

ADDRESS BY CYNTHIA COMBIE MARTYR ON BEHALF OF THE UTTER BAR AT THE SPECIAL SITTING
OF THE HIGH COURT TO MARK THE PASSING OF CYRIL ALVA LANDERS

HELD ON TUESDAY 22ND MAY 2018

Presiding Judges:

The Honourable Justice Francis Belle, Justice Kimberly Cenac-Phulgence, Master Agnes Actie

In attendance- Justice of Appeal the Honourable Mario Michel.

On behalf of the Utter Bar, I extend to the family and friends of our late brother Cyril Alva Landers, sincere condolences on his passing.

I know that words can never fill the void that this loss has created nor replace him in your hearts but, it is a profound honour for me to be afforded this opportunity, to recollect and share some reflections with you his family and friends, members of the Bench and his colleagues at the Bar.

- 1) Cyril Alva Landers was not only a colleague but he was also a family friend. His wife Lorna and her family, the Simon family, are and were close friends of my mother- the Dickson Lynch Family of La Croix Maingot.

Additionally, his son Kenneth and I were fellow students of what was then called “The St. Lucia ‘A’ Level College” which is now part of the Division of Arts, Science and General Studies of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College and we remain good friends to date.

Over the last few years Cyril visited my office on a number of occasions and we often spoke on the telephone. Our conversations encompassed a wide range of subjects and not necessarily the law.

- 2) Upon graduating from St. Mary's College, Cyril Landers, like a number of young men of his time - Hughes Gibson, Calixte Joseph, John Compton, Graeham Louisy, Russell Combie among others, sought economic advancement in Curacao.

Cyril and my father worked alongside each other as laboratory technicians for an oil refinery in Curacao. Their role was to test the quality of the crude oil being delivered for processing at the refinery from samples taken before the oil was pumped from ships via pipelines to the refinery.

Mr Landers who arrived in Curacao in *December 1949*, a few years after my father, worked for about 4 years before journeying to the United Kingdom where he pursued studies in Law and was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn.

In so doing, Cyril followed the path taken by some of his contemporaries in the legal profession who left Curacao and proceeded to the United Kingdom - Maurice Mason, Clendon Mason, John Compton, Kenneth Foster, among others.

- 3) Our late colleague was a multifaceted and enigmatic individual. On his return to Saint Lucia, he provided public service as a Magistrate of both the 1st and 2nd Districts, before launching into private practice as a Barrister and Notary Royal.

His practice was mainly directed to the Magistrate's courts especially in the south and I am advised that the late Henry Giraudy and Cyril Landers dominated the practice in the Magistrate's Court in Vieux Fort, in particular.

Cyril established Chambers in Castries and Vieux Fort in order to serve the citizens of the north and south, a service which he continued just prior to his passing.

Cyril also practised in the High Court where he was best known for a pro bono defence in a murder case known locally as the 'Etherington murders' referred to earlier by my learned friend.

- *This case involved the gruesome murder of two British Nationals Donald Etherington, Manager of the Geest Banana estate and his wife Marjorie, which occurred between 9 -10 June 1971; their charred bodies had been found at their bungalow at Morne Fortune Castries.*
- *Fingerprint evidence led to the arrest of three local criminals - FLORIUS, FAUCHER and CHARLES aka Fooksal of Castries. All three were sentenced to death.*
- *Mr. Landers represented the accused CHARLES aka Fooksal who was under the age of 18, was suffering from an abnormality of the mind and the question was whether the mandatory death sentence should be applied in his case.*
- *That case had an emotional and agonizing effect on Cyril and despite a vigorous fight and his best arguments in the Court of Appeal against the mandatory death sentence and a hearing before the Mercy Committee, his client's sentence was not commuted to life imprisonment. All three accused were hanged the following year.*

4) Mr Landers served as Chairman of the Public and Teaching Service Commissions for two (2) terms from **August 1991 -September 1997** and was the Advisor to several Co-operative Bodies. He was the long standing legal representative of the St. Lucia Civil Service Co-operative Credit Union and he and I shared the privilege as members of the panel of legal advisors selected to advise the Board of the Saint Lucia Development Bank. I am advised that he also provided legal advice to the Roman Catholic Church.

- 5) Someone once remarked that our late colleague was ‘A’ political. Upon hearing that remark, Mr Landers responded - “The phrase is incomplete as it is incorrect”. Perhaps he preferred to be referred to as ‘A - *political activist*’.

Cyril Landers was however regarded as “a political lobbyist” whose *torch bearing* allegiance was proudly and passionately held. He even attempted elective politics in **1974** as a candidate contesting the safe Labour seat of Laborie/Saltibus. It is reported that although unsuccessful, Cyril surpassed expectations in the lion’s den of a Labour stronghold.

Perhaps the better view is that Cyril fared well in the labour stronghold.

Cyril’s desire to serve in the Legislature was later rewarded when he was appointed a Government Senator from ***October 1979 to December 1980***.

- 6) Politics and governance continued to stir his passion and he read widely regarding local and international politics. He was particularly absorbed by the book- ***Fire & Fury: Inside the Trump White House***, which was given to him by his son Rushin for his last birthday. He had been a confidante and political counsellor to the late Henry Giraudy Q C. and Sir John Compton.

At the date of his death, Cyril was a member of the Disciplinary Committee of the United Workers Party.

- 7) Mr Landers reduced his Court room appearances sometime in the late 1980’s or early 1990’s and according to him, “to make way for a younger generation of lawyers”. He continued to practice in the south of the island and maintained a very healthy Notarial and Probate practice.

This reduction of his work schedule, allowed for the development of the philanthropic facets of his character and personality which serves to remind all of us that there is more to life than our practice of law.

- 8) He was a long-standing member of the Rotary Club of Saint Lucia. Of the variety of projects that the club pursued, Cyril preferred those which involved working with and serving the underprivileged and the needy.
- 9) Over the years, Cyril shared an extremely close friendship with Mr Augustus Justin. Together they co-founded and contributed financially to the Adelaide's Home for the Elderly in **1985** at that time located at Sans Souci and he remained actively involved with the venture until **1991** which has now expanded to include the Johnson Memorial Home at Morne Fortune, Castries.

Mr Justin described his friend as “a very private individual, a good man, a simple man, a spiritual man, a very disciplined and no nonsense man”.

- 10) Among his many generous contributions, Cyril initiated what has become a legendary Christmas party for the children of La Croix Maingot where he lived. It began in 1984, with a handful of children from the immediate vicinity, with only a small home stereo for musical accompaniment. The event grew to accommodate a few hundred children from surrounding neighbourhoods as far as Ciceron, necessitating the move to a nearby dancehall to accommodate the numbers.
- 11) Of course, our late brother was the main sponsor of the party, but the Landers family requested and arranged for donations from companies such as DuBoulay's Bottling, who had been a consistent sponsor. The Landers Family Christmas Party has become a Christmas staple of the community for the past 34 years.

12) I now turn to address Cyril's true calling as **Dr. Quack** - Our late brother took great pleasure in this title which his friends bestowed on him and actually used it to describe himself. Cyril Landers was a proponent of the use of the herbal remedies for the treatment of various maladies.

He had a mini-library of books, booklets, photocopied articles etc, many of which were gifted to him, because his friends/family knew that such would be well-received and cherished. He expounded on the use of garlic for treating mild ailments and NONI for the management of cancer. He would often gift bottles of NONI to his friends, either as a suggested treatment or as preventative medicine.

13) There is one additional facet of his personality that I am permitted to disclose here.

It appears that many of our senior colleagues seem to delight in personal entertainment provided from television shows. Sometime ago, Geoffrey du Boulay shared Sir Vincent Floissac's thoughtful appreciation for the ribald content of the expositions displayed on the Jerry Springer and Maury Shows.

I am informed and verily believe, however strange and out of character it may seem, Cyril Landers had been an avid wrestling fan, since the 1980s. Every Saturday evening, he could be found glued to his Television set watching wrestling.

14) He was particularly fired up by special events such as Wrestlemania--- and while watching, one would hear echos of his voice throughout the house as he would attempt to transform the so-called St Lucian "national 'E' word" into the more palatable and sophisticated "e-e-e-gance" during a body-slam or other special wrestling move.

15) Cyril was equally vocal in expressing his pleasure/displeasure to the various wrestlers, referees and decisions, oblivious to the fact that his words were not being transmitted through the television set.

16) Finally, I would like to share the following words of comfort to family and friends of our late brother. The words are taken from a poem by Mary Lee Hall titled **Turn Again to Life**. Mary Lee Hall was the first female lawyer in Connecticut, USA and also a poet, a suffragist, and a philanthropist. I know that our colleague would have concurred with the sentiments expressed.

*“If I should die and leave you here a while,
be not like others sore and undone,
who keep long vigil by the silent dust.
For my sake, turn again to life and smile,
nerving thy heart and trembling hand
to do something to comfort other hearts than mine.
Complete these dear unfinished tasks of mine
and I perchance may therein comfort you”.*

The family and friends of our colleague Cyrl Elva Landers, may God embrace you in comfort and give you courage and strength during this difficult time.

I thank you.