



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY



THE QUEEN'S  
COMMONWEALTH ESSAY COMPETITION 2016

**PRESS RELEASE: 26 OCTOBER 2016**

### **Young writers from Zambia and Singapore receive prizes at Buckingham Palace Award Ceremony**

On Wednesday 26 October the Winners and Runners-up of The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition 2016 attended an Award Ceremony at Buckingham Palace. The special reception was hosted by HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, on behalf of Her Majesty The Queen.

Junior Winner Gauri Kumar, 14, from Singapore; Senior Runner-up Esther Mungalaba, 19, from Lusaka, Zambia and Junior Runner-up Tan Wan Gee, 14, also from Singapore were each presented with their certificates by The Duchess. Senior Winner Inessa Rajah, from South Africa, was unable to attend the Award Ceremony. She will, however, celebrate her achievement with the Royal Commonwealth Society during Commonwealth Week in March 2017.

The young writers were flown to London for Winners' Week – a week-long programme of cultural and educational activities, including a tour of Parliament and a day trip to Cambridge, the latter organised by the competition's sponsor, Cambridge University Press.

Among the 70 guests at the reception were Children's Laureate, illustrator Chris Riddell and representatives from the Governments of Singapore and Zambia. Commonwealth organisations were also represented with guests including Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Minister for the Middle East and Africa, Tobias Ellwood MP, Director of The Queen's Trust, Nicola Brentnall MVO and other prominent figures.

Awarded for their submissions on the 2016 competition theme 'An Inclusive Commonwealth,' the Winners explored contemporary topics including the struggle to find a diasporic identity, the importance of equality and the global migrant crisis.

**Gauri Kumar** said: "Winners' Week has been amazing, Buckingham Palace is breathtaking."

**Gauri** continued: "The topic of my essay is a very pertinent issue with my family and it comes up a lot."

On speaking with HRH The Duchess of Cornwall at the event **Tan Wan Gee** said: "She asked me about what inspired me to write my poem. She was incredibly nice."

**Esther Mungalaba** said: “Buckingham Palace is beautiful. It feels overwhelming to be here and with such important people.”

On her advice to young aspiring writers **Esther** said: “If you really love writing or have an idea that you feel even one person in the world should know about then you should take this step and find out more about the essay competition, you won’t regret it.”

**Claire Whitaker OBE** said: “As the Chair of Trustees of the Royal Commonwealth Society, I am immensely proud of our work in facilitating this essay competition in the name of our patron, Her Majesty The Queen. The success of this year’s competition is a testament to the continuing importance and relevance of the Commonwealth and its values for young people.”

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#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

More information about the Competition, including the Winners and Runners-up can be found here: <https://thercs.org/youth-and-education/the-queens-commonwealth-essay-competition/>

**Senior Winner:** [\*Dr. Congo-man\*](#), Inessa Rajah, South Africa, aged 17

**Senior Runner-up:** [\*Let Them In: A Short Discourse Outlining How Complicated These Three Words Can Be\*](#), Esther Mungalaba, Zambia, aged 19

**Junior Winner:** [\*Untitled\*](#), Gauri Kumar, Singapore, aged 14

**Junior Runner up:** [\*Are We Really So Different?/ Dear Santa\*](#), Tan Wan Gee, Singapore, aged 14

**The Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition** was founded in 1883 and is the world’s oldest international schools’ writing contest. The competition is sponsored by Cambridge University Press and received approximately 13,500 entries from almost every country in the Commonwealth.

The theme of the 2016 competition was *An Inclusive Commonwealth*, which is also the 2016 Commonwealth Year theme.

The 2017 competition was launched on 21 September 2016, International Day of Peace, with the theme *A Commonwealth for Peace*, reflecting the overall 2017 Commonwealth theme *A Peace-building Commonwealth*.

**The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS)**, founded in 1868, is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. Through youth empowerment, education and advocacy, the RCS promotes the value and values of the Commonwealth. [www.thercs.org](http://www.thercs.org)

**Partners:**



**Cambridge University Press** is the publishing business of the University of Cambridge. Granted letters patent by Henry VIII in 1534, it is the world's oldest publishing house and the second-largest university press in the world. Cambridge University Press has been a sponsor of The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition since 2013.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

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