

NEWS: Winners of CHOGM 2009 Essay Competition announced

The Royal Commonwealth Society and the National Secretariat for CHOGM 2009 are delighted to announce the winners of the CHOGM 2009 Trinidad and Tobago Commonwealth Essay Competition.

The winners were announced at the conclusion of the Commonwealth Youth Forum at a ceremony introduced by the Hon. Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Launched in September 2009, the Competition asked local students to "Write a letter to a visiting Commonwealth Leader about what Trinidad and Tobago can teach the world".

The first prize winner in the 14-18 age category is Christineil Thompson from Naparima Girls High School. She will be flown to London in March 2010 to carry the Trinidadian flag at the Commonwealth Day Observance at Westminster Abbey. The Observance is attended by HM The Queen and is the largest inter-faith celebration in the United Kingdom.

Her winning essay is a letter to the Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd. Christineil writes about the rich cultural and racial diversity of Trinidad and all that this can teach the world.

The first prize winner in the Under 14 age category is Kara John from Northgate College. She wins a laptop computer donated by sponsors DigiData systems and Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Company.

Director of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Dr Danny Sriskandarajah said: "We were delighted with the number and quality of essays we received. It's encouraging to see that so many Trinidadian students are able to articulate their country's role in world affairs so powerfully. We hope visiting leaders take the opportunity to read some of these wonderful essays and learn about Trinidad and Tobago."

Notes to Editors

Trinidad and Tobago Commonwealth Essay Competition: The aim of the Competition is to encourage the young people of Trinidad and Tobago to engage with the Commonwealth and CHOGM 2009. It gives them the chance to have their voice heard by Commonwealth leaders and encourages them to aspire towards high standards of academic scholarship and creative writing.

On 26 November, twenty highly commended entrants took part in creative writing workshops with leading local writers.

Competition Judges: Deborah-Jean Baptiste-Samuel, a theatre Director, attorney-at-law, orator and former journalist. Willie Chen, an artist, sculptor, metalworker, poet, playwright and short story writer. Debbie Jacobs, a Trinidad Guardian columnist. Ira Mathur, an Indian born Caribbean freelance journalist working in radio, television and print in Trinidad

The Royal Commonwealth Society: Founded in 1868, RCS conducts a range of events and activities aimed at promoting international understanding. HM Queen Elizabeth II is Patron and Peter Kellner is Chairman. Headquartered at the Commonwealth Club in London, the RCS has some 5000 members in the UK and a presence in 40 Commonwealth countries through a network of branches and Commonwealth societies. The RCS is a registered charity in England & Wales (226748) and conducts a number of educational, youth and cultural programmes across the Commonwealth, including one of the world's largest school essay competitions and a youth leadership programme. It also organises numerous events dealing with issues of Commonwealth interest. See www.thercs.org.

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