

Commonwealth Day Celebration

It was an honour to represent the Cayman Islands at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Programme on 12th March, 2012 Commonwealth Day.

There were 40 young representatives from different countries of the Commonwealth such as Bermuda, Malawi, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Malaysia, and New Zealand. The day included tours of the Houses of Parliament, talks with the Secretary-General and other CPA staff, UK Members of Parliament, Mr. Liam Smyth Clerk of the Journals, House of Commons and Ms. Sukey Cameron UK Representative of the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Liam Smyth's keynote address was particularly relevant to the theme this year of 'Connecting Cultures'. As a Clerk of the House of Commons he explained his extensive experience of training Clerks in various Commonwealth jurisdictions, and the cultures he had interaction with, such as: India, Zanzibar, and Australia. I found his presentation especially poignant since the delegates attending this Commonwealth programme were from a variety of countries, and as a delegate I had a sample of this experience from the events of the day.

Ms. Cameron spoke to the young representatives about her role as the UK Representative from the Falkland Islands. I found her presentation interesting as there are similarities between the Cayman Islands and the Falkland Islands it was insightful to understand the role and influence of a UK Representative.

This was followed by the Commonwealth Day Observance at Westminster Abbey in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen, His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall and Her Royal Highness the Countess of Wessex. The Observance is a large multi-faith gathering, also attended by Heads of Government, faith leaders, dignitaries from around the world and several hundred young people. This year's theme was 'Connecting Cultures'.

I found the service to be a moving experience that was illustrative of the vast diversity of cultures within the Commonwealth. The service also demonstrated that despite the variance in customs and way of life, every culture was connected to the same foundation- and existence based on love, faith and an aspiration for harmony. It was truly a celebration as this is also The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Year; in particular Her Majesty's coronation had taken place in Westminster Abbey.

The Observance at Westminster Abbey featured a newly-composed song to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee performed by soprano Laura Wright - '*Stronger as One*'; a musical performance by South African artist/musician Hugh Masekela and the Descarga Dance Company. The address was given by Dr. Jane Goodall DBE, Scientific Director, Mahale-Gombe Wildlife Research Institute, Tanzania. The Commonwealth Secretary-General, HE Kamallesh Sharma, read the Act of Affirmation to the Commonwealth and personal reflections were presented by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Andrew Forrest. Liz Lochhead read her own poem '*Connecting Cultures*' for this special event.

Ridhiima Kapoor

This photo was taken at the Royal Commonwealth Society Tea Party shortly after the service at Westminster Abbey.

From Left to Right: Delegates from Norfolk Islands, Jersey, Malaysia, Former Royal Correspondent Robert Jobson editor of *Queen and the Commonwealth*; Norfolk Islands, and Ridhiima Kapoor - Cayman Islands.



This photo was taken outside the Houses of Parliament. From Left to Right: Delegates from Malaysia, Ridhiima Kapoor -Cayman Islands, Jersey, Sri Lanka and Nigeria.

