



# Association of Caribbean Mediaworkers

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## Address by ACM's President Dale Enoch at the Inaugural Media Awards in Grenada

President of the Media Workers Association of Grenada, Michael Bascombe, executive members of the association, Members of MWAG, Senator Brenda Hood, Minister of Tourism, Members of Parliament, all Media workers of Grenada, Mr. Wesley Gibbings, General Secretary of the Association of Caribbean Mediaworkers, Sponsors of this event, specially invited guests...

It is always a good thing when your peers seek to honour the work that you have done. Opportunities like this one must be applauded because what MWAG is doing is really putting a mirror on itself and its members. To award excellence is really a form of introspection. In order to celebrate the work, there must be scrutiny. Over the past weeks, Media Workers here in Grenada have been taking a closer look at the work they have been churning out. That scrutiny had to take place before you made your submissions. You needed to go back in the files and pull out the work, select the best and then put it up for consideration. ...that exercise, ladies and gentlemen put the spotlight on the quality of the work you have been doing on behalf of the people of Grenada, the region and indeed the world. But as we all know, introspection does not always produce the kind of results we want...so obviously some of the work was less than acceptable while others were good and worthy of tag of excellence. On behalf of the ACM I congratulate each and every participant for doing what would have been a difficult thing.....looking into the mirror of the profession.

I am told the objectives of the awards were among other things, to improve standards of journalism and all other areas of the media. This must be the mandate of any organization like MWAG. It should be the reason for our very existence as organizations and professionals. Standards in media have not been as good as they should be. Certainly the work is being done, but in many parts of the region our standards have been falling miserably. There appears to be, in some instances, cloudiness over what our roles are and we may be losing our way as to what we should be doing and how it should be done. This uncertainty could only bring suffering to the work. Going back to basics and understanding your role in a free society is necessary.

The time is now for us all to do that. If we don't the powers that be would recognise the weakness and seek to capitalise on this. The integrity and credibility of the work must be protected. I urge MWAG and indeed every media association affiliated to the ACM to lead the charge of ensuring standards improve. I have said it in my own country, that the standards in radio cause me serious concerns. We have more radio, but the quality leaves a lot to be desired. The almost always limited submissions from radio in awards like this are indicative of that poor and unacceptable standard of work.



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It is important that we do our part in lifting standards, so that challenges to the work can be effectively fought. Those challenges include some of the laws which are still on the books of some countries. Those laws which seek to prohibit a free media, those laws which continue to be nurtured by governments and over zealous leaders. It is not bad enough that the laws remain in effect, but in some jurisdictions there are attempts to introduce more restrictive laws. It is your association's responsibility to monitor those attempts and be prepared to fight them vigorously.

There was a victory of sought in ST. Lucia recently with the withdrawal of a piece of legislation which had serious implications for a free media. The archaic criminal defamation, libel and slander laws must also be eliminated. They exist in just about every member country and we need to lobby for their removal. WE cannot depend on politicians to bring them to an end....afterall it suits their purpose to keep, nurture and even propose those laws.

The ACM has been quietly paying particular attention to the so called sunset legislation which governs security arrangements for the region's hosting of the cricket world cup tournament next year. We have to be very careful that in the interest of fighting George Bush's war on terrorism we do not allow for the erosion of the rights of media workers. We need to consider what impact, if any, this legislation could have on the free movement of journalists during the tournament. The ACM will comment on this in due course.

And while we are on cricket....how involved are media practitioners in the planning of this tournament.. ...of course as far as coverage goes? We have to be very careful we are not used as public relations officers for the various local organising committees. MWAG, and indeed all media associations must play a role in ensuring the profession is not damaged when the tournament is over. I am also hearing of restrictive accreditation fees.

THE ACM has taken steps to better the network. Media passes are soon to be dealt with in a different way, thereby allowing easy access. Your membership cards will be easier to get and you would be able to enjoy the benefits of being part of the organization.

Alliances continue to show that the ACM is credible and critical to media issues in the region. We are in the process now of organising a major training workshop with emphasis on HIV-AIDS reporting. We are collaborating with the American based Keiser Family Foundation and the Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership to host that event in Trinidad and Tobago in January. In the coming months more collaborations are being planned. We will keep you informed via MWAG.



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I cannot leave this podium without calling on all media practitioners in Grenada to give support to your association. I know of the challenges all our organizations face, believe me, but it is important for us all to overcome the bad times and the struggles and the hard work. Strong associations can only be a benefit to the profession, the publics we serve and the democracy. MWAG is certainly one of the strong pillars of this regional network that make up the ACM. President Bascombe's involvement at the executive level of the association has been tremendous. I commend his work and his commitment. You have to support those efforts. Those of you who are not members should sign up, because by doing so you not only help build a strong local body, but the regional network is strengthened as well.

Again i congratulate all participants and applaud MWAG for this initiative. I would also suggest that President Bascombe and his executive utilise the skill and experience of the so-called veterans of the media, some of whom are with us this evening. I thank you for the invitation.

Dale Enoch

President