



The Eric Williams Memorial Collection

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Eleventh Annual FIU Eric Williams Lecture Touts a New Vision for the Caribbean

MIAMI, Fla. (November 16, 2009)—Former Prime Minister of Jamaica Portia Simpson Miller, Sister ‘P’ as they call her, delivered a rousing and timely address at the 11th Annual Florida International University (FIU) Eric E. Williams Memorial Lecture on Friday, November 6, 2009. Her lecture, “*A New Vision for a New World Reality: Prospects for the Anglophone Caribbean,*” was the feature of this year’s Distinguished Africana Scholars Lecture Series, and an integral part of FIU’s African & African Diaspora Studies Program in the University’s new School of International and Public Affairs. For the first time, the Lecture was webstreamed live to the Trinidad and Tobago University of the West Indies (UWI) community.

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Simpson Miller, an engagingly warm and self-effacing personality, is Jamaica’s current Leader of the Opposition and the first woman to become Prime Minister. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in public administration, an Honorary Doctorate from the Union Institute and University in Cincinnati, Ohio, and has participated in the Leaders in Development Executive Program at the JFK School of Government, Harvard University.

But it was Simpson Miller’s sound historical knowledge of the genesis of Caribbean unity that was most notable, several times causing the 300-plus audience to erupt in both applause and approbation. She effectively reviewed the Caribbean’s long history of fragmentation and opposition to meaningful unification. She bemoaned the lost years during which its people might have been a collective leader on the world stage and offered several distinct remedies for this time-worn proposition that if enacted, along with measures that are currently being proposed by the region’s players, might well jumpstart this seemingly elusive vision.

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In the lively Question & Answer session that followed, Mrs. Simpson Miller ably fielded numerous on-point questions by a preponderance of students, refusing to bow to time constraints and ensuring that every voice was heard.

Several US Federal and Florida elected officials, including **Governor Charlie Crist**, proffered courtesy greetings, Mayoral Proclamations, the silver Seal of the City of Miami, and hearty congratulations on the Lecture's Eleventh Anniversary. As in the past, pledges to the Lecture Endowment Fund were actively solicited.

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 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 65-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. 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*.

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; Delancyhill, P.A.; Diane Galloway's Herbal Gardens, Inc.; FIU: College of Arts and Sciences, School of International and Public Affairs, AADS Graduate Students' Association, Caribbean Students' Association, Council of Student Organizations, Latin American and Caribbean Center, National Society of Black Engineers, Ruth K. and Shepard Broad International Lecture Series, Student Government Association, Women's Studies, Women's Studies Graduate Students' Association; Dipcon Construction; Jaskq Creations; Joy's Roti Delight; Prof. Leroy Lashley; Miami-Dade College; and the Trinidad & Tobago Diaspora, Inc.

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.

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