

David Abdulah

Comrades,

I received the news from Roberta of Andaiye's passing to be with the ancestors. The day before I read Jocelyn's reporting of her condition and realised that the indomitable will and courage of Andaiye was finally waning.

It has taken me a week to be able to fully accept that Andaiye's physical being will no longer be here with us. For, although, we did not communicate on a regular basis for many years there was always the knowledge that this remarkable human being was there and that gave great comfort since her strength in the face of tremendous personal and political adversity taught us that no matter how difficult and uphill the struggle for social justice and the fundamental transformation of our Caribbean societies may be, our revolutionary spirit must never flag. This is not an exaggeration or a kind remark in the context of a eulogy or tribute on the death of a friend or colleague or family member.

Andaiye lived through and overcame adversities that would have caused a lesser person to wilt and capitulate many times over. There were her personal health challenges - of being a cancer survivor for three decades; and having other ailments that required her to be constantly in need of oxygen and which severely restricted her mobility. In fact the last time we met a few years ago she spoke of these challenges and the fact that any day could be her last on this earth as one would speak about what to have for breakfast. That she took these health challenges in her stride and discussed them with her usual dry sense of humour and straight forward matter of fact attitude, epitomises her courage and her philosophy of life. We know too, even as she was ill, of her having to care for her aging father and then in 2010 having her family home severely damaged by a fire.

Such personal hurdles would have daunted most of us but not Andaiye. And these came after the tragic and incalculable political setbacks that resulted from the assassination of her comrade Walter Rodney in June 1980 and then the destruction of the Grenadian Revolution in October 1983 with the assassination of the leaders of that revolution, persons with whom she would have been not just political comrades but friends.

Yet Andaiye, never losing sight of the real objective of revolutionary change which is to improve the lives of and empower working people, the marginalised, the poor and the powerless, reset herself and applied her tremendous intellect and organisational ability to the task of building the women's movement in Guyana and the Caribbean. Her co-founding of Red Thread was but one aspect of this work; another being her contributions to the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action.

Andaiye was of a generation of remarkable Guyanese people. Walter Rodney, Rupert Roopnaraine, CY Thomas, Bonita Harris, Jocelyn Dow, Omawale, Maurice Odle, Karen DeSouza. Josh Ramsammy to name but a few who contributed to the formation and building of the Working People's Alliance together with the elder Eusi Kwayana and the construction of a Guyana where the interests of working people, women, youth and children and the poor and marginalised, regardless of race or religion, would be placed at the centre of development and would hold the reins of power. Among such a distinguished group of her peers, Andaiye stood out.

We are all indebted in one way or the other to Andaiye for all that she has done for so many people throughout her entire life. She never lived for herself but gave selflessly of herself even in the face of great personal challenges. She therefore is undoubtedly a true revolutionary in the very best sense of that word.

I take with me the memory of our last meeting during which Bonita dropped by - Andaiye still smiling that mischievous half smile of hers even while being seriously ill - and of us talking as old friends and comrades do of the political difficulties and challenges of today as we reminisced on the past victories and defeats. In the words of her friend and Guyanese and Caribbean Poet Laureate Martin Carter - "Death must not find us thinking that we die". Andaiye lives! Her Spirit Lives! Her Example Lives!

A Luta Continua! Solidarity forever!

David Abdulah