

THE NATIONAL GAS COMPANY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LIMITED (NGC)

NGC Bocas Lit Fest Launch

Venue: Angostura Box, QPCC

Date: April 27th, 2016

Time: 6:30pm

Remarks by Ronald Adams

Vice President, Gas Transmission and Distribution

Dr. The Honorable Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, Minister of Community Development, Arts, and Culture

H.E. Mr. David Prendergast, High Commission for Jamaica

H.E. Senor Guillermo Vázquez Moreno, the Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba

H.E. Dr. Lutz Görgens, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany

H.E. Mr. Jorge Rosado La Torre, the Ambassador of the Republic of Peru

H.E. Senor José María Fernández López de Turiso, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain

Ms Marina Salandy-Browne – Founder & Director Bocas Lit Fest

Deryck Murray, President, QPCC

Dane Darbasie, Vice-President, QPCC

Board Members of the Bocas Lit Fest

Board Members and Executives from NGC

Distinguished Members of the Media

Other distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening,

Good evening

The sixth NGC Bocas Lit Fest is proof that a great idea can only get better. This year's festival is unusually long, as it includes the first Latin American and Caribbean Literary Film Festival. Also, the festival is observing of the 400th anniversary of the death of two literary greats, namely William Shakespeare and the Spanish author, Miguel de Cervantes. Both authors will strongly feature. As you can see, the NGC Bocas Lit Fest is not just a national event; it has become a regional one.

It is a festival that acknowledges the longevity of our creations, and that true artistry endures beyond death. A recent example to support this would be the death of Prince, a man whose poetic lyrics and defiant challenging of narrow social prejudices helped to shape a generation. The wave of sorrow that poured forth following the news of his death is yet another example of the power that the artist has over the way we think and feel.

I would like to draw your attention to our venue tonight, a most appropriate one since we are celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Queen's Park Cricket Club. The anniversary is being marked by the production of a commemorative book, which is sure to appeal to both bibliophiles and sporting enthusiasts alike.

The goals of the NGC Bocas Lit Fest go beyond the aesthetic pleasure it offers. We also attempt to promote the creative arts as a viable industry. A few years ago, if you were to ask any creative person — whether they be writer, poet, artist, singer or actor — what was the response when they first voiced their intention to make a living off their talent, many would have told you the reaction was nothing short of scepticism.

Gladly, there has been considerable change in the attitude. Granted, there is still much to be done to actively encourage our 'creatives', even from a young age, to set their ambitions high by putting in place mechanisms that will allow them to access the training, materials, and experience they need to attain their full potential.

As Caribbean people, we often create our own space and pace. We are overflowing with rhythm, with song, with dance, with colour, and with words. Despite our relatively small population, the Caribbean is home to two Nobel Laureates for Literature. I refer, of course, to Derek Walcott – born in St Lucia and resident mostly in Trinidad and the USA, and V.S. Naipaul, born in Trinidad and resident in the UK. The creativity of our people is probably what we are best known for worldwide, and it would be imprudent not to cultivate this abundant natural resource.

The reality that Trinidad and Tobago is not immune to the effects of economic troughs suggests that we as a people need to look to non-traditional sources of income, such as in the creative industries, and in our own way begin the move to diversification of the economy away from sole dependence on 8 to 4 jobs. Just as the energy industry needs to innovate, evolve and operate on a different level, so, too, do our creative industries.

I draw this comparison between diversification in the energy sector and the creative sector because it speaks to what NGC has been advocating and facilitating in both areas. For years, NGC has spearheaded or supported downstream development within the energy sector so that our country can benefit even further from our natural gas and oil resources.

By the same token, NGC has heavily invested in community development through our Corporate Social Investment programme. Each year, we strategically invest in areas like sport, education and training, youth development, environmental awareness, and the arts.

These are carefully planned investments that pay bountiful dividends, created by the concept of shared value. That intersection between society and corporate performance exemplified by:

- improved performance of our athletes at the regional and international sporting levels, owing to our investment in track and field development;

- the improvements in communities throughout the country where NGC has constructed or refurbished recreation facilities;
- the self-reliance of micro-businesses that have benefited from NGC-sponsored training;
- the creation of employment in rural communities through our reforestation programme where, through responsible stewardship, we replant equivalent hectares of forested areas cleared for pipeline infrastructure.

As we continue the shared value concept, let's now also consider the dividends earned from NGC's sponsorship of the Bocas Lit Fest since its inception in 2011, and the addition of several elements such as the South and Tobago editions, which allow visitors to enjoy books and stories, meet writers, showcase their talents, and improve their craft through workshops. Then there is the Children's Festival, which provides children with the opportunity to contribute to stories and see their names and ideas in print through the story books created from their imagination. Consider the boost to the self-confidence of some of these children!

In short, investment in our communities, investment in our country reaps the biggest dividend of investment in national development.

So it is in this context that I wish every success to the writers, poets, and all other 'creatives' gathered for the 2016 edition of the NGC Bocas Lit Fest. Thank you for your contribution to the cultural collective. Indeed, without teamwork, collaboration and partnership, this beautiful product could not have been shared with so many local, regional and international participants.

We have enjoyed the opportunity to work with the Bocas team on this project, which has grown beyond our expectations, and which we believe, under the astute management of founder Marina Salandy-Brown, still has new and exciting chapters to be revealed.

We thank the media for their enthusiastic coverage and we look forward to their continued assistance in spreading the word!

Finally, to all the festival-goers and book lovers, especially the children, we anticipate your continued enthusiasm and support of the Festival. This year's Bocas is going to be even more fantastic than previous ones. I know I am looking forward to enjoying it, and I'm sure you are too.

Thank you.

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