

# Hazel Brown, in memoriam

*Alfred Aguiton, friend.*

Those of us who were fortunate to have known Hazel Brown owe her an unpayable debt of gratitude.

I first met her when we, at the Current Affairs Unit of 610 Radio, gave laserlike coverage to the campaign Hazel had unleashed (together with her sister caped-crusaders Faith Wiltshire, Helen Camps, et al) against a very popular local ice-cream which was deemed to have bacteria in its production.

Those ladies caused the gentleman businessman Maurice Quesnel many a sleepless night...but did win the health improvement they sought.

Witnessing Hazel's hitherto unseen activist energy, it was easy to tease her with the fun that her name "Hazel" must have been because of how 'nuts' it was to be such a courageous campaigner for citizens' rights in those Staid Sixties. Plus, that the name "Brown" must have had to do with the combination of our national colours black and red with yellow, and the earthiness of that soil of realness from which Hazel was always coming.

In 1974, a few years after the historic Battle of The Bacteria, Hazel phoned me and my colleague, now deceased Astra Da Costa, when a trade union strike had caused the colonial Rediffusion-Radio Trinidad company to terminate our days-old employment contract. Hazel, with her business partner management consultant later ONR/NAR advisor Philip Nunez, called to suggest that we "fight back" against "the forces of evil" by forming our own company, and that we should proceed to do what we did best: communications.

"Go speak to Philip Rochford" (head of the four-years' old nascent National Commercial Bank) she advised us, "because he's looking to help young nationals who want to be entrepreneurs".

"And while you're at it," she added, "consult Al Roberts (a brilliant young uprising attorney, father of the combatant Anil) who would take your fight to the High Court."

We took both steps, registered a public relations-advertising agency brazenly called All Media Projects Limited (AMPLE—the name was ours, not Hazel's but her chutzpah had clearly rubbed off on us!)...But that's another story.

Hazel and Philip not only offered us a two-room office space to get our agency started, but seconded to us one of their secretaries, Ann Allick, who is still with us 48 years later! More than that, Hazel gave us our very first job: an advertising/PR campaign titled "Back To The Breast", which went after encouraging the return to breast-feeding by T&T's young mothers. This was a campaign mounted by the Hazel-Helen pro-consumer fighting-force HATT—Housewives Association of Trinidad and Tobago—which was hands-on and street-smart militant, and certainly not activists just content to talk through their HATT.

Needless to say, the campaign went straight to not just the breasts but the heart of all of T&T...and

the powdered-milk business was struck a blow in the chest!

Hazel thereafter remained our lifelong friend, never ceasing to dazzle us with her dynamic, indeed dynamite energy—blowing up the sanctuaries and shibboleths of the social tumours of the day.

She went at every cause with her no-nonsense rapid-fire speaking style, her finger-pointing mannerism as she argued for her convictions; yet she could defuse any opponent's anger with her husky full-throated laugh, always having the knack for presenting the acceptably sensible ways to do helpful things on behalf of defenceless individuals, communities, and country.

Hazel had become for us T&T's first "human drone", hovering above us all but able to zing in and tangle up with the entanglements of our times—from worker's rights to domestic violence.

I last spoke to Hazel in more recent times as she battled with her own slowing-down challenges. She had lost little of her fire. She was still relentless at leaping into the trenches, fearless in rushing to the frontlines, selfless in not wanting or awaiting titles and accolades, mute-less when even at receiving her honorary UWI doctorate she admonished her donors for being "silent in the face of issues which need expression and action".

All the while, she had been finding time to raise a platoon of children who themselves have turned out to be fighters and first-responders, doing so Hazel-style, from Bench to Radio Station.

Today, it would be simply too vacuous of us to wish that whichever Paradise Hazel has gone to, there she should "rest in peace".

Nah. No way. That would be like asking Sat Maharaj to ungird his battle loins and decline the fights of life.

God has gotten a new Angel Warrior-for-Just-Causes in His ranks...and we can only hope that we, on this side of the veil, will continue to benefit from the inheritance of Hazel's spirit and walk in the light of her shining example.

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