

Extract from *The World Summit on Arts and Culture, The Report*

The Delegate's Perspective



Attending the Summit, in my mind, meant five to six days of complete immersion in cultural discussions and activities. I also anticipated networking and making new acquaintances with practitioners and experts in my area of work, from various regions of the world.

Having spearheaded the move for Belize to become a member of the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies, I also looked forward to finally meeting personnel I have been in communication with as well as delegates from other member states and institutions.

From the time the Summit opened, I kept thinking that this was an experience that should have been shared by all my colleagues working in the field of culture and the arts in Belize. Listening to speaker after speaker, my imagination bounced back and forth applying ideas and concepts to the Belizean reality, sifting the relevant from the irrelevant.

It soon became clear in my mind that the theme *Transforming places, transforming lives* is actually what our work in Belize was all about. The word 'regeneration', though not part of our everyday vocabulary in Belize, is very much the same process that has resulted in the establishment of Houses of Culture in different parts of the country and the transformation of what was once Her Majesty's Prison into what is now the Museum of Belize. I visualised

this most during the presentation of Justice Albie Sachs of the Constitutional Court of South Africa. It was memorable when he reminded us that 'starting with nothing' can (at times) actually be a good thing.

With the Garifuna language, music and dance having been proclaimed Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO since May 2001, I found the presentation by Dr Akbar Khakimov of Uzbekistan particularly interesting as he indicated how a similar proclamation has impacted positively on the life of one of the cultures in his country.

The case study of The Sage Gateshead was quite inspiring and gave me numerous ideas along the lines of arts funding and corporate social responsibility. In Belize, we at the National Institute of Culture and History have been making continuous investments in culture and the arts practically independently of alternative funding sources. Now that I am back at my desk, I will advocate for due consideration to be given to not only increasing funding for our programmes, but even more so, expanding the pool of alternative sources.

All the speeches, presentations and discussions, according to my assessment, highlighted the fact that no matter where in the world we all came from, to varying degrees, we all face the same challenges and stand at the threshold of the same opportunities.

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