



Association of Caribbean Mediaworkers

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A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE ALISTER HUGHES

By Wesley Gibbings, President – Association of Caribbean Media Workers, St George's, Grenada – March 4, 2005

I bring greetings on behalf of the Association of Caribbean Media Workers. Our network of journalists and media workers who like Alister have made this place, this Caribbean space, our home.

With these brief words, we salute a fallen comrade. Alister Hughes, the quintessential Caribbean journalist. Not only because of the reach and influence of his journalistic offerings in the region, but because the overwhelming context of his life's work was always the Caribbean reality – our hopes, our dreams, our folly and our failures. His work as a stringer for agencies such as Associated Press, Agence France Presse, the BBC and ABC News won him as much acclaim as his journalistic outputs for the likes of the Trinidad Express, what used to be Radio 610, the Caribbean News Agency, Radio Antilles and his own Grenada Newsletter – among others.

In a sense, his resilience as a freelance journalist served as an inspiration to younger and some not so young Turks to pursue a similarly risky career path. But cowardice was not to be a part of his more popular attributes. He was considered in media circles as a master exponent of the art of telling it as it is. So much so, that his personal welfare and safety sometimes trailed widely behind the need to tell the painful truth about ourselves.

The late, great Guyanese poet could well have been right here at Alister's side two decades ago and again last September when he wrote:

*If today our city is like a house of stone
rigid and cold, silent and still
It is because a soldier walks with a gun
not even a friend of the stars
not even a friend of the dogs.
And if today the sound of the ocean on our shore
comes like a rumble of terror
It is because death rides at anchor in the sea
watching until we sleep
waiting for hope to fade.
And even if today they try to stamp us down
flesh unto mud, heart into stone
Are we not still a great generation of struggle
strong and uncountable
born to be free?*



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This Grenada morning in the midst of our sorrow, we look out to that giant newsroom somewhere out there. I can hear him tap tapping at the keys, his sharp, round eyes dissecting each letter, every single word.

Again, Martin Carter:

*Death must not find us thinking that we die
too soon, too soon
our banner draped for you
I would prefer
the banner in the wind
Not bound so tightly
in a scarlet fold
not sodden, sodden
with your people's tears
but flashing on the pole
we bear aloft
down and beyond this dark, dark lane of rags.
Now, from the mourning vanguard moving on
dear Comrade, I salute you and I say
Death will not find us thinking that we die.*

Rest in peace, dear Brother.