

PRESS RELEASE

DR. MARIA AGARD MP CHRIST CHURCH WEST

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On November 22nd 2015 I learnt of my expulsion from the Barbados Labour Party, an institution I served with diligence and distinction for 17 years.

That the decision made by the National Council of the Barbados Labour Party could so hastily and precipitously sever all relationship with one of its few successful representatives in the House of Assembly has confused and disturbed, not just a Party or a Constituency but an entire nation of right thinking Barbadians.

For several weeks, many have pontificated, on the issues relevant to this development and what it bodes, not just for Maria Agard but the Barbados Labour Party and Barbados.

Today, free of the encumbrances that previously bridled my tongue; I am here to tell my story.

I am Maria Agard, Member of Parliament to serve the constituents of Christ Church West until elections are constitutionally due in 2018.

Born, nine days after our forefathers took the bold step to sever ties with our colonial past, I am a child of Independence.

All the hope and dreams of our fore fathers are manifest in my being, my psyche, my objectives and my goals.

I am a Barbadian, proud and strong, resolute, determined enduring. I uphold the fundamental tenets of good governance and democracy.

I came to public life mindful of my indebtedness to a country that has gifted me with everything I hold dear. Wanting nothing in return, desiring nothing, I came to politics to give of myself to Barbados.

My overarching philosophy, in respect of my country, which to many seem to have lost its direction in terms of governance, is that there needs to be a sea change in the political system in our beloved country.

I came to public life determined to reject the political polarization that prohibits members from opposing sides from collaborating in the best interest of the people, and in its place I embrace a relationship of collegiality with all my fellow parliamentarians regardless of political divide, to serve this nation and its People.

I reject the tradition of securing the approval and vote of constituents by pandering to personal patronage, rather than by true representation, a representation defined and expressed in the facilitation of shared resources available to all through advocacy to government agencies and the fair distribution of these resources, not to the entitled partisan supporter, but to the most vulnerable and marginalized as a priority.

I reject the practice of indebting myself to the monied class, with their own self directed interests who may be in conflict with national goals and

development, and instead I embrace the tenets of integrity, transparency, and accountability.

I long for the day when as a national commitment to good governance, all parliamentarians support and demand the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, to which we have been signatory since December 10th 2003 with no further progress hence, one of only 21 countries of the United Nations to refuse to do so, a disgrace that must be corrected with urgency.

If my lack of resources at any time offended you, my friends, know it was as a result of the vows I took, that my will, my conscience and my character must never be sullied in public life because a favour owed had to be fulfilled, or equally important, that the public purse could be held for ransom by the same token.

I implore you my friends, even as we eagerly anticipate celebrations for our 50th anniversary of independence, that the most fitting expression of our pride for our country is to reject the debilitating mental and physical dependencies that are encouraged by some political operatives for their own purposes, to secure your vote, and instead to embrace the potential and talent integral to our people through exposure to education, opportunity and industry, thereby committing to national productivity so urgently needed.

I came to public life to be the change agent I desired for my country. I came to shake up the status quo because it is the preservation of the status quo that is destroying this country. I came with a new thinking and a new

expectation that Barbadians desired to be truly free as our independence suggests.

But these were my ideals, revolutionary and progressive, yet in the minds of those who did not share my vision, my approach was considered offensive, rude and disrespectful.

I have been expelled from the Barbados Labour Party not on account of the nine frivolous charges laid against me, or any of the spurious notions which have been fed to the public by those who aspire to shape public opinion with their falsified information.

It must be documented for indepth scrutiny, that the charge of poor representation was never formally laid against me, nor form part of the nine charges, though poor representation was the precipitating offense for which I was condemned.

I have been expelled from the Barbados Labour Party because I dared to be different.

I dared to speak out against a grave injustice that had been done to the members of the Christ Church West branch when their cast votes were declared null and void.

I dared to speak out against the unconstitutional, the unauthorized and bullying tactics of a political leader who is not accustomed to being told that she is wrong, even when she contemptuously violates the very constitution her espouses to uphold.

I dared to speak out against the practice of the silence of omerta that prevents members of this institution from airing the evils that are practiced within, because I believe that by carrying that practice of learned silence to government and worst yet, to Cabinet, we as politicians have been witness to some of the gravest atrocities leveled on our people while we adhere to silence because that is all we have ever practiced.

What good can come of this practice, when a country sinks deeper and deeper into debt, with no signs of relief from either political party because our vow is a deafening silence and commitment to party above country.

As an agent of change, I wanted better for my Barbados. What about you?

I have worked in the constituency of Christ Church West, with fervor and diligence. Mine was a service of advocacy to government agencies on behalf of the vulnerable, sponsorships to youth programs and the nurturing of young minds in a healthy direction. The Maria Agard road tennis tournament is a manifestation of this goal. The meeting of residents through numerous town hall meetings and the collaboration with relevance authorities to serve all our needs.

To my friends and family in Christ Church West, whose outpouring of love affection and concern has been my rock, I thank you for maintaining confidence in me. I pledge to you today, that as I continue to be your representative as an Independent Member of Parliament, I remain responsive and accessible to your needs, I am wholly committed to the

advancement of your best interest, in the House of Assembly as well as in the wider Barbados community.

I am determined to challenge the decision to expel me from my Party, in the Court of Law, not only for myself, for a grave injustice has been done, but for the preservation of the legacy of the Right Excellent Sir Grantley Adams and the founding fathers of the Barbados Labour Party, principles to which I proudly adhere, because I have no fight with the party I served for 17 years, even as I reject its leadership as being tyrannical and autocratic.

The Labour Party as the oldest political institution in the region, fought valiantly for fundamental rights and freedoms for all Barbadians. It fought for universal adult suffrage, one man, one vote regardless of economic franchise. It fought for holiday with pay, workman's compensation, the rights of workers, and improvements in the availability of education.

Rights many of our ancestors did not have. I feel a deep sense of obligation to fight with every sinew of my body for the preservation of these fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the laws of this land.

Such rights and freedoms as the right to fair hearing, due process and natural justice. What a travesty it has become that the very institution that fought valiantly for the enfranchisement of many, should now be at the fore front of efforts to deprive others of the same rights.

That it is a political institution, desirous of forming the next government, that has perpetuated such abuse, is tragic and must be opposed on all grounds.

The legacy of the founders of the BLP must be preserved.

To all of Barbados I say to you, passion replaces fear when the cause is clear.

Today the cause could not be clearer. If we as a people need a strong advocate for the cause of justice, it must start with me, it must start with you.

Having thanked my constituents, I wish to thank my fellow parliamentarians who stood with me and who continue to stand with me, for the sake of that justice.

To the churches and their leaders who offered prayers for my protection and well being, I thank you, and to all Barbados who took the time to whisper that reassuring word of comfort, know that I have been strengthened by your support and offerings of goodwill.

I remain a committed Barbadian, committed to the People.

I say to you, be blessed Barbados. Walk in the path of righteousness and Eternal Light.