



The Eric Williams Memorial Collection

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17th Annual FIU Eric Williams Lecture Addresses US-Cuba Accord

MIAMI, FL. (October 15, 2015)— The 17th Annual Eric E. Williams Memorial Lecture at Florida International University’s Modesto Maidique Campus (11200 SW 8th Street, Miami, Florida) will take place at the Wertheim Performing Arts Center, on Friday, October 23, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. Admission is free and open to the public.

This year, the African & African Diaspora Studies Lecture hosts the Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and The Grenadines, the Hon. Ralph Gonsalves. *“The US-Cuba Accord: How the Caribbean Paved the Way”* promises to address the historic 1972 initiation of diplomatic relations with Cuba by Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Jamaica and Guyana - the four signatories to the establishment of CARICOM the very next year. This unprecedented step was taken, despite intense pressure from Washington, a full 43 years prior to that of the US earlier this year. The underpinnings of the Trinidad and Tobago position stem from Williams’ oft-stated insistence on an *“extended Caribbean Community embracing everybody – British, French, Dutch, American, Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic and the three Guianas”* (From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean, 1492-1969).

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Prime Minister Gonsalves has enjoyed an active political life for many years, having been elected Head of Government for the past three consecutive terms. He has researched, written and published extensively on a range of matters touching upon the Caribbean, Africa, trade unionism, comparative political economy, and developmental issues. This lawyer-politician is also experienced in diverse legal fields: constitutional and administrative law, matrimonial and real property law, the law of tort and of contract. As a one-time activist, in 1968, he led a student protest of the Jamaican government’s decision to deport historian and intellectual, Walter Rodney. He remains passionate about the potentialities of slave trade reparations, strongly advocating a deeper and more meaningful relationship between Africa and its diaspora. “Our Caribbean civilization...has a vital role to play in Africa’s rebirth. Indeed, we have been doing so in ways

ranging from elemental political and social cooperation, to the shedding of blood by the Cubans in their defeat of apartheid South Africa in the battle for Cuito Cuanavale.”

Established in 1999, FIU’s annual Eric Williams Lecture honors the distinguished Caribbean statesman, consummate academic, internationally renowned historian, and author of several other books. His 1944 groundbreaking study Capitalism and Slavery, popularly referred to as *The Williams Thesis*, arguably re-framed the historiography of the British trans-Atlantic slave trade (and its concomitant European incarnations) and established the contribution of Caribbean slavery to the development of both Britain and America. The book has been translated into eight languages, including Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Turkish and soon-to-be, Korean. It 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*. Eric E. Williams was also the 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.

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, Prime Minister of Jamaica; the celebrated civil rights activist Angela Davis; prize-winning Haitian author Edwige Danticat and Hon. Kenny Anthony, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia.

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 FIU’s: Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs; Ruth K. and Shepard Broad Distinguished Lecture Series; Cuban Research Institute; Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center; AADS Graduate Students Association; Caribbean Students Association; Council of Student Organizations; Student Government Association; Milton Adams/Karen M. Linger; Elliot & Sandra Bastien; Bilmor With Advertising Specialties, Inc.; Dr. Anique Bryan; Dr. Anthony Bryan; Cheryl and Fitz; Frank Collins; Leslye Danglade; Michael & Patricia Edwards; Jennifer Eligon; Hometruster Mortgage Co.; Michael John; Rev. Canon & Mrs. Winston Joseph; Joy’s Roti Shop; Leroy & Anne Lashley; Louis Lezama; Miami Dade College; Beverly Mohamed; Zulma Niles; Jennifer & Dorrick Nurse; Ronnie and Sumin Quan-Vie; RLB Financial Services, Inc.; Lennox & Gemma Roach; Douglas & Anella Sebros; Mervyn Solomon; Yvonne St. Louis; Trinidad and Tobago Community at Christ the King Catholic Church; Victoria Mutual Building Society.

The Lecture is also supported by The Eric Williams Memorial Collection Research Library, Archives and 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.

Books by and about Eric Williams and Prime Minister Anthony will be available for purchase and signing at the Lecture. For more information, please contact 305-348-4156/905-9999 or africana@fiu.edu.

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