CARICOM Youth Shaping the Future of the Community

Twenty-three year-old law student of the Anton de Kom University of Suriname, Yldiz Beighle, one of the Caribbean Community’s finest Youth Ambassadors has been appointed Co-Chair of the newly constituted CARICOM Commission for Youth Development (CCoYD). If she typifies the products of the CARICOM Youth Ambassador programme, (CYAP) then this programme is well on its way to becoming one of the most potent portals to the development of a cadre of young dynamic Caribbean leaders, who will promote the goals of regional integration and the ideals of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

Miss Beighle not only exudes confident aplomb and decorum - undoubtedly nurtured by a firm upbringing and buttressed by a sound educational background - but she has also demonstrated her capacity to explore, grasp and advocate on regional and global issues, particularly those affecting Caribbean youth.

Yldiz Beighle’s inexhaustible list of career feats belies her age. She has a wide repertoire of experience in youth development, which spans membership in several national, regional and international youth organizations, including serving as Regional Advisor on youth issues; Suriname’s Youth Ambassador for the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG); active involvement in national and regional HIV/AIDS prevention and support activities as well as keen involvement in community based projects through the Ministry of Education and Human Development, Suriname.

As the Co-Chair of the CCYD, Miss Beighle leads a team of youth and technocrats, charged with the responsibility to, among other things, provide a full scale analysis of the challenges and opportunities for youth in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and to make recommendation on how to improve their well-being and empowerment.

Attributing much of her personal and professional development to the exposure, training and empowerment facilitated by the CARICOM Youth Ambassador Programme, Miss Beighle feels that her experience in the programme so far will help her to acquit her responsibilities successfully.

“The CYAP is there to form a cadre of young leaders for the region and I am not an exception. Personally, it makes me stronger in several areas; it creates opportunities,
which are useful for the development of both my self and the region,” Miss Beighle remarks.

“Professionally, she continues, “the CYAP enabled me to gain experience at the regional level in policy issues, it creates the opportunity to channel my views to regional policy makers, such as the CARICOM Secretariat, Heads of State and COHSOD. Actually it makes me ready for the bigger world as a strong leader.”

Launched in 1993 at the Heads of Government Conference, which also marked the 20th Anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas, and reactivated in 2000 in Grenada, the CARICOM Youth Ambassador Programme is the Community’s institutional arrangement for youth leadership development and participation in issues on the agenda of CARICOM Heads of Government.

The Caribbean Youth Ambassadors (CYAs) are the Community’s focal points for deepening the regional integration and development process through advocacy and peer education initiatives implemented at the national level.

Youth Ambassadors are rigorously selected biennially from the membership of National Youth Councils, other representative youth organizations and/or are experienced youth leaders. All Member States and Associate Members are eligible to participate in this programme.

Since its inception, the programme has produced a cadre of outstanding youth ambassadors in the Caribbean, who are distinguishing themselves in their chosen fields of service, impacting significantly, the lives of other Caribbean youth, especially in critical priority areas such as HIV/AIDS, entrepreneurship, peer education and advocating on the CSME.

Yildiz Beighle is among the 32 youth ambassadors, who were selected from among their peers to serve in the 2005-2006 / 2005-2007 years. These Youth Ambassadors continue to network and collaborate with current and retired members of the Youth Ambassador Corps and youth leaders from local representative and Community based organisations in the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Youth Development which was approved by the thirteenth Meeting of CARICOM’S Ministerial Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD XIII), October, 2005. The thematic priorities of this strategy focus on adolescent and youth health and reproductive rights; adolescent and youth protection; social and economic empowerment opportunities and adolescent leadership, governance and participation, with special reference to the active involvement of youth in nation building and the integration process.

According to Yldiz, “this programme has the potential to, among other things, develop youth leadership and advocacy skills at the highest level and facilitate involvement in policy issues at the national and regional level.”
She firmly believes that “as the highest youth institution at the regional level, the CYAP … plays a crucial role in the development and integration of the youth … and creates the possibility to get a sense of the real international development issues.”

However, Yldiz points out that more financial support, both at the national and regional level is needed for the work of the CYAP.

After her stint at the CARICOM Secretariat as an intern, Yldiz is looking forward to becoming one of the Caribbean’s leading lawyers, even while serving as a regional youth policy advisor and lecturing at her alma mater.

Many irons in the fire it seems, but who knows, with the training and experiences she is garnering, coupled with her drive and tenacity, this product of the Caribbean Youth Ambassador programme is destined to help shape the face and future of the Caribbean Community.

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