



# the BOCAS Lit Fes

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MORE THAN A LITERARY FESTIVAL

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ANNUAL  
REPORT

Celebrating a decade  
of achievement

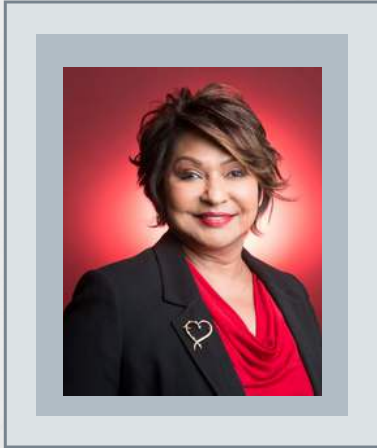
[WWW.BOCASLITFEST.COM](http://WWW.BOCASLITFEST.COM)

2020



# LEADERSHIP

## PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT



**RANI LAKHAN-NARACE**

Our 10th Anniversary was a double occasion for celebration, as Bocas brilliantly demonstrated its mettle, quickly and successfully pivoting to virtual programmes that were deeply appreciated by ardent Festival followers, especially as they were suffering from the isolating circumstances of the pandemic. Additionally, meeting our obligations to our sponsors is always a priority, and we were able to do so commendably.

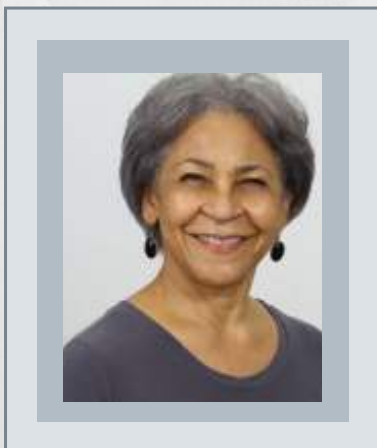
The Caribbean diaspora was delighted to be able to participate, as our geographic reach was greatly enhanced by being completely online. The pandemic, therefore, unexpectedly catapulted Bocas into a whole new arena of exciting possibilities in terms of reach, impact and programming diversity, which will further unfold in the coming year.

A key initiative is to build a community of connected and engaged Festival fans and literature enthusiasts around the globe, so we will be soon launching a Friends programme.

I must express my unwavering admiration and gratitude to Marina and her team for their outstanding performance and extend my hearty congratulations on achieving this wonderful milestone.

Let me also express my appreciation to all the Directors, past and present, for their contribution to Bocas's success, as well as to all the sponsors and well-wishers for their continued support.

## MANAGING DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



**MARINA SALANDY-BROWN**

The year 2020 will never be forgotten for the revolution it created at every level of human existence. For the Bocas Lit Fest (BLF), it marked the tenth consecutive year of Trinidad and Tobago's annual literary festival. We aimed to make 2020 unforgettable but not as indelible as Covid-19 rendered it. With a pandemic declared in March, the BLF team resolved to deliver an online literary festival just six weeks later, leading the way in the cultural sector.

I want to thank my extraordinary Bocas team, the writers who did not give up in very difficult times, and everyone who contributed to a successful decade for the Bocas Lit Fest, especially our faithful sponsors, led by our title sponsor the NGC. Special thanks to artist Jackie Hinkson for his generous anniversary poster art, which immortalises our achievements.

## Vision

The Bocas Lit Fest exists to develop and promote Caribbean writers and to grow Caribbean readers to realize the full potential of our literature in cultural, social and economic terms.

## Mission

To be the Caribbean's premier literary arts organization, dedicated to the development of all our people, the broadening of our culture and the expansion of the literary industry.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Rani Lakhan-Narace - President** - Executive Chairman · TRINRE Insurance Company

**Marina Salandy-Brown - Vice President** - Founder and Festival Director

**Thackwray "Dax" Driver** - Chief Executive Officer, The Energy Chamber

**Courtenay Williams** - Attorney-at-Law

**Stacy Ann Golding** - Principal, S N Golding Financial Services Limited

**Lucy Hannah** - Producer of global literary initiatives

## Advisor to the BOD

**Leslie Clarke**, Managing Director, Murphy Clarke Financial Limited

## Retired Directors 2020

**Deanna Greenidge** - Editor and publisher

**Kenrick Attale** - Executive Chairman of Lonsdale Saatchi & Saatchi

**Funso Aiyejina** - Professor Emeritus, the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, poet, short story writer, playwright and academic

**Lucita Esau** - Businesswoman

**Marsha Ramnanan** - Executive Director, Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PWC)



# 10 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT

**“We've always been writing in the Caribbean but before Bocas, no one had really created a space — at home — with the power to put regional writers on a pathway to the international publishing industry.”**

**Marina Salandy-Brown**

Storytelling Caravan in Tobago 2012



## Reflections on the 10-year journey

*Reading shaped my life, so it was not strange that I should become engaged in some literary field. When Marina first called to encourage me to join our then "small" group I was very happy to do so. Then I discovered the scope of this venture and realised that it was, indeed, a small team that was dedicated to achieving the objectives of the Bocas Lit Fest. Needless to say, we were in well over our heads but Marina steered us through every possible angle and hurdle, encouraging us to move forward into the larger literary world. We strove to reach every part of it and continue to do so. It was not a slam dunk to get funding for THE BOCAS LIT FEST but we give thanks for some enlightened minds at the NGC which continue to generously support our festival and the eagerness of One Caribbean Media, which saw a way to help us open and build a connection with the public through their media and funding for an annual prize. I am proud to have been part of this family during the past 10 years. We have grown from strength to strength, forever committed and thankful to the faithful support of our benefactors.*

**Lucita Esau**  
Retired Director



South Bocas 2014



A decade of OCM Bocas Prize-winning books (2011 - 2020)



NGC Bocas Lit Fest 2016 - Curb side Open Mic giving emerging writers a voice



The BLF brings the Literary Arts to the Festival Village at Carifesta XIV in 2019

# A DECADE OF IMPACT

Hosted 13 events outside of T&T, taking our writers to the world

Published and distributed 9 fully illustrated children's storytelling books featuring 155 stories

From 2013, engaged with over 150,000 students in 250+ secondary schools as part of an annual nationwide spoken word tour in collaboration with the 2Cents Movement

Delivered 72 different workshops and master classes for emerging and advanced writers hosted in Trinidad, Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana and St. Lucia

**17 NGC Bocas Lit Fests:**  
9 in PoS,  
1 in South/Central,  
3 in South &  
4 in Tobago

## FIRST CITIZENS NATIONAL POETRY SLAM

934 poets auditioned (2013-2020)  
258 semi-finalists (2014-2020)  
83 finalists (2014-2020)  
27 winners (1st - 3rd places)  
TT\$400,000 in prize money  
51 Slam events to-date

Awarded **TT\$1.42M** in prize money and long-listed 136 books in 4 literary prizes administered by the BLF and funded by our sponsors

**831** different events, **750** writers - readings, discussions, debates, performances, film screenings, book launches, poetry slams; adult storytelling and more

The Lit Fest has significantly elevated the NGC brand both locally & internationally having achieved **TOP 20** status



# WHAT WE DO

## ANNUAL LITERARY FESTIVAL



The annual NGC Bocas Lit Fest, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, became two virtual festivals. The original dates of 1-3 May became our first attempt at an online festival. It included the announcement of the winners of the current BLF-founded prizes, a tribute to the late Kamau Brathwaite, readings, book launches and Pavement Poets. A second, seamless, online festival followed from 18-20 September, live-streamed on the BLF website, via YouTube and on Facebook. It comprised 18 events over 23 hours, featured 80 new and star authors, prizewinning books, readings, discussions, Extempo, poetry, storytelling, Stand and Deliver, the important New Talent Showcase, as well as other entertaining and informative elements.

## PRIZES



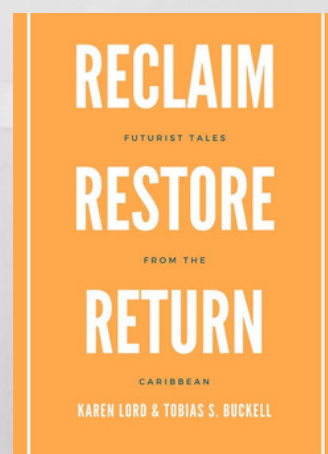
Richard Georges, a Trinidadian-born poet living in the Virgin Islands won the 10th coveted OCM Bocas Prize and Amanda Choo Quan of T&T was victorious in the second year of the emerging writers prize, the Johnson and Amoy Achong Caribbean Writers Prize (JAWWCP) for non-fiction. Our prizes award, promote and have advanced the careers of both established and new Caribbean writers. The late Kamau Brathwaite was the recipient of the Bocas Henry Swanzy prize for Distinguished Service to Caribbean Literature.



Richard Georges

## PUBLISHING

In 2020 the Bocas Lit Fest collaborated with the Caribbean Futures Institute to publish *Reclaim, Restore, Return: Futurist Tales from the Caribbean*, a free e-book for the 2020 NGC Bocas Lit Fest that received fine reviews. A special Peekash Press anthology, marking the 10th anniversary of the NGC Bocas Lit Fest, *Always Coming Home: Caribbean Writers and Their Journeys Through the World*, features all ten overall OCM Bocas Prize winners and some of the leading Caribbean writers who participated in the festival since 2011. Peekash Press, our publishing imprint, will explore e-books as a publishing model for this region, along with audiobooks and print on demand facilities, in partnership with other Caribbean territories.



# MORE OF WHAT WE DO

## CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL



The Children's Festival also celebrated 10 years in 2020. The much loved Storytelling Caravan (targeted to children under 12), evolved into Dragonzilla's Storytime, a series of 18 films of the children's own stories taken from the BLF annual illustrated colouring book, read by well-known storytellers. The videos were broadcast repeatedly on TV6 and during the September festival. Work has also begun on animating some of the other children's stories created over the last decade.

A Shortstory Writing Challenge invited children to create their own stories. The authors of the top ten then made them into videos. The prize-giving event took place at the National Library and was attended by the Minister of Education, Dr Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, who was very fulsome in her praise for the work of the Bocas Lit Fest over the last decade.

## YOUTH PROGRAMMING (AGES 12 – 18)



A highlight of our Youth Programming is the popular and lucrative First Citizens National Poetry Slam. In 2020 it was presented as a TV production in partnership with TV6. Youth programming also included the commencement of the **Write Away!** project sponsored by Scotiabank Foundation, which replaced the Burt Award Young Adult Author Tour.

The project facilitated the development of new digital material for a series of virtual, creative writing workshops presented by Lisa Allen Agostini for secondary schools, in consultation with the Ministry of Education. As part of the Write Away! project, books were distributed to selected, under resourced school libraries, with the objective of providing young people with adequate and appropriate reading material that contribute to their emotional, intellectual and social development.

## THE WRITERS CENTRE

Home of the Bocas Lit Fest and the 2 Cents Movement, The Writers Centre (TWC) is a space dedicated to writers and literary programmes in Trinidad, one that will help affirm the city's growing reputation as the literary capital of the Anglophone Caribbean. The Writers Centre is an arts-friendly, collaborative, entrepreneurial enterprise ready to serve members of our dynamic community of creative self-starters.





# YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMMING

During 2020 we created many new offerings and produced an average of 2.5 virtual events weekly including:

**Bios and Bookmarks**, the new Sunday one-hour long chat with leading Caribbean authors living everywhere about their newest work.

**Bring your Own Book and Bottle (BOYBB)** a monthly digital international chat-in about books with our book network.

**Writing workshops** - topics included poetry at all levels, getting published and one-and-one masterclasses with prize-winning writers and seminars, including the series Lit's Be Real.

**Survival Kit** - A series of monthly art, music and literature offerings intended to help deal with the depths of the lockdown.

**The Bocas Book Bulletin** - A monthly news roundup of new Caribbean books and writers, prizes and events, published every first Sunday in the Express.

**The 100 Books That Made Us** - This is a long term project launched in 2020 to establish a definitive popular canon of Caribbean literature.

**Publishing Consultancy** - Offering individuals advice in editing and publishing their books commercially.

**Special Events** - These included a series of hard-hitting panel discussions and film and video productions:

- *Remembering the 1990 Coup*
- *Kamau Brathwaite Birthday; Indian Arrival Day*
- *The Case for Reparations*
- *The filmed PoS literary walking tour, presented by Wendell Manwarren will be launched at the 2021 festival*
- *The 10-year anniversary Peekash publication of the new generation of regional writers will also be launched at the 2021 festival*
- *A Question of Leadership*
- *The Treachery in Every Poem: Celebrating the poetry of Colin Robinson*



# 2020 HIGHLIGHTS



## NGC Celebrates A Caribbean Literature Champion

Marina Salandy-Brown, DLitt (h.c.) founder of the NGC Bocas Lit Fest, recipient of the Chilean Strait of Magellan Award, Honorary Fellow of the United Kingdom's Royal Society of Literature (RSL)



# 2020 ACHIEVEMENTS

## 700%

more people saw the 2020 First Citizens Poetry Slam!

As the pandemic caused a global pivot, the annual Poetry Slam achieved a 700% increase in audience numbers from 150 in person at the Old Fire Station in 2013 to 3,500 online views in 2020, plus an undisclosed number of TV views of 5 hours of programming

Reach of our  
2020  
Programming

## 55,265

You tube views

## 19,256

Facebook  
views

## 12,945

views of 23  
posts on  
Instagram

## 98,226

people were reached by the various elements of the 2020 NGC Bocas Lit Fest Children's Festival. This included World Read Aloud Day, Dragonzilla's Storytime videos, Dragonzilla's Writing Challenge, colouring book mailouts and 3 animated videos

## 133

children aged 12 and under participated in the first Dragonzlla Storytelling Challenge

## 33%

of our demographic is now represented by women between the ages of 25 to 34 years





# WE ARE WORLDWIDE

Through strategic partnerships with international cultural agencies such as the Commonwealth Foundation, the Arts Council of England, the University of East Anglia and the British Council, as well as international literary festivals, Bocas has created opportunities for Caribbean writers to present and publish their work and network with peers in locations ranging from the United States, Canada, and Britain to Bangladesh, South Africa, and Croatia.

In 2020, NGC Bocas Lit Fest Programme Director Nicholas Laughlin facilitated an online session hosted by the Islay Book Festival in Scotland, featuring Heather Barker of Barbados, Angela Barry of Bermuda, and Kendel Hippolyte of St Lucia.

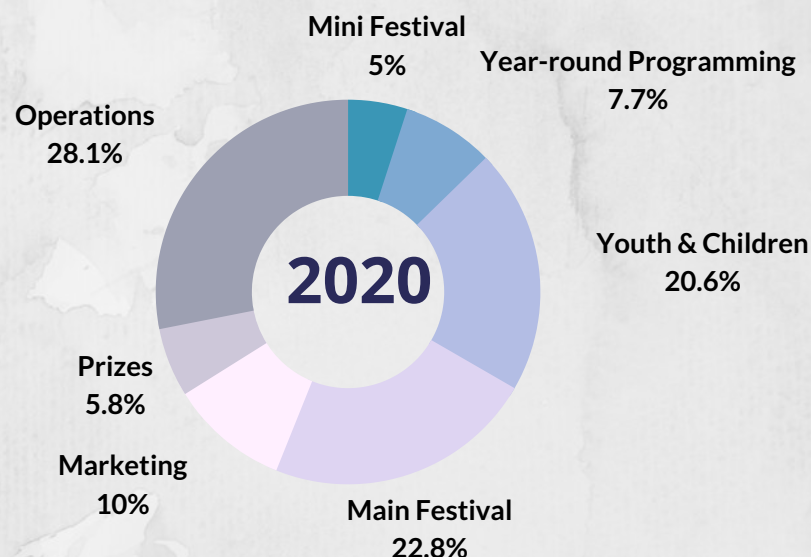
Dominica-born writer Jean Rhys (1890–1979), author of the celebrated novel *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, was the subject of a virtual discussion hosted by the Royal Society of Literature and the British Library in partnership with the Bocas Lit Fest, “What’s So Great About Jean Rhys?”

Additionally, our 2020 virtual Bocas@10 UK series concluded in partnership with “Your Local Arena”, funded by the Arts Council of England. It presented a special Bocas 10-year celebratory event featuring a collection of videos and texts by past festival authors.

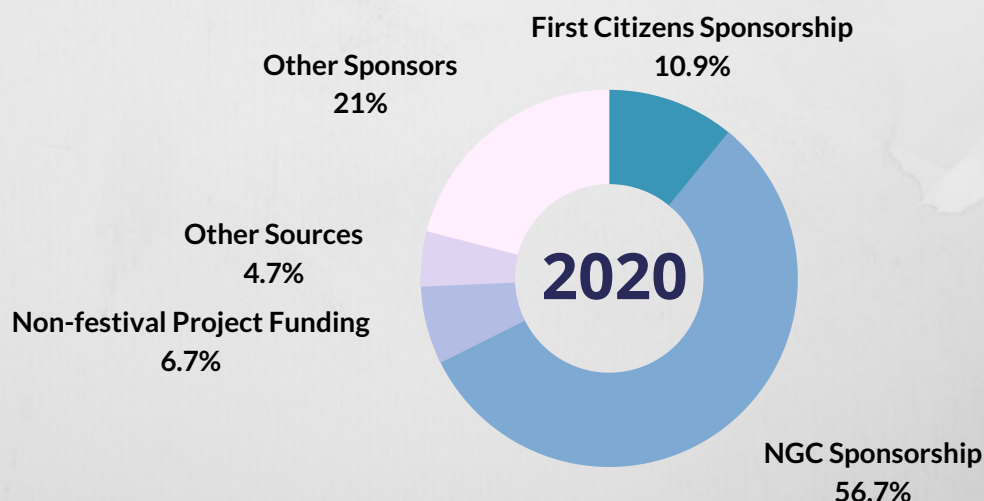
# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The work of the BLF remains in high demand and thanks to our generous sponsors we were able to deliver an impressive slate of projects in 2020 to mark our first decade. The BLF is very financially responsible and remains resilient and adaptable, even if no less reliant on our long-time sponsors who have remained consistent. We trust that our proposed Friends of the Bocas Lit Fest loyalty programme will receive wide support and increase our ability to deliver the unique value-added programmes intended to help nurture our citizens and advance our society.

## Expenses



## Income





# OUR TEAM



Marina Salandy-Brown is the founder and Vice President of the Bocas Lit Fest, Festival Director of the NGC Bocas Lit Fest, and a Newsday columnist. She is a former editor and prizewinning BBC programme maker with a publishing background and member of the Arts Council of London's Literary Panel. In 2005, she received the degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt), Honoris Causa, from the University of Westminster (UK), and in 2013 from the University of the West Indies. She is a current member of the British Council's Arts Advisory Committee and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Her writing has appeared in international magazines and literary anthologies, including *New Daughters of Africa* (2019). In 2020 Marina was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.



Funso Aiyejina is the Deputy Festival Director of the NGC Bocas Lit Fest and a member of the board of directors of the Bocas Lit Fest. He is the former Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Education at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine and now Professor Emeritus. He is also a prizewinning poet and short story writer. He won the 2000 Commonwealth Writers' Prize (Africa). Born in Nigeria, he has been based in Trinidad and Tobago since 1989. He is a widely published critic of African and Caribbean literature and a specialist on the work of Earl Lovelace. Since 2000 he has co-run the Cropper Foundation Writers Workshop, for Caribbean writers. His third poetry collection, *The Errors of the Rendering*, was published by Peepal Tree Press in 2020.



**Front Row from left to right:** Danielle Delon, Children's Festival Director, Marina Salandy-Brown - Founder and Managing Director, Patrice Matthews - Administrative & Project Manager. Absent - Junnel Lewis - Accountant

**Back Row from left to right:** Justin Ramoo - Children's Festival Coordinator, Shivanee Ramlochan - Social Media Manager, Marielle Forbes - General & Hospitality Manager, Nicholas Laughlin - Programme Director, Anna Lucie Smith - Festival & Publishing Manager, Ardene Sirjoo - Marketing Consultant, Jean-Claude Cournand - Youth Projects and Business Development Manager

**Absent:** Junnel Lewis - Accountant - Real Time Accounting

# NOV

## PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS

### Projects include:

- A virtual festival in late April with a series of year-round events
- The continuation of workshops to guide novice writers along the pathway to commercial and critical success
- The launch of a new prize that recognises and assists writers of Caribbean stories for children that reflect our cultures and traditions, sponsored by UTC
- The launch of ***Friends of the Bocas Lit Fest*** through which local, regional and international supporters can directly contribute to the sustainability of the NGO

## CONNECT WITH US



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# OUR SPONSORS

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**THE NATIONAL GAS COMPANY  
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## LEAD SPONSOR



**First Citizens**

## MAIN SPONSORS



## SPONSORS

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**Dr. Kongshiek  
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