

Trinidad and Tobago  
15<sup>th</sup> October 2009

The Honorable Kevin Rudd  
Prime Minister of Australia  
630 Wynnum Road  
Morningside Qld 4170

Dear Mr. Rudd,

On behalf of my country, I wish foremost to say thank you. We are quite elated that you have expressed your desire to learn more of Trinidad and Tobago's culture and traditions and how they can be incorporated into the global village. A rather important observation on the nature of the information I am about to present is its compatibility to those common values, principles and standards that we share as commonwealth members. I observed that you enjoyed the long-anticipated historical and cultural segment of the opening ceremony so I will not recapitulate on our history as you are already familiar with it.

One of the most noticeable facets of Trinidad and Tobago's culture is our versatility. Not only do we as a united nation survive the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune at times, but together we morph ourselves into a more attractive and tenacious society. A prime example of this fact was proven during the recent economic crisis. Unwittingly, almost every one of us became versed in frugality. Even the young children have been trained by their parents in understanding the value of the dollar and also the rewards of thrift.

You may have observed that our country is a combination of many distinct cultures and races. As equally important is the absence of violence due to racial tensions and cultural barriers. I do not deny that among a few members of the population discriminatory views may exist but as a unit, we have never approached a race/colour motivated genocidal war. Contrarily, the opposite is true of our outstanding citizens. We prefer to focus on what unites us, our similarities, instead of those aspects that divide us because we accomplish more together. To epitomize this point, is the existence of the 'dougla', our Creole vernacular for a person of mixed parentage. Such a person is a testament to the miscibility of races in our country. I believe our national anthem summarizes this effectively, where in the last line it says, "...Here every creed and race finds an equal place..."

Trinidad and Tobago has one of the most vibrant cultures in the Caribbean region and thus, by extension, the world. With a combined area of 5,128 km<sup>2</sup> we are the one hundred and seventy second largest country in the world. With a population of 1.3 million people we are quite small in comparison to the other mega-countries of this world but, without a shadow of a doubt, we have proven that quantity of land space of population size is not a limiting factor to quality production and global influence. We maximize the usage of our resources albeit natural, economical or most importantly, human. The capitalization on our natural resources was paramount to the advancement of our economy, but even more so is the human aspect. In applying the theories mentioned in the previous paragraphs, we have not only generated revenue but have also boosted morale among us. For example our Carnival celebrations are world renown. This was originally a French celebration but was modified by the Creole Africans during slavery. The appreciation of religious and cultural beliefs by the entire population is a voluntary effort. For instance, our country has a large number of Hindus and Muslims. A number of holy days are observed by both groups, therefore public holidays are given so the society can reflect and enjoy these auspicious occasions with family and friends. The exotic East Indian, Creole and even African dances have become the norm at all cultural showcases and government functions. I firmly believe that the appreciation, not tolerance, of all cultures is pivotal in constructing a truly dynamic country.

Trinidad and Tobago has a plethora of knowledge which we are waiting to share. The acquisition of knowledge, especially when applied as a catalyst of amelioration, is the main pathway through which the international community can foster genuine development. Extremely important to this global advancement is not only the appreciation our distinct cultures but the extraction of specific aspects of each society, which, when combined, can form a beautiful and practicable mosaic. It is these factors which can make an indelible contribution to our world.

Respectfully yours,

Christineil Thompson  
Student

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