

TRIBUTES TO ANDAIYE

By Eusi Kwayana

6:35 p.m. on May 31, 2019 is a moment that should remind us of a life that will remain vital to the all-round reconstruction of Guyana, the Caribbean and the hemisphere. Silently, at that moment, Andaiye tek she bundle an' go-way. She has left thousands in the spaces in which she worked, torn between a sense of relief at the end of her physical ordeal and the sudden realization that her active engagement in the up-hill tasks before us is no longer possible. We are also, while celebrating her most remarkable and productive life, sorrowful at the loss of her friendship, her laughter, her love and above all, the sense of mothering that was ingrained in her being.

Here I must testify to the mutual love and respect that has prevailed for all time between her, her family, her close associates and our family. Andaiye's multiple talents in human development have been recited in most of the tributes published. To save time and space, I wish to adopt and recommend, for the good of all concerned, the recommendation of one writer. It is the suggestion that the best honor we can pay to her departed mentor is to make a serious attempt to adopt, as far as we can, her principles and her conduct – her praxis.

Her praxis included certain interventions into public affairs in her own name and at her own risk, or in one case in an activity in which she was seen as a central figure.

When the official newspaper of the day thought fit to publish an uninformed and disrespectful attack on the Rastafarian community of Guyana, Andaiye took up her pen, broke with the known reflexes of wide sections of the society and rebuked the offending editorial.

Most Guyanese today are aware that our country lacks an overall national sense necessary for people aspiring to be a nation. Part of this comes from the fact that the political institution to which our people entrust their future are often lacking in moral courage. It will be necessary for serious people who have any hope left to continue this conversation outside of the atmosphere of a celebration such as this. We shall find that one courageous woman had often pointed the way towards cooperation. She did not call for the abolition of differences, but for "cooperation and unity across differences." Andaiye has taught us therefore that we cannot make everything over to our own taste and preference, but that we have the power to create and secure a national community in which, regardless of race, gender, class and age, ability and disability, all are entitled to equal respect and equal security. This is a challenge in particular to the major political institutions and also to their supporters. It is a challenge on which the future, not of our beloved Andaiye, but of the present and future generations depends.

Andaiye tek she bundle an' go-way. In the USA the radio was playing today, Billie Holiday's "I'll be seeing you in all the old familiar places." May the society embrace her example and be fair to her memory.