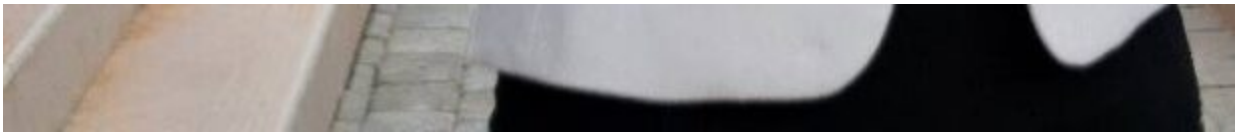


Hazel Brown, one of a kind - Trinidad and Tobago Newsday

Gabrielle Hosein

[Commentary](#)

15 Hrs Ago



Dr Gabrielle Hosein -

DR GABRIELLE JAMELA HOSEIN

HAZEL BROWN was a gift to the Caribbean and the world. She was a world-changer.

She was everything she was known to be: fierce, sharp, caring, enthusiastic, tireless, visionary, difficult, single-minded, loving, creative, curious, dramatic, insightful, empowering, cantankerous, generous, strategic, joyful, inspiring, determined, deeply political and absolutely one of a kind.

For nearly 30 years, I learned and grew from just listening and watching her, from being in the spaces she created and nurtured, and from being encouraged, instructed and mentored time and again. To know her was to learn from her.

She was always full of plans and ideas. She had an encyclopaedic insider knowledge of Caribbean feminist history because she had been thinking, watching, listening and influencing for 50 years, and was a pioneer of her generation from TT, allied with similar Caribbean women and men from across the region.

There is hardly an issue about which she wasn't concerned or didn't speak out at one time or another. Her analysis and advocacy was intersectional before the term became popular, because she was aghast at injustice of any kind.

She was unapologetically for the rights and empowerment of women and girls, domestic workers, low-income consumers, breast-feeding mothers, women in local government, housewives, and so many more.

She was a pan-Africanist even as she consistently gathered against the alienating tide of racial stereotyping and division.

As a young Indian woman who grew up in her shadow, she treated me as one of her daughters, with affection and patience, knowing I'd do whatever she told me to do, and I think feeling a sense of accomplishment when it was very clear I was trying to walk in her footsteps, something I think she felt about all the young people she influenced. We had laughs, connection, serious discussions and times when I hope I made her proud.

Hazel would often talk about how she understood the power of the State, and local government, from sitting in Port of Spain City Council meetings when she was ten years old. She had a scholarship from the mayor's office to attend school and he would have to sign her report card at the end of term. So she would sit listening until it was her turn for his attention, thus gaining her first understanding of politics.

In June, I called her so she could tell Zi this wonderful story. Seventy years separated them, and Hazel was sharing a memory from when she was Ziya's age,

which I hoped would both inspire and educate. What a gift to have heard that story from Hazel herself, I told Zi, not yet knowing how true those words would be.

I came of age with her as an ever-present advocate, organiser, writer, protester, baby-doll masquerader, marcher, global leader and truly fearless Caribbean woman. With her goes a feminist era in which she lived and which she helped define. Today, the world isn't the same. She was a gift we had for a time.

I know she knew how much I admired and appreciated her, and how much affection and respect I had for her. The journey was full of lessons and love.

I cannot imagine her resting, now that she is freed of her body. I can only see her shaking us up in the night so we wake with a fervour to get up in the morning and take our placards to the road. I can only imagine her appearing in spirit in the shimmering heat amidst her beloved baby dolls on a Carnival day. I can only picture her rattling the visitors' gallery in the Parliament when politicians do foolishness.

I know I will sense her in the wind on International Women's Day. I think I will hear her voice in my ear for decades, telling me what I should do, what we must do. I cannot imagine her, even gone from this life, without her boots on. She had a fighting spirit that I do not think would be ready to move on when there is still so much to be done.

I send her family, friends and sisters in struggle and diverse allies my sincerest condolences.

May we continue to fight in her name, with her spirit and with the sense of power she wanted us to know was ours. Then, I think, her indomitable spirit may agree to rest in peace.

Hazel Brown, I mourn and celebrate you. I thank you. You live on in us. We know there is still much work to do.

Diary of a mothering worker

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