



The Eric Williams Memorial Collection

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Tenth Annual FIU Eric Williams Lecture Analyzes the Emergence of Barack Obama

MIAMI, Fla. (October 15, 2008)— The Tenth Annual Eric E. Williams Memorial Lecture at Florida International University will take place on Friday, October 24, 2008 at 6:30 p.m., as part of FIU’s African & African Diaspora Studies Program. As 2008 heralds one of the most energizing US election campaigns in recent history, this year’s Distinguished Africana Scholars Lecture, “*The Challenge of Leadership in America: Race, History and the Emergence of Barack Obama*,” promises to address critical issues of how the phenomenon that is Obama could have occurred within the context of today’s current climate, with a vibrant discussion of the implications for contemporary times.

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Noted scholar Arnold Rampersad will be the featured speaker at the Wertheim Performing Arts Center, University Park, 11200 Southwest Eighth Street, Miami, Florida. Admission is free and open to the public.

Arnold Rampersad is the Sara Hart Kimball Emeritus Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University. He has also served as the University’s Senior Associate Dean for the Humanities. Professor Rampersad is the prize-winning author or editor of more than a dozen books about black American culture. These include biographies of Langston Hughes, Jackie Robinson, and Ralph Ellison, as well as Days of Grace: A Memoir, co-written with the late tennis star Arthur Ashe, and The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois, a pioneering study of arguably the most influential African-American intellectual. Born in Trinidad and Tobago, Professor Rampersad has also taught at Rutgers, Columbia, and Princeton Universities.

Established in 1999, the Lecture honors the distinguished Caribbean statesman Eric E. Williams, first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and head of government for a quarter of a

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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 ground-breaking work, the 64-year-old Capitalism and Slavery, which has been translated into seven languages, including Russian, Chinese, Japanese and soon-to-be, Korean. Urdu and Hindi editions are also planned. Few modern historical works have enjoyed its enduring intellectual impact and appeal, causing the 1997 *New York Times Book Review* to term “The Williams Thesis” as remaining on the “cutting edge of slave trade research in academic circles.”

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

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’s Ruth K. and Shepard Broad Educational Series – Department of International Relations, the Labor Center, Caribbean Students’ and Student Government Associations; AFSCME Local 1363; Capital World Wide Ventures, Inc.; Caribbean Airlines, Ltd.; Classic Realty, Inc.; Delancyhill, P.A.; Diane Galloway’s Herbal Gardens, Inc.; Dipcon Construction, Ltd.; Priscas Cosmetics; Soca Afrique Creations; Sweet Hand Kathy; Zagada Markets.

The Lecture is also supported by the Eric Williams Memorial Collection 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 Eric Williams and Arnold Rampersad will be available for purchase and signing at the Lecture.

For more information, please contact 305-919-5521/271-7246 or africana@fiu.edu.

