

Report on the Public Symposium:

**2nd Symposium Towards a Multiculturalism Policy Framework:
A Focus on the Creative Arts**

**Friday 4th February, 2011
Crowne Plaza, Port-of-Spain**

**Ministry of the Arts & Multiculturalism
February 24, 2011**

OVERVIEW

Due to the general strong indication that policies for the Arts must not be left to falter in the search for a policy on Multiculturalism, it became prudent to focus on the relationship between the Creative Arts and Multiculturalism. The success of Trinidad and Tobago in terms of social harmony and racial diversity was underscored by several contributors to the discourse. Complaints and questions were raised however in relation to resource allocation across disparate artforms and cultural practices, especially in light of what was seen as abundant emphasis on the performing arts as opposed to other components of the Cultural Sector. It was also declared that Multiculturalism requires mutual engagement of each other's culture with respect and tolerance.

The state needs to be mindful of the policy environment that relates to effective design and implementation of policy in the Cultural Sector. Cultural policy must pursue appropriate blending of initiatives across Ministries with responsibility for Culture, Education, Trade, Communications and Tourism amongst others. It must also seek to identify and supplement all structural weaknesses in the value chain related to the production and consumption of all artistic goods and services. Policies on Multiculturalism and Culture should be kept distinct with the former setting standards to which the latter must adhere. Significant initiatives to include in this Cultural Policy measures for greater equity include constantly changing slate of stakeholder collaborators and constant evaluation of implementation.

PANEL: How should the Arts be Treated with in a Multiculturalism Policy

Dr. Merle Hodge (Moderator) Towards a Multiculturalism Policy: Focus on the Arts

Dr. Suzanne Burke Converge, Connect, Commerce: Treatment of Arts in Multicultural Policy

Dr. Kumar Mahabir

Mr. Shastri Maharaj

SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

PANEL DISCUSSION – How should the Arts be Treated with in a Multiculturalism Policy

The Presenters for this session focussed on several issues including the following:

– **Equitable Recognition and Treatment of Diverse Artforms:**

The Ministry seems to have traditionally focussed on the performing arts and this is just a sliver of the whole complex that is called Culture. Culture also includes food; family systems; languages; expressions of spirituality; forms of recreation; medicinal practices; agriculture; clothing; attitudes to children and other non-material aspects of culture. Attempting to infuse multiculturalism into the arts in our country might be reinventing the wheel. It may prove more prudent to pursue diversification of the arts that we promote and endeavour to put them to wider use in our quest for development.

- **Developmental Nature of the Arts:**

The arts can be used to confront social maladies such as crime, if we can involve our youth across the country in the kind of experience of the creative arts that builds empathy; develops their finer feelings; draws them to the appreciation of beauty and the habit of quiet contemplation; sharpens their skills of critical thinking; forms an appreciation of and commitment to the environment in which they live, which includes embracing the diversity of that environment. The Arts also fosters risk taking, problem solving and analytical thinking. These attributes are essential for the population of any modern society.

– **Holistic Appreciation of that Successful Policy Framework:**

Policy covers government action, inaction, decisions and non-decisions and implies a deliberate choice between alternatives. Multicultural arts policies run the risk of ‘managing’ cultural differences rather than taking up the challenge of reconfiguring arts and cultural industries institutions and practices at their core. The Domains for Cultural Policy action within the Cultural Sector are:

- **Core Creative Arts** e.g. Music, Visual Art, Literature, Performing Arts
- **Wider Cultural Industries** e.g. Heritage Services, Radio, TV, Video & Publishing
- **Creative Economy** e.g. Advertising, Design, New Media, Gaming, Fashion & Architecture

These can also be ordered in terms of the Value Chain Analysis for the Cultural Industries. Areas for policy convergence include:

- Community Development
- Education and training
- Trade and Industry
- Economics and Finance
- Media and Broadcast
- Tourism and urban development

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OR SUGGESTIONS

Immediate next steps for the Policy development process

- Presentation of a timetable in terms of adoption of policy inclusive of drafts and public consultations.
- Appointment of a Multiculturalism Commission to take charge of the consultative process because it is possible that the Ministry does not have within it the diversity to drive the process.
- Holding of a third Symposium is needed to focus on presentations from artists.
- Nomination of people from the sector to work with the Ministry as advisors.

Recommendations re: Policy Design

- Keep Arts and Multiculturalism Policies distinct but related as they operate within a creative ecosystem.
- The role of the state means moving among and between the various sectors and policy areas to ensure that:
 - o the connections between the audiences and artists are strong,
 - o the balance points between production and consumption is even,
 - o that the preservation of the core creative arts is not done at the expense of the development of the wider creative industries, or
 - o that the instrumental impetus for the cultural policy regime does not overtake the recognition of the intrinsic value of the arts.
- Effective policy design needs convergence of all related areas of the cultural sector (Community Development, Education and training, Trade and Industry, Economics and Finance, Media and Broadcast, Tourism and urban development).
- Core values of policies - equity and diversity as espoused in a multicultural framework must run through every aspect of arts and cultural industry policy framework.
- Build in evaluative mechanisms that constantly keep agents and institutions accountable to core values of policies.
- There is an architecture that must accompany the development of the arts and cultural industry sector. Supporting architecture must treat with:
 - Institutions of Support
 - Fiscal incentives
 - Regulatory and legal framework
 - HR Development and training
 - Trade and promotion
 - Venue development
 - Research and innovation
 - Media and broadcast
- An annual report to set benchmarks and measure progress in the sector should be developed.
- Multiculturalism cannot be confined to the Cultural Sector.
- In creating a Multiculturalism policy, focus needs to be placed on an equitable system of distribution of resources inclusive of education, advertising and funding of competitions by the state and corporate sector.

The Ministry with Responsibility for Culture & its line institutions

- There is a need to focus on the creation of relevant institutions and legislation that will optimise sectoral development.

- The National Museum and Art Gallery must openly discuss and contemplate its programmes.
- Institutions must be manned by a diverse set of players to ensure we stay true to ideals of equity and fairness, and adopt more transparent operational imperatives and models.
- Appropriate personnel needed to staff Ministry to ensure development.
- Revisit the National Cultural Council.
- Develop an Arts and Culture Foundation that has biennial awards ceremony, assistance for cultural programmes representing Trinidad and Tobago internationally.
- Establish research unit for establishing true history of information coming to Ministry so that cultural institutions will be established on the basis of true historical fact.

Developmental Agenda for the Arts

Artistic Development

- Diversify the arts the Ministry promotes.
- Institute a Trinidad and Tobago Prize for Literature.
- Create a module for writers at the National Academy for the Performing Arts.
- Create a Craft Village and a Cultural Village to provide the tourist with an experience of local culture, increase foreign exchange earnings and provide education to schools
- Explore the provision of sprung floors for Dancers.
- Build two record processing plants.
- Resuscitate Caribbean Sound Basin.
- 5% of monies on government construction should go to acquisition of art for these public edifices.
- Quota for local media content (60% local-40% foreign). Implementation via a sliding scale for implementation of local content for media with legislation by May 31st with 15 % to start and an increase every 6 months.
- Ministry must engage promoters as a matter of policy.
- Artists need to be educated on Intellectual Property Rights
- Reclaim public space through the arts.
- Superior artistic direction of public art and design projects is needed to maximise their impact.
- Carnival Bandleaders need more funds due to developmental nature of Children's Carnival

Ideological issues related to Multiculturalism

- Multiculturalism must deal with liberation from oppression of colonialism.
- Government is to counterbalance what the corporate sector has developed re youth heroes and champion the true icons of the countries
- Government's job is to seek the youth out and empower them

Social Issues related to a new policy agenda

- Ministry needs to promote our history of Riots surrounding our festivals.
- Deal with Loud Music
- Installation of Peace Parks in every community (a 20 acre park with a space within it for every spiritual tradition).
- Understanding of all groups must be heard

Culture & Education

- Cultural Policy must drive and link with education policy.
- The school is the engine to drive education and training in the Cultural Sector.
- Visual Arts need to be in all schools.
- Converge education and culture related symposia.
- Natural Medicine needs to be put in the school curriculum.
- Resensitise children and the nation to the non academic factor of learning.
- Need to expand training classes and funding for same.
- Remove the arts from the back burner and put it on the front burner in UWI, UTT and the school system.

Paradigm Shifts related to Multiculturalism

- This policy process must be taken to its natural conclusion. The energy of the artist is about transforming reality. The creativity of a people is the engine for social transformation.
- What is being called Multiculturalism is better couched as a multidimensional vision for the arts that sees greater recognition of a broader, more diverse range of artforms.
- May need to revisit changing watchword 'tolerance' to 'respect'.
- Must have new enculturation where education is a priority
- Use term 'Cultural Amalgam' as opposed to Multiculturalism
- Counter culturalism: foreign and other forces eroding base of legitimate cultural expressions and folkways.