



## YOUNG WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP—TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

On March 5, 6, and 9, 2020, 58 young women leaders from across Trinidad and Tobago came together in Port of Spain for *Young Women in Leadership – Trinidad and Tobago* (#YWiLTT); this programme was organised by CIWiL and ParlAmericas in partnership with the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago around the celebration of International Women’s Day 2020.

The young women leaders participated in an immersive training programme on transformational leadership, gender equality, inclusive decision-making, and parliamentary processes. They then demonstrated their learning and skill in the YWiL Parliamentary Sitting, serving as youth parliamentarians and sharing their perspectives on issues of national importance.

YWiLTT was the first in a series of national-level initiatives to be implemented across the Caribbean specifically to foster young women’s interest in public leadership. The programme is designed to support these leaders in building knowledge, skills, and networks necessary for their work as current and future changemakers.



Learn more about the CIWiL-ParlAmericas partnership and the creation of the YWiL programme in these videos of [Lady Anande Trotman-Joseph](#) (CIWiL President) and [Alisha Todd](#) (ParlAmericas Director General).

*“To hear leaders within the gender equality sector tell stories that are relatable to me & my interests and passions has been the most inspiring part of #YWiL. For the first time, I could actually see myself playing a part in state leadership and public affairs.”*



— D’Andre Wilson, YWiLTT participant



Hear about the importance of programmes like YWiLTT from two of the experts who participated:

- [Dr. Gabrielle Hosein](#) (Head of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the UWI St. Augustine Campus)
- [Chantal La Roche](#) (Senior Legal Officer at the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago)

Hear [Dylis Mc Donald](#) (CIWiL Project Coordinator) discuss CIWiL's work and plans for future YWiL initiatives in the Caribbean in this video.



## The Road to YWiLTT

### *Application process*

- ⇒ Over 350 talented and inspiring young women leaders from across Trinidad and Tobago applied to participate in the programme.
- ⇒ Representatives from more than 40 organisations across the country contributed to the promotion of YWiLTT's application process.

### *Orientation sessions*

- ⇒ Orientation webinars provided participants with information on programme content and logistics, and on the work of parliaments, parliamentary procedure, and the motion for debate during the YWiL Parliamentary Sitting.

### *Portfolio selection*

- ⇒ All participants submitted videos of preliminary versions of contributions for the YWiL Sitting to assist in the assignment of parliamentary portfolios.



# LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

The first two days of YWiLTT were dedicated to leadership training and preparation for the YWiL Parliamentary Sitting. The workshop's approach was based on CIWiL's flagship transformational leadership model and advocated for leadership that supports women's rights and gender equality.

Women leaders from various sectors led participants through activities and discussions that explored:

- The concepts of gender and gender equality;
- Acting as a transformational leader, including in spaces where there can be barriers to change;
- Applying a **gender lens in decision-making**;
- Effective leadership tools and strategies, including communications, resource mobilisation, networking, and creating and maintaining partnerships; and
- Parliamentary procedure and practice, with a focus on debating.



Watch this [video of YWiL participant Terriann Baker](#) to hear her perspective on the importance of gender sensitivity in the legislative process.



Listen to the [podcast](#) of the panel on this topic to hear strategies shared by Dr. Gabrielle Hosein (UWI IGDS St. Augustine), Lady Anande Trotman-Joseph (CIWiL), Patries Ramkaran (Association of Female Executive of Trinidad and Tobago – AFETT), and special guest Senator Hazel Thompson-Ahye. The session was moderated by Dr. Rosina Wiltshire (CIWiL).





 Alyssa Baptiste  
YWiLTT



Alyssa Baptiste “Conquered one of my goals this year which was to get out of my comfort zone and do something EPIC. The #YWiLTT conference was just that.

Thank you [@\\_ciwil](#) for the opportunity to use my voice to effect change.”

Watch this [video of YWiL participant Steffene Maharaj](#) for more on the learning and connections that were built through the programme.



The workshop also emphasised connection — with yourself and others — as a means for authentic, informed, and sustainable leadership. Participants were encouraged to consider their own leadership approaches and strengths, their goals for making a positive impact and in their communities and country, and to plan strategic actions in the short, medium, and long term for meeting these objectives.

Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that contributes to change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, it creates valuable and positive change and enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms.

The model of transformational leadership starts at the level of individual transformation, before moving on to the group and institutional levels. It fosters a culture of accountability, justice, and transparency.

When applied to gender and leadership, this process leads to the redefinition of gender and power relations, and the strengthening of leadership that is bold and innovative and builds on the skills of women and men in society thereby enhancing gender equality.

Learn more on [CIWiL's website](#).



Watch this [video of YWiL participant Bernice Antoine](#) to hear her discuss how the model of transformational leadership resonated with her.





Chantal Callender  
YWILTT



Chantal Callender “Last week I had the opportunity of attending a two-day highly intensive workshop hosted by the Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) and ParlAmericas in collaboration with the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

This allowed me to meet a group of young women from ages 18-25 who are probably some of the most inspiring group of ladies I've ever met! These women really are a true testament that WE WOMEN really are the future, therefore I'm certain that T&T and the world is definitely in great hands! The Black Girl Magic was absolutely present throughout the entire program!”

Participants reported the following as key learning gained during the leadership workshop:

- The importance of networking and coming out of your comfort zone as it can be life changing
- The practice/concept of intersectionality has really stood out to me. I now see how one issue/problem may have an overlapping impact on others
- Gender mainstreaming as a tool to dismantle a patriarchal society
- Leading from where you are; all leadership is self leadership
- Advice on the use of standing orders and thorough feedback pertaining to my debating skills
- The way to go about joining community work/ activism in the first place



Watch videos of YWiL participants [Reyanna Sankar](#) and [Sharese Taylor](#) to hear them share their main takeaways from the workshop and how they will carry these lessons into their personal and professional lives.



# YWiL PARLIAMENTARY SITTING



[Watch the debate](#) on the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago's ParView channel on YouTube.

On March 9, the House of Representatives of Trinidad and Tobago hosted the YWiL Parliamentary Sitting, representing the first of its kind in the country. The 58 YWiL participants served as parliamentarians and officers of the parliament for a debate and vote on a budget amendment bill developed through a simulated gender-responsive budgeting process.

The simulated bill proposed fund reallocations in line with the following gender equalities priorities:

1. Promoting gender equality through education,
2. Continuing improvements to police responses to gender-based violence, and
3. Strengthening food security and climate change resilience for small-scale women farmers.

To achieve these goals, the bill proposed increases or reductions in the budgets of the Ministry of Education; the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service; the Ministry of Agriculture, Land, and Fisheries; the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts; the Ministry of Health; and the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs.



YWiL participants' contributions during the Sitting offered their perspectives on the priorities established and the proposed resource allocations, assessing whether these were sufficient for making progress in addressing key issues of gender inequality in the country. These were informed by research and collaborations with peers, and also aligned with assigned constituencies and portfolios, which resulted in an intelligent, thoughtful, and inspiring debate.

Watch this [video of YWiL participant and former youth parliamentarian Cindy Andrews](#) to hear her discuss how learning about parliamentary practices and engaging in debate has strengthened her leadership and advocacy.



“The Council of Europe defines gender budgeting as a ‘gender based assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality’.

The purpose of Gender Budgeting is threefold:

1. to promote accountability and transparency in fiscal planning;
2. to increase gender responsive participation in the budget process, for example by undertaking steps to involve women and men equally in budget preparation;
3. to advance gender equality and women’s rights.”

Source: [Gender Budgeting](#) (European Institute for Gender Equality 2019, pg. 3)



Following the vote, the YWiL Parliamentary Sitting concluded with remarks by the Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives and member of the ParlAmericas Board, and the presentation of certificates to all participants.



*"We tend to think of youth as our tomorrow. Youth is really our today. And you made our today look great. You made our today look secure. I want to thank you all for coming here, sharing with us, preparing so well, embracing the parliamentary experience, and let's hope that being the first in this exercise, you will not be the last."*

—Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives





Onilaja Ogunsanwo  
YWiLTT



Onilaja Ogunsanwo "It was with great pleasure that I served as the Clerk of the House for first-ever Young Women in Leadership Parliamentary debate. I got to witness the first-ever all-women Parliamentary Sitting of over fifty beautiful young women. The Bill that was discussed was the allocation of funds for a gender-responsive budget.

Thank you to Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL), ParIAmericas, the Government of Canada and the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago for the great opportunity."

 Ashlee Burnett  
YWiLTT



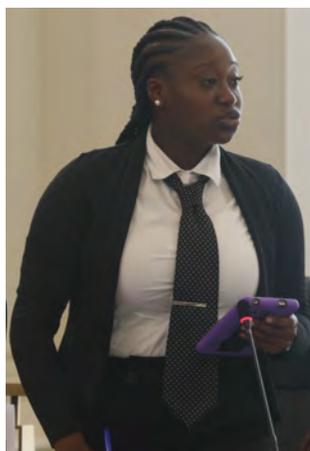
Ashlee Burnett “So many women gone before me could’ve only dreamt of being able to be given this opportunity. They’ve worked hard to establish and set the grounds for us to able to take a seat at the table.

CIWiL, ParlAmericas and [@tparliament1](#) made this sitting possible today; an all women sitting. Imagine that. 58 women, all in chamber, addressing pertinent issues presented to cabinet.

#YWIL happened in Trinidad and Tobago, the first time in the entire Caribbean.

I feel honoured and so grateful to be a part of Herstory!”





Paula Joseph  
YWiLTT



Paula Joseph “✦✦ YESTERDAY I MADE HISTORY. ✦✦  
Yesterday I sat in the Chamber in the first ever ALL  
WOMEN sitting in the Parliament and contributed to a  
debate on gender-responsive budgeting.

I met so many passionate young women who are  
ready to create and change policies for the better-  
ment of our nation. My experience was great.  
In one session we had to share the best piece of  
advice that we've received in our lives. Mine was  
'don't listen to what they say, go see for yourself'.  
Today, I can say that I did.

I came and I contributed and that's what we should  
all attempt.”

Inspired by their participation in YWiLTT, the young women leaders planned next steps for taking positive action in their communities, sharing their learning, and continuing their leadership development.

Some of the commitments adopted included:

- Educating friends, other youth leaders, and classmates about gender equality and activism
- Becoming more actively involved in advocacy and volunteer work to promote the human rights of all
- Planning fundraisers or other initiatives to benefit young girls or marginalised groups
- Learning more about transformational leadership and aligning their practices and visions with this leadership model
- Maintaining relationships with other YWiL participants and continuing to build their networks and support systems
- Continuing to believe in their abilities and the value of their voices as leaders



# YWiTT PARLIAMENTARIANS

**Dana Persad**  
Speaker of the House

## GOVERNMENT

**Dana Springer**  
Minister of Social Development and Family Services / Leader of The House  
Arouca

**Aleah Holder**  
Prime Minister  
Diego Martin West

**Jewell Mottley**  
Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs  
San Fernando West

**Anushka Gopie**  
Minister of Public Administration  
Port of Spain South

**Ruqayyah Scott**  
Minister of Finance  
Diego Martin North-East

**Jiselle Singh**  
Minister of National Security  
Port of Spain North

**Alliyah Jackson**  
Minister of Works and Transport  
Laventille West

**Chantal Callender**  
Minister of Health  
St. Joseph

**Steffeney Maharaj**  
Minister of Education  
Arima

**Alyssa Baptiste**  
Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs  
Tobago West

**K'Areecy Rogers**  
Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs  
St. Ann's West

**Cassidy Mitchell**  
Deputy Speaker  
Tunapuna

**Antoniya Gulston**  
Minister of Trade and Industry  
Moruga

**Chelsea Walker**  
Minister of Housing and Urban Development  
Point Fortin

**Ulani Fletcher**  
Minister of Energy and Energy Industries  
La Brea

**Cindy Andrews**  
Minister of Rural Development and Local Government  
Sangre Grande/Toco

**Kaneisha Toussaint**  
Minister of Communications  
La Horquetta

**Selena Mohammed**  
Minister of Tourism  
San Fernando East

**Paula Joseph**  
Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts  
St. Ann's East

**Tia-Marie Lander**  
Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries  
O'Meara

**Kelesi Pegus**  
Minister of Planning and Development  
Bon Air

**Bernice Antoine**  
Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development  
Diego Martin Central

**Anna-Lisa Nichols**  
Minister of Public Utilities  
D'Abadie

**Sadé Melville-Peters**  
Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs)  
Tobago East

**Aidan Belcon**  
Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Energy  
Maloney

**Amy Ramkissoon**  
Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Public Utilities  
Laventille East / Morvant

**Chelsea Elli Nandlal**  
Government Member  
Chaguanas Central

**Mahkees Henry**  
Government Member  
San Fernando South

## OPPOSITION

**Chrisette Benjamin**  
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Point-a-Pierre

**Mya John**  
Leader of the Opposition  
Siparia

**Jásher de Gannes**  
Opposition Member  
(Shadow Minister of National Security)  
Naparima

**Krystol Scott**  
Opposition Member  
(Shadow Minister of Community Development, Culture, and the Arts)  
Tabaquite

**Jamie-Leigh Ramsahai**  
Opposition Member  
(Shadow Minister of Health)  
Chaguanas East

**Arianne Matthew**  
Opposition Member  
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Caroni Central

**Khailah Bernard**  
Opposition Member  
(Shadow Minister of Finance)  
Oropouche East

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(Shadow Minister of Sports and Youth)  
Cumuto

**D'Andre Wilson**  
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Couva South

**Reyanna Sankar**  
Opposition Member  
St. Augustine

**Aneisia Taylor**  
Opposition Member  
Talparo

**Quinesha Jack**  
Opposition Member  
Barataria

**Britney Ramnarine**  
Opposition Member  
Princes Town

**Kurrisha Aberdeen**  
Opposition Member  
Fyzabad

**Narisha Ramkissoon**  
Opposition Member  
Mayaro

**Lauren Segulam**  
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Couva North

**Sumayyah Huggins**  
Opposition Member  
Chaguanas West

**Futima Fraser**  
Opposition Member  
San Juan

**Jael Goddard**  
Opposition Member  
Lopinot

**Kashime Phillips**  
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**Rebecca Bobb**  
Opposition Member  
Manzanilla

**Nikella Eastman**  
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Canada



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- Association of Female Executives of Trinidad and Tobago (AFETT)
- CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago
- ECLAC Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean
- The University of the West Indies, Institute for Gender and Development Studies – St. Augustine Campus
- Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women
- Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs) – Gender Affairs Division
- UNFPA Liaison Office in Trinidad and Tobago

We are also grateful to the numerous organisations and individuals who promoted the event and its recruitment process, helping to make this historic event such a success.

All photos courtesy of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.



# ABOUT CIWiL AND PARLAMERICAS



Caribbean Women in Leadership

[Caribbean Women in Leadership \(CIWiL\)](#) is a non-political, multi-partisan, and independent NGO established to monitor, strengthen and increase women's political participation and leadership in the region through advocacy, networking, research and capacity building initiatives.

CIWiL aims to create a sustainable, effective, and efficient women's leadership base, and to achieve gender equality, through advocacy, networking, research and capacity building.

CIWiL is about creating a space of sharing, nurturing, and solidarity among women across the many gaps that divide us.

The mission of CIWiL is to be a flagship organization to support efforts to increase the number of women in politics, leadership and decision-making at all levels in the Caribbean through high-quality training, networking, research, analysis and advocacy.

CIWiL acts as a coordinating and implementing mechanism for a regional programme of work developed and delivered by a network of organizations and individuals, to advance women's transformational leadership.



[ParlAmericas](#) is the institution that promotes parliamentary diplomacy in the inter-American system. Composed of the 35 national legislatures in North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, ParlAmericas promotes cooperative political dialogue, facilitates the exchange of good legislative practices, and produces tailored resources to support parliamentarians in their work. The International Secretariat of ParlAmericas is headquartered in Ottawa, Canada.

Through its gender equality programming, ParlAmericas promotes gender mainstreaming in parliamentary agendas and operations and, in close collaboration with civil society partners, advances women's political leadership, including that of the next generation of empowered women leaders.

*YWILTT was hosted as part of the ParlAmericas-CIWiL joint project, "[Strengthening Women's Political Leadership in the Caribbean](#)," supported by the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.*