

# Corrie is not an Exploiter of Amerindians

*Sent to the Chronicle Newspaper, Stabroek News, Kaiteur News - all on Sunday February 11th 2007*

Dear Editor,

I received a copy of a letter from a friend of mine, Mr. Damon Corrie, whom I knew personally for many years, complaining in an open letter to our Hon. President, Bharrat Jagdeo. He stated an individual in a certain Ministry is targeting him, accusing him of exploiting Amerindians. The letter explained the worker in the Ministry have bribed an Amerindian to trump up false charges against Mr. Corrie indicating he is exploiting Amerindians.

Why are they targeting Mr. Corrie? This individual would give the shirt off his back for his Amerindian family.

Mr. Corrie is part Amerindian and has married into an Amerindian family and bore five kids. Three are living with him in Barbados presently, going to private schools that are rather costly to our standards. Only of late the eldest son is going to a public secondary school. I saw with my own eyes the many toys, books and games the Corries have bought for them. His wife and himself will soon be returning to Barbados with their newborn to a pleasant home. How can that be considered exploitation?

This individual also married his wife when she was 17 and he was 19, they just celebrated their 14th anniversary; definitely not exploitation.

I noticed when Mr. Corrie came to Guyana several times throughout the 90's, he would come with lots of US\$ and go back empty handed. I did not ever see him returning with art craft of commercial quantities. He do not drink alcohol or knock himself from pillar to post. Instead he would buy rations for his Amerindian family, outfitting them with chain saw and other necessities to alleviate the hardships they constantly face. How can that be exploitation?

Mr. Corrie has lived among the Amerindian people more than many Guyanese would dream of ever doing. He has brought their many problems to the International forum when our own Governments, present and past, do not think it wise to even send Amerindian representatives to these conferences. He has to represent the Amerindians of almost the entire CARICOM region because many of the governments do not find it "important" to send representatives, even though they are invited to do so at all expense paid trips borne by International bodies. How can Mr. Corrie be considered exploiting Amerindians for doing this?

I remember many instances in the past, too many people of other races, would laugh at the Amerindians and refer to them as "Buck Man" in a derogatory fashion and want to have nothing to do with them. Guyana has now turned a new page. Last elections, even the Opposition Leader declared he has Amerindian blood in him and is proud to be of that origin.

President Burnham and Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Ptolemy Reid did adopt Amerindian children as their own, but otherwise could have done more for the people in general. Everyone only remember the Amerindians close to elections time. After that, they drop off planet Earth until next elections. This has been going on for too long and it is good their problems are now coming to the fore.

I think what is meant by exploitation, is, people are taking young Amerindian girls, to the coastal rum shops and brothels and turning them into prostitutes. Others are being paid very little for their services in other trades. The US government told the world Governments, including the Guyana government, if they do not put a stop to the exploitation of these kids, they will face serious repercussions. Only then did we start to do something to show we are working on the problem.

It is shameful our own administrators could not recognize we have this problem before hand. We had to be threatened before we made a move.

I commend our Presidents, present and past, for distributing Land Titles to the Amerindians. This is important, but more is needed than just Land Titles. Like any other people, even more so, Amerindians are affected by social ailments that needs to be addressed and we will need all the help we can muster for them to have a better footing in our society at home and abroad.

The people in the Ministries need guidance into matters of what exploitation really is. They should be visiting rum shops, brothels, affluent residential homes in Georgetown and elsewhere, to find where young girls are turned into hookers or maids that work for nothing.

We should be honoured to have someone like Mr. Corrie on our side.

*Regards,*

*Mubarak Kazan*