



The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited

Launch of NGC's National Heroes Project 2018

May 9th, 2018 | Stollmeyer's Castle

Speech by Mark Loquan, President, NGC

The Honorable Dr. Keith C. Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Mrs. Rowley

Senator the Honourable Brigid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Mr. Newman George

Senator the Honorable Franklin Khan, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries

The Honorable Colm Imbert, Minister of Finance

The Honorable Anthony Garcia, Minister of Education

The Honourable Nyan Gadsby Dolly, Minister of Community Development, Culture and The Arts.

Member of the Diplomatic Corps

Mr. Noel Garcia, Chairman of UDECOTT

Ms. Gillian Bishop

Mr. Martin Daly, Chairman of the P.A.L.M. Foundation

Members of the Board of the PALM Foundation

Mr. Hasely Crawford, Sport Ambassador and Trinity Cross Holder

Mr. and Mrs. Wendell Mottley

Members of the Stollmeyer Family

Colleagues in Energy

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Members of the Media

Good evening.

It is my singular honour to welcome you and bring opening remarks this evening, on behalf of NGC, as we launch the 2018 edition of NGC's National Heroes Project. Ask a child to name a popular hero and many will return with Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, maybe Martin Luther King, or quite likely, a superhuman of 'Avengers' fame. Iconic heroes, all of them, but they do not belong to us.

NGC is a state enterprise that has built a world-class business on the industry and talent of **local** people, and we truly value the human capital of Trinidad and Tobago. What we as a people have been able to achieve in various fields of endeavor – energy, sport, music, art – is regarded with awe and respect the world over.

However, as a country, we too often fail to recognise and celebrate our own. The NGC National Heroes project, in some small way, is intended to teach our children to recognise and celebrate our own by having exhibitions such as these open to visits by students from all schools and walks of life. The men and women who have given their lives in service to this country may fade from memory, but through these projects, we intend to immortalise them with tribute.

This is a cornerstone of NGC's National Heroes Project - an annual campaign celebrating individuals who have, through their work and achievements, brought glory to our country, enriched our culture or helped define who we are as a people.

Our children need to know their names. I think in Pat's own words, the thread that runs through everything we will be doing as part of this year's instalment of the Project, defines our mission perfectly: *'Until all have crossed, none have crossed and some we need to carry'*. Our job will not be complete until all our young people are civic-minded citizens with an appreciation for the people who made us.

The National Heroes Project was launched last year with an exhibition honouring Olympic legend Hasely Crawford. I would like to recognise Hasely's presence with a round of applause. This year, we move on to a daughter of our soil - a woman of such distinction, who has served this country and

our culture so selflessly, in so many diverse realms, we cannot conceive that she sits on the sideline of our collective memory.

I speak of Dr. Patricia Alison Bishop – Trinity Cross recipient, teacher, visual artist, historian, intellectual, musician, and environmentalist. Many would say without hesitation that the qualities that define a hero - courage, nobility of character, achievement and selfless service – describe Pat as perfectly as they do any super hero.

Pat was a person of incomparable talent. She was no *ordinary* ‘genius with a paintbrush’ or ‘gifted musician’ – Pat distinguished herself in the Arts at a time when very few women were doing so.

That alone makes her a model for our girls and young women who continue the fight against stereotypes and gender oppression. Of course, the importance of Pat’s work goes beyond who she was. She encouraged artists in all walks to go back to ‘first principles’, to move away from imitation and create original works that could stand apart from the crowd. This emphasis on local creativity, originality and innovation , which pervaded her own work, is what made her a truly visionary artist.

It is a lesson in art with relevance to broader society and it was her belief that we did not always need foreign validation to find worth in and appreciate our unique, indigenous culture and talent. In her words: ‘Every so often there are some big things you have to try. It’s risky, of course. But somehow, somebody has to give Trinidadians a sense of their own capacity’.

Pat is perhaps most famous for her pioneering work with the Lydians – who were sponsored by NGC from 1991 to 2014. Particularly impressive was her formation of the Lydian Steel orchestra, which was a completely literate steel ensemble. Music literacy in the pan fraternity is a passion I shared with Pat, who served as a founding Director of the Music Literacy Trust, and I remain in awe of the orchestra’s astonishing classical repertoire, having accompanied the Lydian Singers in several classical performances. The fact that we have a group of pannists capable of such musical achievement is nothing short of extraordinary – and it speaks volumes about the woman behind the vision.

The only thing more remarkable than Pat's ability was her fierce patriotism. Through her art, Pat was very vocal in expressing her love of country and her defence of our traditional culture. At NGC, we have many of Pat's pieces along our corridors, which I pass by every day. There is one I've come to know very well. It is an ode in mixed media to 'long-time' pan and Carnival, composed on canvas as a vibrant Pouli. The piece recalls that time in our history when Carnival and Panorama would play out among the Savannah Pouis. Alongside this piece hangs a rusty steel drum - a symbol of the forgotten ancestors of the shiny modern pan, and of all the elements of traditional culture that have been lost to technology and modernity.

The nostalgia of the piece is moving - Pat's tribute to the past that shaped us, that we must never let die. Beneath the piece is written, "NGC salutes the late Pat Bishop as an artist who sought to capture the essence of our Trinidad and Tobago culture, while calling for the preservation of the originality that made us outstanding on a global scale". **It is a daily reminder of the need for our National Heroes Project to preserve our local talent and the stories behind our icons.**

Pat's final collection of paintings, *She Sells Sea Shells by the Sea Shore*, which we are fortunate to have on display this evening, will say more about the woman and her worth than I ever could. There will no doubt be some sadness that she is not here to share the spotlight with her work. But no sadness yet. For now, joy – profound joy that this project has taken shape. I am so excited to see the events planned in her honour.

I know that those who visit Pat in galleries, listen to Pat in song, or discuss her legacy in intellectual forums will be moved, as so many others have been, to emulate her life and celebrate her for the national heroine she was.

I take the opportunity to thank her sister Gillian and the P.A.L.M. Foundation for their efforts to keep Pat's achievements, struggles and life alive and ensure that future generations know her name. NGC is pleased to partner with you on this valuable project and we look forward to working with you towards the successful staging of all the events on the calendar.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you. Enjoy your evening, and safe travels home.

I would now like to invite Mr. Martin Daly, Senior Counsel and Chairman of P.A.L.M. Foundation to the lectern.