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**SCHOOL:** Bishop's High School (Tobago)  
**AGE:** 16 years  
**AGE CATEGORY:** 14 – 18  
**COMPETITION:** Trinidad and Tobago Commonwealth Essay Competition  
**TOPIC:** "What Trinidad and Tobago can teach the world"

Tobago  
October 29<sup>th</sup> 2009.

Dear Mr. Baldwin Spencer,  
Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda,

Welcome to Trinidad and Tobago. The distinguished pleasure is mine to share with you some of the fascinating lessons of our small Caribbean country. More popularly known as the capital of paradise, "sweet T&T", is 155 square kilometres with 1.3 million inhabitants. We can teach the world what it takes to make it a better place.

Our cherished **national watchwords** of discipline, production and tolerance, coupled with our **motto**: "together we aspire, together we achieve" have made us **one people** despite our different ethnicities. Daily we epitomize long cherished **values** of respect, love and caring. These values I would love to share with the

world. I am confident that if these practices are adopted, our world would be more harmonious where there is unity in **diversity**.

Not only have the watchwords and our motto served to bind us together as one people, but they have created in citizens of a small country, the discipline needed to 'think big' and 'achieve big'. Our achievements on the international scale were only possible because we believed in ourselves. Our athletes, scholars, contestants at various international competitions like Miss Universe and Miss World, representatives at international forums, like the International Criminal Court, have done us proud because they all dared to think big in order to achieve big. Brian Charles Lara is the world's record holder with the highest score in international cricket 400 runs.

Major problems face the world like **climate change**, **terrorism** and the **financial melt-down** and it is easy to feel that members of the commonwealth are inadequate to deal with these problems. Prophets of doom say that solutions are beyond our control, but as Trinidadians and Tobagonians we would like to teach the world that 'small axe can cut down big trees', once the small axe truly believes that he can... yes he can.

Our young **democracy** of only 47 years can teach the world profound lessons. We can teach the world that the gift of democracy is a treasure chest (holding personal and national freedom, rights, responsibilities and equal opportunities for all). Such intrinsic values are worth defending at all costs, even with our lives. The attempted coup of 1990 in Trinidad and Tobago, challenging the democratically elected government, forced us to determine how much we value our democracy.

Our then Prime Minister, A.N. R. Robinson, asserted at gun point that he was willing to die for his country, valuing democracy above his life.

Democracy has guided Trinidad and Tobago to enjoy equitable wealth distribution, education for all, an excellent health care system, dependable communication network, reliable infrastructure and a safeguarded financial sector.

The lesson we want to teach the world is **‘while democracy has its flaws, and is imperfect, never let democracy die; fight for it with your life; your future generations are depending on you.’**

In an age when the world focuses on **preserving the environment**, Trinidad and Tobago, can teach the world how to do this successfully. We can teach the world that to achieve this aim, education on environmental matters must be the first tool employed, as we often do in the many educational campaigns on the environment, like the RBTT Young leaders programmes. Additionally, preservation must be the responsibility of all citizens: children and adults alike.

Dear me to boast that Tobago has been the successful custodian of the oldest tropical rain forest reserve in the western hemisphere. Additionally, our vast network of nature trails, lush and colourful vegetation, enormous terrestrial and marine parks, including the famous Buccoo reef, have repeatedly earned Tobago the number one eco-tourism destination of the world.

We can teach the world how to efficiently manage it’s **natural resources**, since we have managed ours with distinction. Trinidad is the world’s largest repository for pitch. Our asphalt is used on hard surfaces all over the world. We are one of the

world's leading producers of methanol. We are self-sufficient in oil and natural gas. Our energy base is stable.

Our rich **diverse culture** is enviable. Carnival, calypso and the steel pan profoundly establish the creativity of our people. Our religious freedom finds full expression in celebrations such as Divali, Eid, Shouter Baptist Liberation Day and Christmas day.

Enjoy your stay in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Yours respectfully,

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Keisandra Dee George.