purpose of 'newspaper sales.' This is not the first, and certainly would not be the last time, I am certain, both my image and/or my name has been used as 'clickbait.' As recently as last week, an image of my wife and I was also recently used in another article, which gave an impression separate and apart from the related article.

Today's headline and attendant image in the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday, titled **'Doubt over Gary Degree,'** certainly provides the false impression, that there are questions related to the legitimacy of my current Master's degree in Security Management. Granted, in smaller font, the subtitle relates the article to the actual story, which has nothing to do with my substantive degree. Naturally, the attendant comments following the placement of the headline and image on the newspaper's social media platforms are followed with 98% comments related to the false impression of the legitimacy of my qualification, and 0% comments related to the story's actual article.

I am led to believe, this is in no way a coincidence, as this headline comes mere days after the statement by the Cabinet relating to Commissioner of Police requiring a Master's degree related to the field. A decision of which I agree, considering I am a holder of said degree by the University of Leicester [attached]. As such, one is led to believe the rationale for such an inflammatory headline is

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simply this – to inflame a contrary opinion, whilst raising questions and ultimately, querying the credibility of an individual, in this case, myself.

Further, if persons were to go on to read the article, they would note I was one of a group of persons who were approached to be recognised for work undertaken. This recognition came in the form of an Honorary Doctorate. I accepted the invitation and token of an award, as any civilized and decent citizen would do, and thanked the organisation for the appreciation. I made the decision not to make this a public gesture. I trust, the newspaper, in their haste to throw cold water on the organisation bestowing the award would have done significant due diligence before attempting to discredit those who would have sought to grant these awards. The many other citizens who were bestowed awards of one kind or another were deeply moved, that this or any organisation would have taken the time, effort and energy to recognise the work they would have been quietly undertaking over years in their various communities. The awardees ranged in age, and sector and represented a wide cross-section of unrecognized hard workers in our society. Again, interestingly enough, you would never see or read about many of these hard-working persons, nor would you hear of the stories of their impact on society, simply because it may not elicit the same level of ‘bacchanal and sensationalism’ as placing my image along with an odious headline.

This is not the first time that this newspaper has deliberately published a misleading headline earmarked to discredit me.

Just a few weeks ago, as the Commissioner of Police, I made a comment to clarify a matter whereby the public was only receiving parts of the facts leading to the arrest of someone, so I quoted what was in the Charge report of that individual, which was information that any member of the media could have acquired, but did not. The attorney for the defendant, then submitted a media release, voicing his concern of me stating " the facts", yet this same newspaper takes the view of one defence attorney to put a front-page headline of " Gary's mischief. It is hoped that this newspaper does not see the truth as mischief.

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Whilst I appreciate the various and important roles of the media, I trust the media also appreciates the impact sensationalism has on the persons to whom they target. Whilst I understand bacchanal and negative news sells much more than positive and uplifting stories, I trust the media will also appreciate the role they share in the spread of such stories and the potential impact the spread of negative and many times fake news may result in. Whilst I know freedom of the media is enshrined in democracy, I also trust that the media would utilise this freedom with a higher purpose, simply not one, bent on getting the next dollar up from their competitor, as sometimes, the bigger picture is certainly more newsworthy than the bits of bacchanal or the crumbs of controversy.

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END

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