

Remarks by Dr. Carla N. Barnett, CARICOM Secretary-General, at the Launch of 'Caribbean Perspectives'

May 20, 2024



Dr. Carla Barnett, CARICOM Secretary-General, speaks at the book launch

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- His Excellency Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana;
- Mr. Ramsay Ali, Chief Executive Officer, Sterling Products Ltd. and President, Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association, and Book Sponsor;
- Ms. Sandra Ann Baptiste, Author;
- Ms. Marguerite Boodhoo-Buckmire, Consultant, Carigold Signature;
- Mr. Ron Robinson, Chairman of this Afternoon's Proceedings;
- Distinguished Guests;
- Members of the Media Fraternity;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am delighted to join you this afternoon at this memorable occasion, and I am honoured that Ms. Baptiste, a communications specialist *par excellence*, who has worked extensively across the Region, asked me to say a few words as this publication is launched.

The work undertaken by Ms. Baptiste over decades as a journalist, working in and outside the Region and in different media houses, has produced a volume of work which bears testimony to her involvement and active interest in integration. Indeed, this commitment and dedication are seen in her writings which provide a critical historical context of integration over the period of the 1970s to 2014, while demonstrating

intensive preparation and attention to detail. These make this publication a valuable resource for researchers or persons simply interested in the historical background and developments in regional integration.

Many of the themes remain priorities for the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), including intra-regional trade and the boosting of exports; the development of productive sectors; the Single Market and Economy; and relations with third countries. Importantly, the interviews conducted with former CARICOM leaders, including former Heads of Government, Ministers and Secretaries-General, provide an insight into the thinking which impacted the decisions related to integration. In giving voice to these perspectives, we are reminded of the crucial role that the media plays in building regional integration. In these times where information is available at the click of a button or the swipe of an app, accuracy in telling the story, in asking the searching and probing questions, and in presenting these in an analytical, clear and factual way, are positive hallmarks in ensuring that Caribbean integration remains relevant for the people of the Community.

Ms. Baptiste also offers further depth in the publication by providing the stories on the varied economic, social, and other developments which took place in CARICOM countries at different points in time. This added dimension provides perspectives on the ways in which decisions would have been made which, in one way or the other, impacted the pace of integration.

In reading the historical perspectives as reflected in these stories, one cannot help but be struck by the fact of challenges that still exist. This is a timely reminder that although we can be proud of the significant achievements made by CARICOM, as we close out the celebrations of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Caribbean Community under the theme "*50 Years Strong: A Solid Foundation to Build On*", there is still much more work that needs to be done. The publication of *Caribbean Perspectives* at this time therefore, in addition to recording the historical origins of the regional integration movement, is an opportunity to evaluate the lessons learned in order to forge a stronger, more determined future for the Community.

I take pleasure in adding my congratulations to Sandra Ann on the publication of "*Caribbean Perspectives*", with thanks for your commitment and support of regional integration.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you.