

Clotil Walcott **A Historical Figure In Process**

Statement of Reason

One aspect of academic work in the social sciences is the search for a better understanding of the reality in which we live. Among social researchers, there is an increasing call to do more relevant research, which furthers our understanding of society and positively impacts on the lives of its members. Academics in the Caribbean have also been called upon to come up with theoretical frameworks and explanations which appropriately and more relevantly mirror the experiences of societies in developing countries. In this context, many persons have been able to make outstanding contributions to society, either through their life's work, or through formal studies and publications. Some have even been able to combine their formal studies and writings with a level of activism which enabled them to make practical contributions to society and the lives of ordinary people. For this we have honoured them in different ways. Within the University, some have been awarded formal degrees while others have been awarded honorary degrees.

It is not often that someone from the working class, especially a woman, is able to empower herself and rise above her circumstances without the benefits of high formal education to sufficiently make such contributions, as described above, to society. In the past, whenever this has happened, society and intellectuals in society have not been able to sufficiently liberate themselves from bound notions of academia and intellectualism to recognise the value and worth of the contributions of such persons until it was too late. In addition, History has illustrated that the social and political irritation which often accompanies true activism for profound social change, sometimes obscures the vision, brilliance and greatness of those who strive for such change, until after their deaths.

Clotil Walcott is a living example of someone who has made a tremendous contribution to her society, and to the cause of women in general through her activism, research and publications. She has been indefatigable in her championing of the rights of women in general, and more specifically, of the household worker waged and unwaged. As a trade unionist, she has ventured into uncharted waters to have household workers recognized as workers, unionised and properly remunerated for their labour. For this, she has been placed under tremendous pressure, with obstacles specifically placed in her path to prevent her from achieving her goals. This however did not prevent her from forming a trade union - as yet unrecognised because in Trinidad and Tobago domestic or household workers are not recognized as workers. She has however been

successful in lobbying for the passing of the laws, pertaining to minimum wages of household workers and assistants. She has also been in the forefront of the legislation passed by the parliament of Trinidad and Tobago to add to the National Accounts the previously uncouted, unwaged including that performed by housewives. In achieving this Trinidad and Tobago however became one of the first country in the world to pass such legislation. The Trinidad and Tobago legislation was then used as the model for negotiations on unwaged work in the Platform for Action at the United Nations Fourth World Congress of Women held in Beijing, China in 1995.

What is so very special about Clotil Walcott however, is that she has done all of this as a grassroots, working class woman and mother¹ with a basic primary school education. She has used her life experiences, her concern for others around her, boundless energy and native intelligence and intellectual ability to do what many have done after having spent a number of years in the formal schooling process, at higher levels of education. Ms. Walcott has been recognised internationally for her work and received a number of awards. She has participated in a number of international fora for the advancement of women, and is continuing her tireless work in the advancement of her various causes. She already has one publication and has written a number of articles relating to her work, ideas and experiences. This is definitely a woman who will take her place in history among the great social reformers of our age, who have been responsible for significantly influencing their society.

This is an excellent opportunity for the University of the West Indies to demonstrate its ability to recognize and value greatness wherever it may be found and to be a leader in the transformation of limited ideas of intellectualism and ways of doing, by recognising the work and contribution of Clotil Walcott. Attached is a Resume/C.V. outlining the accomplishments of this outstanding woman.

¹ Clotil Walcott is the mother of five and grandmother of many and was a single parent for most of her adult life.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Clotil Walcott
Date of Birth: September 7, 1929
Address: Wattley Circular, Mount Pleasant Road, Arima,
Trinidad and Tobago
Telephone: (868) 667-5247

Education & Qualifications:

(Primary)

St. Joseph's Roman Catholic School
Arima Roman Catholic

(Certificates)

Overseas Correspondence Courses

- Shop Steward Duties
- Collective Bargaining
- Industrial Negotiations
- Trade Union and the Law

Employment Experience:

Central Experimental Station, Centeno - Labourer
Cannings Poultry Processing Plant, Arima - Machine Operator - Packer
(1964-1988)

Conferences & Seminars:

1979: The Hague, The Netherlands, Institute of Social Studies.
"Women's Struggles and Research"

London, England

"Women Count, Count Women's Work"

1985: Nairobi, Kenya

"End of Decade Conference of Women and NGO Forum"

1988: London, England. House of Commons.

Counting Women's Work

"Legislation Affecting Domestic Workers in Trinidad and Tobago"

1990: Vienna, Austria.
Extended Session of the Commission on the Status of Women
- to Review and Appraise the Forward Looking StrategieS
- International Conference

1995: Beijing, China.
Fourth World Conference on Women and NGO Forum

1997: London, England:
25th Anniversary Wages for Housework Campaign - Feature Speaker

Membership in Groups and Organisations:

President and Founding Member National Union of Domestic Employees

Committee Member of the National Aids Committee

Founding Member of the National Women's Caucus

Founding Member of the International Wages for Housework
Campaign, Branch of the Local Chapter of Trinidad and Tobago

Member of the International Women's Count Network

Member of Housewives in Dialogue (with UN Status)

Funding Member of the International Network of Domestic Workers
formed at the Beijing Conference in China

Publications:

Fight Back Says a Woman (Edited Collection of pamphlets)

Part 1 "The Exploitation of Working-Class Women vs Cannings Limited -
Guilty?"

Part 2 "A Woman's Fight - An Example of Exploitation of the Working
Class Woman"

Part 3 "Women's Aim Now is to end Exploitation"

"Working Class Woman Speaks Out

Awards and Honours:

1984: Bank and General Workers Union (BGWU) - Grand Certificate of Honour for Service and Dedication to the Trade Union Movement

1985: Peoples Popular Movement: Star Citizen Award

1991: Council of Progressive Trade Unions (CPTU):
Servant and Hero of Labour Gold Award

Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women:
Honoured for Outstanding contributions to the Women's Movement

1995: Partners of the Americas: Honoured for 30 years of Dedicated Service which achieved world recognition of the value of women's work.

Public Activism:

Has been publicly vocal on the following issues:

- the non recognition of domestic employees as 'workers' and their consequent lack of entitlement to basic protection and basic rights as workers.
- the vulnerability of young women trapped into prostitution
- rape and sexual harassment in and out of the home
- domestic violence
- remuneration for household work by housewives
- the need to reform the Faculty of Law Act so that women can become eligible for social welfare in their own right.

Achievements:

1. Publication of an order for Minimum Wages and Terms and Conditions of Service for Household Assistants - November 1982.

2. Passage of Act No. 29 1996 requiring the Central Statistical Office and other Public Bodies to produce and maintain statistics relative to the counting of unremunerated work. October 1996
Presented in Parliament by Senator Diana Mahabir-Wyatt.

3. Bill to amend the Industrial Relations Act to include domestic workers as 'workers' laid in Parliament April 1996.