

EDITORIAL

Mr Anthony Abrahams was born to be the man he was

MR Eric Anthony 'Tony' Abrahams, the journalist, politician and former minister of tourism was a man groomed for the leadership which he provided in several different areas of Jamaica's public life.

He was born in affluence and raised as a scholar and a gentleman. He was groomed for political leadership by his education at Jamaica College and later at the University of the West Indies and Oxford University. His intellectual calibre was evident from the award of the Rhodes Scholarship and his debating skills which made him a student leader at both universities.

An essential component of leadership is the capacity to pioneer new developments and in this regard Mr Abrahams accomplished many firsts as student leader, journalist, executive and director of tourism.

He was the first Jamaican head of the Oxford University Debating Society, accomplished in 1963. He was the first black TV reporter for the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)* in 1965. He served as the first executive director of the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica, serving from 1970 to 1974. He was co-founder of the popular and influential morning talk show *The Breakfast Club* on Jamaican radio.

Mr Abrahams served as a director of tourism from 1970 to 1974, starting when he was 29 years old. There he was a dynamic leader who introduced several innovations, many of which have continued to the present as tenets of tourism development.

He was destined for the political arena and realised this inevitability when he served as a Senator from 1977 to 1978 and later as Member of Parliament for the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) from 1980 to 1989 in the constituencies of Eastern Portland and Eastern Kingston. He also served as minister of tourism and information from 1980 to 1985.

Another essential characteristic of leadership is the courage to stand up for what one believes to be right. He had the dubious distinction, like many of the brightest and most talented in the JLP, to be fired by Mr Seaga for disagreeing. Mr Abrahams will also be remembered for successfully challenging the Gleaner Company Limited in a celebrated libel suit, winning damages eventually reduced from \$80 million to \$35 million.

Mr Abrahams will also be remembered for his aggressive style of engaging in discussion; which some found dismissive and often mistook for class arrogance. But those confident enough to engage him recognised his intellectual restlessness and impatience to take action.

Without apology for his fortunate early circumstances, he regarded this as the opportunity which made it incumbent on him to give his talent and energy to the cause of nation building. Throughout his life he was concerned to create a better Jamaica and he contributed to the best of his ability in a number of fields.

Warts and all, Mr Eric Anthony Abrahams will be remembered for his special role in the development of Independent Jamaica.

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