



# Association of Caribbean Mediaworkers

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## **REMARKS BY NITA RAMCHARAN – VICE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN MEDIWORKERS (ACM) ON THE OCCASION OF THE SEMINAR ON WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY, ST GEORGE'S, GRENADA, MAY 14, 2009**

This morning I bring greetings from the Association of Caribbean MediaWorkers and its network of over 200 journalists from throughout the Caribbean region and further afield. I also bear the regret of our President, Wesley Gibbings, who has chosen not to be with us on this occasion, but with whom I have collaborated to bring you these remarks.

The ACM considers this forum to be among the more important opportunities the journalists of the region have for exploring the health of the Fourth Estate with colleagues who have other responsibilities within the industry.

It has been the temptation of many, over the years, not to consider the value of those, who generate media content, to the process of engaging the challenges Caribbean media have always faced. It is a temptation that has however often led to damnation of varying dimensions.

To its credit, UNESCO has long recognized the importance of partnership – through the rank and file of the media – in ensuring that important interventions are made in the interest of not only the media industry but of our societies as a whole.

As Wesley said in his statement on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day: “This year’s observances meet our region in a state of crisis in several critical areas of public life. Growing violence and crime, economic instability, environmental threats and a decline in social and political cohesion have left the Caribbean open to questions regarding its continued viability as a region of relative peace and stability.”

In many ways, the problems our societies face are matters of whether we do or whether we die. To quote our World Press Freedom Day statement: “The search for solutions to the growing threats has led to important interventions at the level of integrating regional resources, negotiating and securing geo-political compacts, and actions at national levels to address issues of social injustice and economic imbalances.

“These have not been easy tasks to engage and our media have played a role in fostering greater public understanding of the nature of the challenges being confronted.”

Toward this end, the ACM has – with its team of volunteers and budgets squeezed from stone – played a singularly important role in promoting notions of



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professional development through mentoring, through instruction and through preservation of the right to do our work.

In the next few weeks, we launch our Handbook for Election Coverage – edited by Lennox Grant and Wesley Gibbings. We are also responsible for a Handbook on covering Climate Change and a State of the Caribbean Media Report of 2005. Add to this, numerous training projects, our ongoing mentoring programme and the recent opening of a permanent secretariat in Trinidad.

Through these activities, and the international alliances we have forged, the ACM is probably the most important venture of its kind in the Caribbean ever. This, without the largesse extended to previous experiments and the odds that continue to be stacked against us as an organisation and even as a profession.

None of this is meant as a lament to our state of being, there is much that has been achieved through the practice of journalism in the Caribbean and we believe there is a lot more work to be done in the interest of the people of this region.

We will continue however to fight censorship in all its many disguised and open manifestations. We will continue to fight oppressive media laws and regulations. We will continue to fight for our colleagues overwhelmed by the burden of impunity generated both from within and without the media industry. It sure looks like the ACM is here to stay for a long time to come.

I would like to recognize one important partner in all of this. I mean the Media Workers Association of Grenada that has stood with us since our inception in 2001 and which we have seen grow and thrive over the years. To its credit, MWAG has given us Michael Bascombe who serves on our executive and MWAG will be our hosts in December when we convene our Fifth Biennial General Assembly right here in Grenada.

I thank Rawle Titus and his team for the great work in assisting in pulling this together. I thank UNESCO for continuing to recognize the importance of this event and I thank everyone else who has played a role in bringing us here over the next two days.

Thank you.