

Ambassadors Kingdom Youth Parliament share their passions

THE HAGUE--The five ambassadors of the Kingdom Youth Parliament, which will be held in St. Maarten in May 2014, presented themselves to the media in The Hague on Tuesday.

Trumane Trotman, a 21-year-old freshman, studying advertisement, marketing & communication at Providence Johnson & Wales University in Rhode Island, is St. Maarten's ambassador.

Together with Kennedy Ogenio of Curaçao, Marifer Aguirre-Broca of Aruba, Carl Fielmich of Bonaire, who also represents St. Eustatius and Saba, and Aster van Tilburg of The Netherlands, Trotman will select and appoint the other 45 youth Parliamentarians between the ages of 15 and 25 for their respective teams in the coming year.

The five ambassadors and their ten-member team will be debating in St. Maarten for three days in May 2014 on common, every day issues that affect the islands in a Kingdom setting, such as education, health care, crime and movement of persons and goods.

According to coordinator and Secretary of the Committee Kingdom Relations Ron van der Veer, the idea is not to discuss formal issues such as the Charter or constitutional issues, but to stick to issues that are of



The five ambassadors of the Kingdom Youth Parliament. Standing, from left: Trumane Trotman, Kennedy Ogenio and Aster van Tilburg. Seated, from left: Marifer Aguirre-Broca and Carl Fielmich. (Suzanne Koelega photo)

common interest and that more relate to the people in the Kingdom.

"The voice of the youth has to be heard. The Kingdom doesn't only consist of people who are now in power, but also of many young people, the future generation. In the Kingdom we should focus more on social issues, not on laws," said Aguirre-Broca, a former member of Aruba's Youth Parliament. Aguirre-Broca (19) was the Youth Minister of Environment for one year and currently studies at University of Leiden, where she does International Studies.

Fielmich (20), a law student at Hogeschool Avans-Fontys in Tilburg, was also a member of the Youth Parliament when he resided in Aruba. When he moved to Bonaire, he continued to be active in youth affairs. He did a project on the Youth Island Council in Bonaire and came to the conclusion that youngsters have the perception that their voice is not heard by politicians.

"We have to change that. Youngsters in the King-

dom have much in common and we need to cooperate more," he said. Fielmich said he would seek active involvement of youth organisations in St. Eustatius and Saba.

Curaçao-born Ogenio (21), a third-year medicine student at Rotterdam Erasmus University, agreed that there should be more attention for young people in politics. There should be more cooperation to see what can be achieved together in the Kingdom.

"The idea is not to only use the debate as a competition, but to also stimulate cooperation and enhance mutual respect and understanding," he said.

Trotman, a former Miss St. Maarten Senior Carnival Queen 2011 who has been involved in various non-profit events and organisations, explained why she had decided to accept the invitation to be St. Maarten's ambassador.

St. Maarten-born Trotman said that the event should not be seen as mere debating, but as a step forward in developing of the

new countries, in her case Country St. Maarten. The past struggles and history are important to her.

"In St. Maarten we don't sufficiently acknowledge where we come from, how hard we had to fight to become a country. In order to know where you are going, we need to know our past and what we stand for. There is much more behind that same Dutch passport that we all have," she said.

Debating is in Trotman's blood. She has much experience in the field, especially when you consider her young age. She improved her debating skills as a member of the St. Maarten Youth Toastmaster club and subsequently the adult Toastmaster club. She was co-leader of the St. Maarten Debate Team, who became first-runner up in the Leeward Islands Annual Debating Competition and second in the Inter-scholastic Debate.

Van Tilburg (22), who studied Administrative and Organisational Science at University of Utrecht, will have the difficult task of creating more interest for the Kingdom among Dutch youngsters. "We know too little about our joint history. There is insufficient knowledge about the islands, too little comprehension and too many negative reports about the islands in the Dutch media," she said.

The ambassadors will screen and select their team members through short, filmed presentations of youngsters in which the prospective youth parliamentarians have to indicate why and how they want to be part of the Kingdom Youth Parliament.

The candidates have to upload their presentation on YouTube within a few

months. The contributions will be placed on the youth parliament's future Website. Trotman said she also wanted to organise debates at the various schools in St. Maarten. Candidates have to be fluent in either Dutch or English, the two languages in which the debates will be held.

The Kingdom Youth Parliament is part of the 200th anniversary of the Kingdom of The Netherlands, organised by the National Organisational Science at University of Utrecht, and chaired by former Dutch State Secretary of Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations Ank Bijleveld-Schouten. The event is supported by the Kingdom Relations Committee chaired by Pieter van Vollenhoven, University of St. Martin and The Netherlands Debate Institute.

The five ambassadors met with Bijleveld-Schouten, Chairlady of the Dutch Parliament Anouchka van Miltenburg, Chairman of the First Chamber Fred de Graaf, former Vice-president of the Council of State Herman Tjeenk Willink and various Members of Parliament on Monday and Tuesday.



What appears to have been a case of someone carelessly dumping waste oil has become a traffic hazard for users of Amazone Road, which leads to Pointe Pirouette. The oil spill took place around dusk on Monday when the dumpster was moved by the garbage truck. Some sand was placed on the road to prevent vehicles from skidding on the oil and to stop the oil from spreading further. The oil spill was reported to the newspaper by a scooter rider who feared for himself and his fellow road users. (John Halley photo)

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