

Know your rights!

By Christine St. Marie, Attorney-at-law

Our fundamental rights are embodied in the Republican Constitution, hence the term “constitutional rights”. The Constitution is no doubt very important. It is the highest law of a nation. It ensures accountability from the “powers that be”, that is, heads of government and public authorities.

Some of our rights and freedoms are outlined in ***Section 4 of the Republican Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago***:

Section 4: *It is hereby recognised and declared that in Trinidad and Tobago there have existed and shall continue to exist, without discrimination by reason of race, origin, colour, religion or sex, the following fundamental human rights and freedoms, namely:*

- (a) the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law;*
- (b) the right of the individual to equality before the law and the protection of the law;*
- (c) the right of the individual to respect for his private and family life;*
- (d) the right of the individual to equality of treatment from any public authority in the exercise of any functions;*
- (e) the right to join political parties and to express political views;*
- (f) the right of a parent or guardian to provide a school of his own choice for the education of his child or ward;*
- (g) freedom of movement;*
- (h) freedom of conscience and religious belief and observance;*
- (i) freedom of thought and expression;*
- (j) freedom of association and assembly; and*
- (k) freedom of the press*

The fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in our Constitution are in fact similar to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights promulgated by the United Nations in 1948.

The Constitution is beneficial to citizens in that it provides a form of redress for aggrieved citizens, should their rights be trampled upon by any public authority.

Dated 5th May 2024.