



The Eric Williams Memorial Collection

P.O. Box 561631, Miami, FL 33256-1631, USA*Tel: 305-271-7246*Cell: 305-905-9999*Fax: 305-271-4160

30 YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH, ERIC WILLIAMS MEMORIAL COLLECTION CELEBRATES CENTENARY OF HIS BIRTH

*“He made us proud to be who we were, and optimistic, as never before,
about what we were going to be, or could be.*

Media Contact

Erica Williams Connell
305-905-9999
ewmc@ewmc-tt.org

Arnold Rampersad, Sara Hart Kimball Professor in the Humanities, Stanford University

PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD (March 19, 2011) – March 22, 2011 will usher in the 13th anniversary of the inauguration of The Eric Williams Memorial Collection (EWMC) at The University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago, by former **US Secretary of State, Colin L. Powell**. Powell heralded the country’s first Prime Minister, who died in office on March 29, 1981: “No one was a greater fighter for justice and equality. No one was a greater leader.” More recently, Dr. Williams was honoured as scholar, politician and international statesman when former South African President Thabo Mbeki wrote the Foreword to the University of South Africa Press’ first publication of Williams’ seminal work, **Capitalism and Slavery**.

The EWMC consists of Williams’ Research Library, Archives and Museum and is the English-speaking Caribbean’s first effort at establishing an entity akin to a U.S. Presidential Library. In 1999, it was named to UNESCO’s prestigious *Memory of the World Register*. At the time, the documentary heritage of only 47 other countries had been so designated. To date, four biographies of Williams either have been published or are in progress – one dedicated to the EWMC. In the prior seventeen years before the appearance of the first, nothing of note was written.

“Those who labored in the organizational, financial and other vineyards to create the Collection have provided a unique intellectual gift, not just to Trinidad and Tobago...” states Professor Ivelaw Griffith, former Dean of Florida International University’s Honors College.

In addition to the physical repository at UWI the EWMC, among other activities, promotes, facilitates and organizes: international conferences (four to date) and conference panels; Encyclopedia entries; symposia; lectureships (Florida International University’s Eric Williams Memorial Lecture is now in its thirteenth consecutive year); book publications and launches; a regional Essay Competition in 17 Caribbean countries, 178 schools; and the first annual CAPE Prize in History. The EWMC has introduced an Oral History Project, comprising hundreds of interviews and calypsoes about Eric Williams; has been the subject of academic papers, lectures and books, and has received multiple awards and recognition for its efforts. It has also collaborated with the Mayor of London and continues to do so annually with the University of Sheffield in the U.K. Community-based initiatives are two school pilot projects – *The Baby Think it Over* anti-teen pregnancy programme, and *The Killing Fields: Man’s Inhumanity to Man* – a Genocide/Holocaust programme. In the future, the Collection will team up with Williams’ *alma mater* at Oxford University – establishing a scholarship in his name in perpetuity.

As 2011 is the Centenary of the birth of Eric Williams, the EWMC is actively involved in numerous celebratory projects: an Oxford/Harvard Universities co-sponsored conference; a Symposium at the University of London; a University of Havana, Cuba conference; the Cuban publication of two of Williams’ books in Spanish (including details of his many contacts with Cuban scholars and several

visits to the country in the 1940's and again in 1975); two Trinidad and Tobago Schools Stamp Design and Performing Arts competitions (co-sponsored by the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation and UNESCO); the Launch of Eric Williams Centenary Stamps, with proceeds donated to the hearing impaired of Trinidad and Tobago; the publication of Williams' dissertation, from which emanated Capitalism and Slavery; the re-issue of the book in Brazil and Spain for the first time in some 40 years; the production of a 16-month historical calendar; and the online publication of Williams' bibliography, consisting of over 1000 titles.

All of these efforts have been amply promoted in the local, regional and international media – from London's *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, and the British Virgin Islands *Island Sun* to the Organization of American States' *Americas* magazine – in both English and Spanish.

Thus, with all of its other endeavours, the EWMC is a model for the Caribbean, a means of demonstrating to its younger generation the vital connection to the past – what that means for both the present and for the future. When the University College of the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands' H. Lavity Stoutt Community College and the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, along with the latter's UK consultants, sought pointers in the creation of their own museums, it was to The Eric Williams Memorial Collection they came – visiting several times.

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, Commonwealth Secretary General, Prime Minister of Tonga**, and three **Nobel Laureates**. Thousands of Trinidad and Tobago students - along with schools/universities from Barbados; Guadeloupe (including the Chamber of Commerce); Martinique; St. Lucia; Suriname; US Virgin Islands; Mauritius; UK; US - have toured the facility since its inception. While a mere 20 schools visited in 2001, this figure had quadrupled within two years. And the young continue to demonstrate their profound comprehension as they speak, following, to what the EWMC 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, indeed the world, in general.

- *“A deep sense of awe and respect, pride, descends upon me in this place. A remarkable collection.”*
Romaine Vularoel
- *“Without a past, how can we look towards the future. This establishment is amazing!”*
Nicola Whitley, Trinidad and Tobago student
- *“An inspiring experience. Propels one to soar to highest high.”*
Sophia Almorales, Trinidad and Tobago student
- *“Thank you very much for treasuring what is really ours.”*
Kimberley Correia, Trinidad and Tobago student

The EWMC is about teaching, research, and community service.
“What we research, is what we teach, is how we can give back.”