



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

22nd Eric Williams Memorial Lecture Danez Smith “Prose Poetry as Rebellion”

MIAMI, FL. (March 14, 2024)— The 22nd Eric E. Williams Memorial Lecture will take place at 6:15 p.m. on Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at the AT&T Conference Center, University of Texas, Austin (UT). The event, with a reception before, is free and open to the public. Live-streaming will be available at: <https://virtualmeeting.la.utexas.edu/meet/eric-williams-memorial-lecture-march-26-2024>, and post-Lecture viewing accessible on the UT Warfield Center's [YouTube channel](#).

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

After a record 19 consecutive years at Florida International University (FIU), in 2021 the Lecture found a new home at the John L. Warfield Center for African and African American Studies at the University of Texas, Austin. **Celebrating Eric Williams**, an online exhibition of the Eric Williams Memorial Collection Museum at The University of the West Indies (UWI, Trinidad and Tobago) is also available for viewing on: <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/caaas/events/eric-williams-memorial-lecture.html>

This year, the Lecture hosts the electrifying Danez Smith, (they/them), a Black, Queer, Poz writer and performer from St. Paul, MN. View a clip of their exhilarating presentation at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSp4v294xog&t=2s>

Danez is the author of *Homie*, (Graywolf Press, 2020), winner of the Minnesota Book Award, the Heartland Bookseller Award, and a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award; *Don't Call Us Dead* (Graywolf Press, 2017), winner of the Forward Prize for Best Collection, the Midwest Booksellers Choice Award, and a finalist for the National Book Award; they also wrote *[insert] boy* (YesYes Books, 2014), winner of the Kate Tufts Discovery Award and the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Poetry. Danez is the recipient of fellowships from the Poetry Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, the Montalvo Arts Center, Cave Canem, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Their work has been featured widely, appearing on platforms such as BuzzFeed, The New York Times, PBS NewsHour, Best American Poetry, Poetry

Magazine, and on the Late Show with Stephen Colbert. Smith is a member of the Dark Noise Collective and is the co-host of VS with Franny Choi, a podcast sponsored by the Poetry Foundation and Postloudness.

Established in 1999 at FIU, the Eric Williams Memorial Lecture honors the legendary Caribbean statesman, eminent historian, and author of several books. His 1944 groundbreaking study *Capitalism and Slavery* arguably re-framed the historiography of the British Transatlantic Slave Trade and established the contribution of Caribbean slavery to the development of both Britain and America. It has been translated into 9 languages: Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Turkish, Korean among them (with German and Dutch translations forthcoming). An 80-year-old still highly controversial and provocative text, popularly referred to as *The Williams Thesis*, the book argues, among other propositions, that slave trade revenue fueled the rise of the British Industrial Revolution; and that its declining profitability, not solely humanitarianism, gave the impetus to British abolition. Never out of print in the US, in March 2022 *Capitalism and Slavery* was listed at #5 on the UK Sunday Times Bestseller list.

Eric 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 to Republican status 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, former Deputy Prime Minister of the Bahamas; Mia Mottley, now Prime Minister of Barbados; Beverly Anderson-Manley, former First Lady of Jamaica; Portia Simpson Miller, former Prime Minister of Jamaica; Hon. Kenny Anthony, former Prime Minister of Saint Lucia; Hon. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and The Grenadines; prize-winning Haitian author Edwige Danticat; award-winning author, historian and educator, Dr. Carol Anderson of *White Rage* fame; and renowned activist Dr. Angela Davis in both 2003 and 2023

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 in part by UT's: Black Diaspora Archive, Center for Women's and Gender Studies, Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, LGBTQ Studies, New Writers Project, Tereza Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies; Mr. & Mrs. Leroy Lashley; Jerry Nagee.

The Lecture is also supported by The Eric Williams Memorial Collection Research Library, Archives & Museum at UWI, which was inaugurated by former **US 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 Danez Smith will be available for purchase at the Lecture.