



National Library of Jamaica

# Anthony Abrahams, dead at 71

## Former tourism minister hailed as a 'unique' and 'brilliant' son of Jamaica

BY PAUL HENRY  
Crime and court Coordinator  
henryp@jamaicaobserver.com

**A**NTHONY 'Tony' Abrahams — the former minister of tourism and journalist who had for close to two decades been the centre of the popular current affairs programme *The Breakfast Club* — died at home yesterday. He was 71.

"He passed away surrounded by his family... He died peacefully," daughter Tara Abrahams-Clivio told the *Observer*. She said Abrahams died of pneumonia.

"His final years were very happy and peaceful. He relaxed a lot and was very warm and friendly and loved his grandkids. That was the final chapter, playing with his [six] grandkids," added Abrahams-Clivio.

Abrahams' death comes little over a year after he was forced off the air during his battle with bone cancer, said his daughter.

He was hailed by Prime Minister Bruce Golding and the ruling Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), of which Abrahams was a minister and senator in 1980 and 1970 respectively, for his outstanding contribution to the country.

"Jamaica has lost another brilliant son in the person of Eric Anthony Abrahams. In everything he undertook throughout

his life, he was a pioneer and the best in his field," said Golding. "A unique and brilliant mind has left us, but he will be remembered for the trail of outstanding contributions he made in his service to his country and fellow Jamaicans."

General Secretary Senator Aundre Franklin said he and the party "are deeply saddened by Abrahams' passing. He was always known to be a man of impeccable intellect and sharp reasoning ability," said Franklin.

Abrahams served as a director of tourism from 1970 to 1974 and later, as minister of tourism and information from 1980 to 1985. He served as member of Parliament for the JLP 1980 to 1989 in the constituencies of Eastern Portland and Eastern Kingston, and served as a senator from 1977 to 1978.

During his earlier days Abrahams, a Rhodes Scholar, served as the founding executive director of the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica from 1970-74 and in 1965 was the first black TV reporter for the British *Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*.

But Abrahams' years with the party was, however, tumultuous, according to political historian and *Observer* columnist Michael Burke. Abrahams' stint as tourism minister was cut short when he was booted from the post by then-party leader and prime minister



Former minister of tourism and journalist Anthony Abrahams, who was for close to two decades the heart of the popular current affairs programme *The Breakfast Club*, died at home yesterday at the age of 71.

Edward Seaga, due to a reported falling-out. Sometime later, Abrahams would quit the party and become an Independent MP due to another blow up with the party leadership, according to Burke.

However, Abrahams will be remembered most for successfully suing the Gleaner Company Limited, winning in 1996 damages of \$80.7 million. The

sum was four years later cut to \$35 million by the Court of Appeal in 2000.

Abrahams co-founded *The Breakfast Club* along with Beverley Anderson-Manley, in 1992, which heralded an era of morning-time radio discussions on political and societal issues. The programme, aired on *KLAS FM*, which was owned by Island Broadcasting, took off and quickly became a big moneymaker.

The Opposition People's National Party also recognised Abrahams' contribution, in particular to the tourism and media industries and offered condolences to his family.

Yesterday, veteran journalist and *Observer* columnist Ken Chaplin, who was in Government with Abrahams, spoke in glowing terms of the man he described as humble.

"He was a live and determined character and he did not give in easily to preaching propaganda. He is somebody I really have a great deal of respect for," added Chaplin.

Tara Abrahams-Clivio said that Jamaica's progress was her father's passion.

"He was very passionate about Jamaica... He believed in the political process and he felt it was failing and he really wanted it to change. He was very disappointed with how things had progressed. He was distressed by the corruption and the tribalism and he was concerned about crime," she added.

Born May 5, 1940, Eric Anthony Abrahams is also survived by son, Jason.