

TRIBUTE FROM DENISE DIAS: HELP AND SHELTER AND MOTHERS IN BLACK

ANDAIYE - 31st May, 2019.

Memorial Service - 8th June, 2019.

DEAR FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES OF ANDAIYE ,

WHY IS IT THAT WE WAIT UNTIL A PERSON DIES TO TELL THE WORLD WHAT A WONDERFUL PERSON THEY WERE? TODAY, ALONG WITH OTHER TRIBUTES I JOIN IN EXPRESSING NOW HOW MUCH WE ALL CARED FOR THIS AMAZING WOMAN. IF ANDAIYE WAS HERE, I CAN JUST IMAGINE HER LOOKING AROUND AND ROLLING HER EYES.

ANDAIYE WAS A FOUNDER MEMBER OF THE WPA, RED THREAD AND THE CANCER SOCIETY, BUT FEW KNEW OR REMEMBERED THAT SHE WAS ALSO A FOUNDER MEMBER OF HELP & SHELTER, AN NGO FORMED IN 1995 THAT WORKS AGAINST ALL TYPES OF VIOLENCE ESPECIALLY DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE.

ANDAIYE'S PASSION AND KNOWLEDGE ON JUSTICE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN WAS NEVER MORE NEEDED DURING OUR EARLY DAYS OF SETTING UP HELP & SHELTER.

HER COMMITMENT, WORLDLY ADVICE, AND HER SIMPLE STRAIGHTFORWARD MANNER OF RELATING HER VIEWS, IS PART OF THE REASON THAT AFTER 25 PLUS YEARS HELP & SHELTER HAS BECOME A LEADER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST VIOLENCE IN GUYANA, PROVIDING SERVICES AND A SHELTER TO VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF ABUSE.

ANDAIYE WAS ONE OF THOSE PERSONS WHO MADE A REAL DIFFERENCE. SHE WILL FOREVER HAVE OUR RESPECT, OUR LOVE, AND OUR GRATITUDE.

TO ANDAIYE'S BROTHER ABBYSSINIAN , ANDAIYE'S FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES. ON BEHALF OF HELP & SHELTER, OUR SINCERE CONDOLENCES. ANDAIYE'S INSPIRATION AND HER VISION WILL KEEP OUR MEMORIES OF HER ALIVE.

ON A MORE PERSONAL NOTE. ANDAIYE WAS NOT ONLY MY COLLEAGUE AT HELP & SHELTER , SHE WAS MY BIG SISTER AND A DEAR FRIEND.

IN 1996 WHEN MY ELDEST 17yr OLD DAUGHTER ALICEA WAS KILLED ON OUR ROADS BY A SPEEDING, DRUNKEN DRIVER ANDAIYE BECAME AND REMAINED PART OF MY FAMILY. ANDAIYE, ALONG WITH MY SISTER BEVERLEY HARPER, AND ANOTHER DEAR FRIEND AND ALSO A FOUNDER OF HELP & SHELTER, JOSEPHINE WHITEHEAD ASSISTED ME IN FORMING THE ALICEA FOUNDATION.

HOWEVER, DESPITE EXPRESSING OUR ROAD SAFETY CONCERNS PUBLICLY, FOR MANY MONTHS ROAD CARNAGE CONTINUED TO ESCALATE. I EXPRESSED MY FRUSTRATION TO ANDAIYE. SHE LISTENED AND SOON AFTERWARDS PROCEEDED TO TELL ME ABOUT THE MOTHERS OF THE PLAZA DE MAYO, AN ASSOCIATION OF ARGENTINE MOTHERS WHOSE CHILDREN DISAPPEARED DURING THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP IN BUENOS AIRES . WEARING WHITE SCARVES THE MOTHERS MARCHED IN DEFIANCE IN FRONT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE.

THROUGH ANDAIYE's INSPIRATION I MADE CONTACT WITH MOTHERS WHO HAD ALSO LOST THEIR CHILDREN ON OUR ROADS. MOTHERS IN BLACK WAS FORMED. WE STOOD IN SILENCE OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS EVERY FRIDAY FOR ONE HOUR WITH PHOTOGRAPHS OF OUR CHILDREN AND PLACARDS ASKING THE ADMINISTRATION TO PASS ROAD SAFETY LEGISLATION. ANDAIYE WHO SUFFERED VARIOUS AILMENTS OVER SO MANY YEARS OFTEN JOINED OUR SILENT VIGIL. HER ONLY COMPLAINT TO ME, WITH A STUPPS AND A WRY SMILE "DENISE, WHY THE HELL YOU CHOSE US TO WEAR BLACK IN THIS HOT SUN".

AFTER NIGH-ON FOUR YEARS, OUR DEMANDS WERE RECOGNIZED AND PASSED. THOUGH WE STILL LACK ENFORCEMENT, WITHOUT ANDAIYE PLANTING THE SEED, OUR GOALS AND WISHES WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN FULFILLED.

ANDAIYE IS NOW AT PEACE. NO MORE PAIN, AND HER LEGACIES WILL LIVE ON.

I CLOSE WITH THIS SHORT POEM TO ALL THOSE THAT LOVE ANDAIYE SO DEARLY:

MISS ME A LITTLE - BUT NOT TOO LONG
AND NOT WITH YOUR HEAD BOWED LOW.
BURY YOUR SORROWS IN CONTINUING OUR GOOD DEEDS
AND REMEMBER THE LOVE AND WORDS WE SHARED.
MISS ME - BUT PLEASE LET ME GO.