

R E P O R T

OF THE

CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES (CAWJ)

INAUGURAL CONFERENCE AND PROJECT LAUNCH

1. The Inaugural Conference and Project Launch of the Caribbean Association of Women Judges was held on the 27th - 29th March, 2014 at the Hyatt Regency Trinidad, Port of Spain, Trinidad.

2. The main objective of the conference was to increase the awareness of judicial officers and attorneys-at-law in respect of issues relating to violence against women and children in the Caribbean. The conference also considered solutions and interventions which can be made by judicial officers and which are being implemented in various territories of the Caribbean.

3. The theme of the conference was "The Law and the Protection of Children: Save our children". The Conference was launched with a special opening ceremony which was attended by His Excellency, The President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona, and other distinguished guests. Approximately 200 persons were in attendance. The Honourable Madame Justice Joan Charles, Chairperson of the Steering Committee, gave the welcome address. The keynote address was delivered by Madame Justice Desirée Bernard, retired Judge of the Caribbean Court of Justice. Special tributes were paid to Madame Justice Bernard by the CAWJ and by the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers. Ms. Joan Winship, Executive Director of the International Association of Women Judges, brought greetings on behalf of the international association. The Honourable The Chief Justice of Trinidad and

Tobago, Mr. Justice Ivor Archie, also addressed the distinguished gathering. The opening ceremony was followed by a special reception at which our guests were treated to sumptuous "trini" favorites.

4. Nine workshops were held over the first two days of the conference. The workshops were attended by judges, magistrates and other judicial officers, attorneys-at-law, as well as persons representing non-governmental organizations and faith-based organizations. Participants came from across the Caribbean, the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom. Approximately 140 persons registered for the conference.

5. The workshops were conducted using the format of panel discussions. The panelists were persons with expertise in the areas under discussion and included judges, magistrates, other judicial officers, psychologists, criminologists, educators, persons attached to international organizations and activists from various non-governmental organisations in the Caribbean and North America. There were about 35 panelists.

6. Topics covered by the workshops were:

- 1) The courts and the protection of children
- 2) Children in care/custody in the Caribbean
- 3) Domestic violence and its effects on children
- 4) Women in violent circumstances
- 5) Rape and incest in the Caribbean
- 6) Human trafficking - Its effect on women and girls
- 7) Work/life balance for the woman judge
- 8) The benefits of ADR in resolving family disputes
- 9) Are men treated fairly in family matters?

7. Participants were also treated to two receptions which were held at night. The Honourable The Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Justice Ivor Archie, hosted a cocktail reception at the Hall of Justice, Port of Spain on the first night. On the following night, His Excellency The President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona, hosted a reception at the National Academy for the Performing Arts in Port of Spain.

8. The CAWJ held its first Business Meeting on the 29th March, 2014. It was held at the Convocation Hall, Hall of Justice, Port of Spain. The Bye-Laws of the CAWJ were approved by the Meeting, subject to certain clauses, which the Meeting agreed would be finalized by a Sub-Committee to be appointed by the Executive Committee of the CAWJ. The following members of the Executive Committee were elected:

President	-	Justice Joan Charles (Trinidad & Tobago)
Vice President	-	Justice Yonette Cummings-Edwards, J.A. (Guyana)
Vice President	-	Justice Jacqueline Cornelius (Barbados)
Vice President	-	Her Honour Paula Blake-Powell (Jamaica)
Vice President	-	Justice Maureen Rajnauth-Lee, J.A. (Trinidad & Tobago)
Treasurer	-	Justice Nadia Kangaloo (Trinidad & Tobago)
Secretary	-	Justice Carla Brown-Antoine (Trinidad & Tobago)
Asst. Secretary	-	Her Worship Lisa Ramsumair-Hinds (Trinidad & Tobago)

9. Evaluation forms were received from 59 participants. Generally, the conference was given high praise especially having regard to the fact that it was an inaugural event. The majority of participants made special mention of the quality of the presentations. They thought that the panelists were well-prepared and well-qualified. The panelists were commended for speaking clearly and with knowledge and authority.

10. The Steering Committee was applauded for assembling such a wide cross-section of panelists and participants; there was a good mix of local, regional and international persons. The sheer number of participants was astounding.

11. In the Evaluation Forms, special mention was made of the following:

- Ms. Renee Cummings - Panelist in the Workshop "The Courts and the Protection of Children"
- Ms. Felicia Robinson - Panelist in the Workshop "Domestic Violence and its Effect on Children"
- The panelists in the Workshop "Rape and Incest in the Caribbean"
- The panelists in the Workshop "Are men treated fairly in Family Matters?"

12. The following comments are worth posting verbatim:

"I want to encourage CAWJ to continue with their programmes as this conference was educational, provided lots of food for thought, and was a very timely intervention."

“As an inaugural conference and launch, I believe this was a tremendous success for CAWJ. This is a very positive signal of what is possible and CAWJ cannot let the momentum die. The Chief Justice of Trinidad and Tobago has definitely been given much food and fuel for his vision.”

“A wonderful Conference full of excellent learning experiences and opportunities for making contact with counterparts in other jurisdictions, many at social events.”

“IAWJ looks forward to working with the CAWJ in finding ways to support and collaborate on future programs.”

“All the best to CAWJ in its future endeavours! You are off to an excellent start!!”

13. Several useful recommendations and suggestions were made by participants with a view to improving the conference. Many participants suggested that concurrent sessions be eliminated. They regretted having to choose one session, when they really wished to attend both sessions. Others called for more interactive sessions and suggested the use of case studies.

14. In addition to the conference programme which has been outlined above, the CAWJ hosted simultaneously the launch of its project entitled "The Family Support Network". On the second day of the conference, some 16 participants attended a one-day workshop for single parents and parents in blended families. Ms. Beverly Samuel, Attorney-at-Law, and Project Consultant, has prepared a

report on the Parenting Workshop and Project Launch which is attached to this Report.

SUBMITTED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
CARIBBEAN ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN JUDGES