

## **Preserving Our Rights**

Barbados as an independent nation, prides itself on being a civil society. It functions in an environment that allows for the participation of the people in a democratic system of government, where freedom of choice is exercised and access to justice is not denied. The country can be proud of the fact that the rule of law and order is observed. Moreover, that the citizens of the land can peacefully advocate for their rights and to protest against any unjust changes to the laws of the land, which would alter the rights of the people.

In a contemporary Barbados, the promotion of rights of the individual, child rights, human rights, workers' rights, civil, constitutional and political rights have become part of the everyday conversation. In an independent nation, there is an expectation that the rights of the people will be promoted, protected and preserved. The purpose of this, is to ensure that the populace is protected from abuse and mistreatment at the hands of those who have authority to make decisions and to implement policy. Advocates for the preservation of the rights of people, are basically ensuring that all citizens have the power and ability to voice their concerns and to challenge any poor treatment from public authorities, institutions, and employers.

The acceptance of the United Nations Human Rights Charter by countries around the globe, is basically the first step towards ensuring that the actions of the political directorate and civil society organizations, understand their role in protecting and preserving the humanity of every individual. Moreover, it addresses the responsibility which they share in ensuring that every individual as a human being, can live a life of dignity.

Considering that the importance of the rights of every individual, there should be no attempt made to alter or deny these rights, without first consulting with the people. The people should never be taken for granted. Those in authority ought not to hold the illusion that they know what is best for the people, and by virtue of this, resort to taking any unilateral action. The thinking of those in authority should always be inform by their respect for the wishes of the people. The authorities should at all

times be mindful of their role in helping individuals to develop their capacity to reason, to develop their skills and enable them to make informed choices in life.

An elected government has the responsibility to protect the people's inalienable rights and property. In a democratic society these powers are limited by the provision of written a constitution. The constitution sets out the limitations there are on powers that elected, appointed and hired officials of the state may exercise. The observing and practicing democratic of ideals, offers some protection against autocratic and dictatorial behaviour.

Since most people are concerned about their constitutional rights, the will of the people is generally directing at guarding freedom of speech, freedom of choice, freedom of religion, the right to assemble, freedom of the press and the treasured right to vote. Notwithstanding the importance attached to those already listed, there is also the right to life, the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture and other cruel and inhuman treatment, the right to the basic necessities of life of food, water, education, housing, healthcare, employment and an adequate standard of living.

With the interest and welfare of the people always being paramount, it is for the people themselves to maintain control over their own destiny. They should never surrender their control or allow it to be usurped into the hands of a few, as to do this, would be to open the door for the possible erosion of rights and privileges.