



The Eric Williams Memorial Collection

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FIU Eric Williams Lecture Analyzes Successes and Failures of Jamaica's/Trinidad and Tobago's 50 Years of Independence

MIAMI, FL. (November 4, 2012) Rachel Manley and Reginald Dumas waxed warm on their respective topics with a relevant and thought-provoking delivery at the 14th Annual FIU Eric E. Williams Memorial Lecture on October 26, 2012. The event was held at Florida International University's South Campus, as part of its African & African Diaspora Studies Program Distinguished Africana Scholars Lecture Series.

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The two prominent speakers – Manley, the daughter and granddaughter of two former Jamaican Prime Ministers; and Dumas, a veteran of Trinidad and Tobago's Foreign Service and former U.N. Special Adviser on Haiti, addressed critical issues pertaining to the last half-century of development in both countries and their subsequent successes and shortcomings.

"50 Years of Jamaican Independence: A Manley Perspective," was delivered emotionally by Ms. Manley, a Caribbean literary personality and poet. Her skill in the genre self-evident, she recounted lyrically the lead-up to Jamaican Independence and its ill-fated Federal experiment - despite her childhood prank of tying together the shoelaces of Grantley Adams of Barbados and Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago while they were both at her grandfather's dining room table! The audience virtually *felt* the resulting heartbreak of the illustrious Norman – his disappointment, his sense of failure - his admonishment to his beloved granddaughter that she must never forget the ideals, the spirit, of the Federation that was so very nearly achieved.

Manley was visibly moved when Dumas told of Eric Williams' insistence on the date of July 4 – her grandfather's birthday – as the day in 1973 which marked the signing of the historic Treaty of Chaguaramas, linking economically Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago and effectively establishing the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM).

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By contrast, Reginald Dumas, providing an interesting counterpoint in both style and substance revisited, with an inimitably dry sense of humor, the vision and aspirations of Eric Williams for his country and for the region, and what these augur for the future. Dumas characterized Eric Williams as prophetic, possessing a single-mindedness of vision, particularly with respect to the meaningful Caribbean integration of even its non-Anglophone territories. ***“50 Years After Independence, Is Eric Williams Still Relevant?”*** reviewed Williams’ leadership style – autocratic in manner, but democratic in practice – the country’s current dispensation in terms of governance, and rhetorically posed the question as to whether or not actual independence had, in fact, been achieved.

In the lively Question & Answer session that followed, both speakers ably fielded numerous on-point questions from the 145-plus crowd that, despite Hurricane Sandy, was undeterred in its attendance. One audience member even suggested, controversially, that Norman Manley was a “traitor” to Jamaica’s sense of nationalism because of his embrace of a united Caribbean. His was not the majority view.

The Memorial Lecture, FIU’s first named and longest running, was established in 1999, and honors the distinguished Caribbean statesman Eric E. Williams, first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and Head of Government for a quarter of a century until his death in 1981. He led the country to Independence from Britain in 1962 and onto Republicanism in 1976. A consummate academic and historian, and author of several books, Dr. Williams is best known for his groundbreaking work, the 68-year-old Capitalism and Slavery, which has been translated into seven languages, including Russian, Chinese, Japanese and this year, Turkish. Popularly referred to as *The Williams Thesis*, this landmark text continues to inform today's ongoing debate and remains “years ahead of its time...this profound critique is still the foundation for studies of imperialism and economic development,” according to the *New York Times*.

Among prior Eric Williams Memorial Lecture speakers have been: the late John Hope Franklin, one of America’s premier historians of the African-American experience; Kenneth Kaunda, former President of the Republic of Zambia; Cynthia Pratt, Deputy Prime Minister of the Bahamas; Mia Mottley, Attorney General of Barbados; Beverly Anderson-Manley, former First Lady of Jamaica; Portia Simpson Miller, now Prime Minister of Jamaica; the celebrated civil rights activist Angela Davis; and prize-winning Haitian author Edwige Danticat.

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The Lecture, which seeks to provide an intellectual forum for the examination of pertinent issues in Caribbean and African Diaspora history and politics, is co-sponsored by: the Caribbean Consular Corps (Miami); Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs; FIU: College of Arts and Sciences, School of International and Public Affairs, Ruth K. and Shepard Broad International Lecture Series, The Honors College, Latin American and Caribbean Center, AADS Graduate Students Association, Caribbean Students Association, Council of Student Organizations, Student Government Association, Student Programming Council; Adams Project Management, Ltd.; Amera Corporation; Bilmor With Advertising Specialties, Inc.; Diane Galloway's Herbal Gardens, Inc.; Edwards & Partners; Lennox Scope; Aryian & Gieowar Singh; Mervyn Solomon; Linda Spears-Bunton; Joy's Roti Delight; Miami Dade College – Prof. Leroy Lashley; Welch, Morris & Associates, Ltd.; Neil Seepersad; Zyscovich Architects.

The Lecture is also supported by The Eric Williams Memorial Collection Research Library, Archives & Museum at the University of the West Indies (Trinidad and Tobago campus), which was inaugurated by former **U.S. Secretary of State, Colin L. Powell** in 1998. It was named to **UNESCO's** prestigious *Memory of the World Register* in 1999.

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