

The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited

Speech

Opening of 2012 NGC Bocas Lit Festival

By

Maria Thorne

President (Ag) NGC

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am delighted to welcome you to the NGC Bocas Lit Festival. Now in its second year, this is the region's premier literary festival. It is described as "Caribbean in focus and international in scope". You could use much the same phrase to describe NGC. As you know NGC is the custodian of one of Trinidad & Tobago's most valuable natural resources. Over the last two years, many emerging energy rich countries have been seeking to do business with us because of the success we have had with our business model of development. As a result, we are always interested when there are other initiatives that make a difference locally and take the T&T brand internationally, and show off our citizens' professionalism, talents, and drive. The NGC Bocas Lit Fest promises to do just that.

As a state enterprise, and in our attempts to be a thoughtful corporate citizen, NGC is committed to supporting initiatives that are crucial to the development of Trinidad & Tobago. We have a particular passion for preserving indigenous art forms. We also like to get involved in "legacy" projects such as the NGC Bocas Lit Fest.

That is, our sponsorship helps build a foundation for events that will flourish well into the future, and which create meaningful mementos. Good literature on the shelf, stimulated creative people, and education outside of the school halls ... these are the souvenirs we consider meaningful.

In the arena of Youth Development, Arts and Culture, NGC quietly but purposefully gives support where it is needed and important to the people of this country. We are well known for our two-decade sponsorship of the Lydians. But did you know that every year we fund many of the unsponsored steel bands? Without our contribution, they could not make it to the stage. The intense competitiveness of Panorama, through music, is a positive force in communities, and for young people. NGC is involved with the Music Literacy Trust, and The St. Augustine Chamber Orchestra. You will find us in the Tobago Heritage Festival, in the Trinidad & Tobago Film Festival, in the San Fernando Junior Arts Festival, and in SanFest. We have even sponsored the publication of the Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago because we wanted the children of this unique nation to have access to their personality through words that will not be lost to future generations.

Likewise, the NGC Bocas Lit Fest is unique because of its focus on rewarding good writing, and promoting the pleasure of the written word. Returning literature—and the notion of reading for pleasure—to public discourse, has the potential to stimulate a culture of

reading in the region generally, and in Trinidad & Tobago specifically.

Through the NGC Bocas Lit Fest, a sea of change can take place. This festival, founded by the redoubtable Marina Salandy-Brown, who is ably supported by a dedicated organizing team, aims to broaden our cultural capital, foster a greater interest in reading and writing, and celebrate the Caribbean's literary achievements... all of it happening in a festive atmosphere. We welcome such efforts in an environment in which the emphasis on learning and reading has shifted from the ephemeral to the practical, from the dreamer to the realist. The ambitious, wonderful works that elevated so many of our literary greats to their finest achievements are no longer recognized as prized items in the libraries of our institutions, or our schools. We do not reach out for them in our personal leisure time, or download them on our Kindles. In a world of texting and tweeting, where the hieroglyphs of SMS have already overtaken our school children's written and spoken grammar, the NGC Bocas Lit Fest is building a sea wall against the tides of expedience, impatience, and superficiality.

On behalf of NGC, thank you to Marina and her team for inviting our involvement. We are enthusiastic about all that you have planned. I thank you all for being here today, and I hope you enjoy the NGC Bocas Lit Fest to its fullest.