

On World Press Freedom Day (May 3, 2011) the Press Association of Jamaica and Media Association Jamaica Limited jointly hosted a Breakfast Forum under the theme “Press Freedom and Media Ethics”. It was held at the Knutsford Court Hotel. Special presentations were made by the following media practitioners:-

- Ms. Ingrid Brown, Senior Staff Reporter (Jamaica Observer)
- Hon. Barbara Gloudon, Veteran Journalist/Talk Show Host (RJR Group)
- Professor Hopeton Dunn, Professor/Director, Telecommunications Policy & Management Programme (Mona School of Business)

Veteran Journalist Barbara Gloudon challenged media practitioners to push the Government to give a timeline on when the review of the country’s libel laws will be completed. At the same time she called out the PAJ for its delay in establishing the long-awaited media complaints council; to police ethics and standards in the profession.

“At what point do we decide we are really going to fight and fight for it fully, or are we going to continue waiting for the day when Massa give us a crown?” she asked. “What can we do...should we do to force the hand of those who, on the one hand, pay lip service to the value of getting the libel law readjusted, and on the other, show no haste in moving to a conclusion?” she added.

Meanwhile, Journalist Ingrid Brown underscored the importance of ethics and standards in the media, urging media practitioners to maintain the highest levels of integrity and professionalism. She said the code of ethics recently promulgated by the PAJ was a step in the right direction, and she urged media managers to enforce the provisions. She also said journalists should strive to get their stories right every time as “wrong information does not go away with an apology”.

PAJ President, Jenni Campbell, said while Jamaica generally enjoyed a free press, recent efforts by the Parliament did little to reform the country’s “strict and archaic libel laws which curtail the press’ ability to expose corruption and concerns about public officials without fear of redress”. She said the culture of secrecy made it difficult, if not impossible, to bring certain issues to public attention.

Meanwhile, Professor Hopeton Dunn called on media professionals to adopt the principle that the interest of the community must prevail over personal interest. He also charged journalists to investigate public officials instead of characterising all of them as corrupt without evidence.