



The Eric Williams Memorial Collection

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26 YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH, ERIC WILLIAMS MEMORIAL COLLECTION CELEBRATES 9TH ANNIVERSARY

“History...to inform of (the) past as an essential guide to...future action”
Eric Williams, August 31, 1962

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PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD (March 19, 2007) – March 22, 2007 will mark the 26th anniversary of the inauguration of the Eric Williams Memorial Collection (EWMC), by former **US Secretary of State, Colin L. Powell**, at The University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago. In 1999, it was named to **UNESCO’s prestigious *Memory of the World Register***.

The Collection consists of the Library and Archives of the late Dr. Eric Eustace Williams, scholar and first Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, whose sudden death on March 29, 1981 after 25 years in office, stunned the region. Dr. Williams was heralded by Mr. Powell as a tireless warrior in the battle against colonialism, among his many other achievements as a scholar, politician and international statesman.

Available for consultation by researchers, the Collection amply reflects its owner’s eclectic interests, comprising some 7,000 volumes, as well as correspondence, speeches, manuscripts, historical writings, research notes, conference documents and a miscellany of reports. A Museum - containing a wealth of emotive memorabilia of the period; copies of the seven translations of Williams’ seminal work, **Capitalism and Slavery** (Russian, Chinese and Japanese [1968, 2004] among them) - a Korean translation will appear in 2007; as well as photographs depicting various aspects of his life and contribution to the development of Trinidad and Tobago - completes this extraordinarily rich archive, as does a three-dimensional re-creation of Dr. Williams’ study.

Dr. Tony Martin, Wellesley College, Massachusetts, states that “[The Eric Williams Memorial Collection at the University of the West Indies] is the most important development in scholarship in the Caribbean in recent years. It is a wonderful collection!” To date, four scholarly biographies of Williams either have been published or are in progress. Dr. Colin Palmer’s (Dodge Professor of History, Princeton University): Eric Williams and the Making of the Modern Caribbean, published by the University of North Carolina Press, is dedicated to the Collection; The Elusive Eric Williams, Ken Boodhoo, Florida International University; Selwyn Ryan’s, University of the West Indies; and The Making of a Movement Intellectual, Maurice St. Pierre, Morgan State University. In the prior eighteen years, nothing of note was written.

The EWMC is actively involved in the academic and Caribbean communities through Florida International University’s annual Eric Williams Memorial Lecture in Miami. Also in its ninth year, the Lecture has presented: John Hope Franklin, one of America’s premier Black Studies historians, 1999; former President of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, 2000; Hilary Beckles, Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor of The University of the West Indies, 2001; the Deputy Prime Minister of the Bahamas - Cynthia Pratt, the Attorney General of Barbados - Mia Mottley, the former First Lady of Jamaica - Beverley Anderson-Manley, 2002; the celebrated civil and women’s rights activist, Angela Davis in 2003; in honour of the Haitian Bicentennial, University of Virginia political scientist Robert Fatton, Jr., and prize-winning author Edwige Danticat, 2004; in 2005, Dr. Hollis Liverpool, University of the

Virgin Islands, aka "Chalkdust" - speaking on Eric Williams, himself; and in 2006, Colin Palmer, Dodge Professor of History, Princeton University.

Other initiatives: The soon-to-be first Spanish translation of Williams' history of the Caribbean, From Columbus to Castro (2007; the 2000 republication, after decades, of the same book in Japanese; and its re-issue in the United Kingdom in 2004 – after a hiatus of seven years. Re-appearing also was the 1944 book, The Economic Future of the Caribbean – edited by Williams and the respected African American sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier. A selection of papers presented at a 1943 Howard University conference organised by Williams, the vision articulated in this work remains striking in its relevance to the 21st century Caribbean. To date, the book has been launched in Trinidad and Tobago; Washington, DC; Toronto, Canada; and London, UK. In 2006, in recognition of the June Presidential declaration as US National Caribbean American Month, another launch was held in New York, co-sponsored by the Consuls General of Jamaica, Barbados, Haiti, Grenada, Guyana, Bahamas, St. Vincent, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago.

A new edition of Williams' long out-of-print autobiography, Inward Hunger is now available. His Negro in the Caribbean (with a new Introduction by University of California, Irvine professor, Winston James) will shortly be published in the United States. There is interest, also, by University Press of Florida in publishing the 2002 Eric Williams New York Schomburg Center conference proceedings - Into The Post-Colonial Moment: Eric Williams and West Indian Nationalism, edited by Professor William Darity (Duke University/University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill).

The EWMC has also supported the inclusion of entries on Eric Williams in: the Encyclopedia of the Developing World by Mario Fenyo, Bowie State University; The Encyclopedia of Antislavery, Abolition and Emancipation by Joseph Inikori, University of Rochester; The Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora, by William Darity, University of North Carolina/Duke University and Clare Newstead, University of Nottingham-Trent, UK; the Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage by Joseph Avitable, University of Rochester (and this Encyclopedia is being jointly dedicated to Eric Williams and Joseph Inikori, "for their contributions to the study of the Transatlantic Slave Trade"); Facts on File Encyclopedia of the Caribbean, by Colin Palmer and Tony Martin. (In this publication, Williams' "legacy to Caribbean historiography" says its editor, "is too important to submerge in a large biographical overview. Of the several hundred...profiles...Williams is the only one to be the focus of two separate articles").

Thus, with its three-time award-winning newsletter and Oral History Project, as well as many other endeavours, the EWMC is a model for the Caribbean, a means of showing to its younger generation the vital connection to the past – what that means for both the present and for the future.

Guests of the EWMC Museum continue to be inspired by their experience, as were the **Vice President of India**; the **Prime Minister and former Prime Minister of St. Vincent/Grenadines and Jamaica** respectively; former **Mayor of New York City Rudolph Giuliani** and two **Nobel Laureates** in Economics, Amartya Sen and Harry Markowitz. Thousands of Trinidad and Tobago students - along with schools from St. Lucia, Guadeloupe (including the Chamber of Commerce), the US Virgin Islands, Barbados (several groups), Chicago, Illinois, and the University of California, Fresno, US - have toured the facility since its inception. And the young continue to demonstrate their profound comprehension as they speak, following, to what the Collection means to the population at large and, as important, what it will mean to future sons and daughters of Trinidad and Tobago, in particular, and of the Caribbean in general.

- “Thank you for treasuring what is really ours.”
Kimberley Corriea, Trinidad and Tobago student
- “A heartwarming and moving experience. Dr. Eric Williams died when I was one.”
Lieske Assam, Trinidad and Tobago student
- “One of the most insightful collections I’ve ever seen. Unique, compelling, wonderful!”
Alana Laura Lalman, Trinidad and Tobago student

- “I stand here waiting for him to return.”

Regika Barker, student, St. Vincent and the Grenadines