CENTRAL BANK OF
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

21st DR. ERIC WILLIAMS MEMORIAL LECTURE

Slavery and Education in the Caribbean:

Mask, Myth and Metaphor

delivered by

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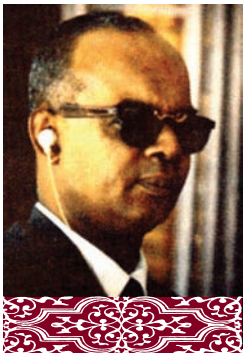


DR. ERIC WILLIAMS

Education: The Staff of Life

No figure, in all our history, has done so much to foster a sense of the importance of education in our society as has Dr. Eric Williams. And few have led by example to the extent that he has.

Indeed, it is coincidental that Eric Williams had taken up what looked like a crusade in education in order to transform the scene, for when he was born in 1911, education relating to the masses in Trinidad and Tobago could not have been more depressing. For instance, looking at census figures for that year, 1911, we see that out of a school population of 112,485 children, only 52,373 were at school — less than half. And since school was optional, and parents had no great faith in education anyway, even those children said to be "at school" spent precious little time of the year in such buildings.

The effect of this was worse than appears on paper, for it turned out that the vast majority of children followed their parents to the agricultural fields. So while they and their parents were reaping the fruits of the fields, the fruit of the educational system obtained was massive illiteracy. In 1911, about 70 per cent of the population of Trinidad and Tobago could neither read nor write.

In 1911, the only industry was the agricultural industry. Out of the population of 333,552, the census-takers found that 82,671 persons described their occupation as "agricultural worker". Although this was already 25 per cent of the population, when one considers that children of school age made up more than one-third of the general population, then the real percentage of agricultural workers was equivalent to about 40 per cent of the total population.

Nothing is wrong with following one's parents to the agricultural fields — on school holidays. The great challenge to anyone wanting to transform the educational scene in a period like that was to first instill in the parents the importance of education in society.

When Eric Williams saw the light of day in Dundonald Street, Port of Spain, on September 25, 1911, there was, in a manner of expressing it, "no hope in the valley" for those who could not afford to pay for their children's education. The child, Eric, belonged to a big family: his mother had several other children and his postman father, though ambitious, could not do much — except to dream. But the little boy, who was sent to Tranquillity Intermediate, was determined to excel and to make his way in the world.

No one can explain where that "inward hunger" came from, what forces influenced it, but we see it there from the earliest years. The quest for learning bore fruit when in 1922, at 11 years of age, he won an exhibition to Queen's Royal College, and this college was, of course, the springboard for his great achievements.

However, the curious thing about Eric Williams in his Q.R.C. years was that despite his academic learning, his head was never "buried" in books. Indeed, he was given to sports, especially football. It is well known that he captained the college's football team, although this did not make him popular amongst some of his players. Once, a former football colleague, disgruntled, said of him, "From the time you were approaching the goal, if you had the ball you had to pass it to him. He was like that. Even if the goal-mouth was yawning in front of you, you had to pass the ball to him, and he just had to score. And he has been scoring ever since."

Educationally, Eric Williams opened his scoring at Queen's Royal College when he topped his fellows in the Junior Cambridge Examination in 1927, winning a House Scholarship. He shone the next year too, and in the Q.R.C. 75th anniversary brochure (1945) the following is the note on him for his performance: "E.E. Williams in 1928, in spite of the comparatively rare number awarded, gained six distinctions in School Certificate."

And we all know the great accomplishment in 1931, when, having three chances at the Higher Certificate because of age, he passed each time, coming third among Q.R.C. candidates in 1929, second in 1930, and first in 1931, routing the other Q.R.C. candidates to take the Island Scholarship.

But the interesting thing is that however powerful the force that drove him forward, Eric Williams did not do this for his own personal glory. This was made clear when he went to Oxford University, for there in his studies and research it was the welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago which moved him, and what he was interested in was how education could be made available so the people could advance to a new day. He was thinking of the masses and their background — in other words, the history of the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago, and the emergence from slavery, but not colonialism, and its long night of backwardness.

He knew that the answer was in education, and this was the project that seemed to obsess him. Indeed, it was his quest for change in respect to the fate and enlightenment of the colonial peoples that brought him into several little conflicts at Oxford and to some extent at Howard University, where he went next.

In 1944, after several years abroad and with the great responsibilities as Assistant Professor in Social and Political Science at Howard University, he came to Trinidad to give a series of lectures, and of course it was an opportunity to look at what was happening in a country that meant everything to him. The lectures were highly successful and he was moved by the fact that so many people wanted him to come back home.

The rest is well known history, how he left Howard University to come to work with the Caribbean Commission — a Commission to help with the development of the ex-British West Indies; and how it soon became his opinion that the Commissioners were not really interested in any sort of development for the region. It is well known too how he left in a huff and came to Woodford Square where he was greeted by a vast, cheering crowd waiting for him. Everyone knows how he said, “I shall lay down my bucket, here with you,” and

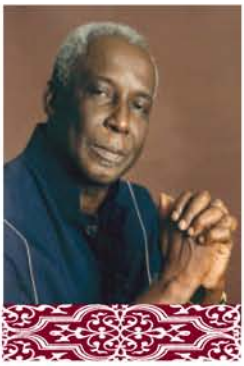
everyone has seen how he formed his political party, became Prime Minister of this country, and led it to independence.

But one is not sure how many have noticed that one of his main objectives was transforming the educational landscape.

He had always realized he was lucky to get a secondary education, getting one of about few places offered at Q.R.C. in 1922. He did not want that sort of thing to keep on happening. He wanted secondary education for all.

Thus it was that at Independence in 1962, Williams, in addressing school-children at a rally, told them that they carried the future of the nation in their book-bags.

Not long afterwards, true to his promise of providing secondary education for all, Dr. Eric Williams began the establishment of junior secondary schools, to be followed by senior secondary schools. The first junior secondary school was opened at Chaguanas in 1972, and this was a signal, as well as a symbol of Dr. Williams' lifelong desire, that through education Trinidad and Tobago would prosper and improve its quality of life.



SLAVERY AND EDUCATION IN THE CARIBBEAN: MASK, MYTH & METAPHOR

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This is indeed a very special year for the Caribbean! The bicentenary celebration of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is of particular significance to us all in the Caribbean. This Eric Williams Lecture dictates a close look at the event for reasons which the *"doctor"* would have approved, were he still with us. The first thing that comes to mind is his cuttingly scholarly and passionately polemic **"Capitalism and Slavery"**. He may well have declared, *"you jokers – see, history has absolved me"*. The obscenity of enslavement and trading in human cargo disappeared from that period of history much because the trade and the system it fueled stopped being profitable for the capitalist urges that prompted it in the first place. This was despite the prevailing force in the discourse of humanitarian considerations trumping the greed and materialism that sustained the trade and the system for all of two centuries and even after.

That colonialism outlived both the trade and the system of slavery also caught the attention of the historian and born teacher, Eric Williams. As Colin Palmer, a recent biographer reminds us, Williams as founding father of the new nation of Trinidad and Tobago knew he had to engage the task of breaking with the *"old procedures [such procedures being rooted in the operational constructs of labour-exploitation, both enslaved and indentured] inherited from the old world". To him "de-colonisation was not only economic and political, it is not*

only an attack on the economics of neo-colonialism and an attack on colonialism [which, he might have added, served as a corset for the viler consequences of slavery] ....it is also an intellectual process".[1] Here, the theme of this series of lectures focusing on **education** becomes pointedly relevant. For as scholar, university-teacher, and surrogate professor delivering public lectures in the University of Woodford Square, he understood the centrality of the cultivation of the kingdom of the mind to self-empowerment and collective certitude and identity. The re-humanization of his Caribbean people depended on education, he strongly believed.

No surprise, then, that he added *"imperialism [by which we must understand the hegemonic control by slave traders, slave owners, colonial bureaucrats, followed by private corporate moguls] has produced over generations a cultural imperialism which continues to dominate, which persists long after the political and economic conditions which gave rise to it have disappeared".* [Forging, safeguarding and sustaining one's cultural autonomy was to Williams a **sine qua non** for an educational system that is likely to be truly effective if it drew on the indigenous heritage.] In his own words, the educational system should play the role *"of a midwife to the emerging social order".* Education *"should not, as heretofore, present the British West Indies through British spectacles as so many annexation and by products of European power politics. Rather, it should emphasise the history and development of the islands and people themselves".* Lived reality should indeed inform the content of the texts studied by pupils at all levels of the educational system. He challenged the new University College of the West Indies, of which he became Pro Chancellor (the first and only), to help emancipate itself from the mental slavery he felt the *"special relationship with London University"* would engender. He knew, as Garvey said and had his words echoed by Bob Marley, that none but ourselves can indeed do it.

None but ourselves indeed! Throughout the traumatic history of this region, it is to the lived realities of forebears that existential learning must also turn for the serious education of self and society in the ex-slave. Once indentured, we are here on post-colonial pieces of real estate we now tenant and wish to call home. This was a pan-Caribbean concern. We are reminded that over in Martinique of the French Antilles, Aime Cesaire, a patron saint of Negritude, was saying to his European Gallic overlords: *"Accommodate yourself to me.*

[1] Eric Williams, *Education in the British West Indies (1950 repr. Brooklyn, NY: A & B Books, 1994), 10.*

I won't accommodate myself to you".[2] Williams would have himself declared that we are quite capable of building our own centres of artistic and cultural excellence. Such centres must be grounded in Caribbean culture shaped by diverse arrivants.

If the bicentenary commemoration of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade does nothing else, it serves to remind all those who now tenant the Caribbean and lay claim to ownership of the region that they are all migrants, tenanting lands once owned by Arawaks, Caribs and Tainos, also known as *"Native Americans".*

The history of the region over the past half a millennium is the history of migrations of diverse arrivants. Had it been left to Dr. Williams, we would have witnessed a mandatory intellectual exorcism! This explains the multiple narratives that litter both the historical landscape and its existential counterpart of the world today. We now speak of the heritage of *"arrivants"* firstly from old and modern Europe (these arrivants have never stopped arriving since that Genoan Wanderer accidentally came upon the Bahamaian island where he was discovered by the native Indians); secondly, from West Africa which supplied the labour needed for the labour-intensive cultivation of such crops as sugar and cotton; thirdly, from Asia, especially the Deccan Plateau of India and the Hakka-speaking region of Southern China who came in as indentured labourers to carry on what the Africans stopped doing after Slave Emancipation in 1838 in the Anglophone Caribbean; and fourthly, more recently from Lebanon with many *"Syrians"* fleeing anti-Christian hostility in the Levantine. All but the Africans came in as free men and women.

The specific narrative forged out of each migration is best told and understood when filtered through the prism of our intangible heritage. In the face of the conquering hegemony of colonising Powers, this heritage catalysed sense and sensibility and shaped, in large measure, a distinctive Caribbean ethos through a process that many scholars often refer to as *"creolisation".*

The bicentenary commemoration of the abolition inevitably jogs the memory to have it focus on the major players in the process. It gives ideal form and

[2] Aime Cesaire, *Return to My Native Land* (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1969), 62.

purpose - economically, politically and culturally – to most of the region's modern existence, maintained over time beyond the survival out of plantation slavery. This existence copes with the obstinate and enduring consequences of the heinous crime which found sustenance in colonialism. The decolonization process is indeed still apace even in this era of Independence and nationalistic self-assertion.

The most significant of these encounters has been the involuntary migration of Africans dragged in bondage across the Middle Passage by European traders. It fuelled an economic system rooted in exploited labour which was the *"property"* of planters whose interest in commercial profit trumped all considerations related to human development. Such development should be based on respect, and a degree of understanding that the African slave was a genuine member of the human species.

The relegation of such persons to silence came naturally to traders, planters and their ilk despite evidence to the contrary. There were numerous and now, fairly well documented, insurrections on slave ships in mid-Ocean, and the myriad strategies – and stratagems – which characterized the African Presence on the Plantations. Such were the strategies (and stratagems) that took the slave beyond the status of sub-human beasts of burden to that of **thinking, creative** agents of the determination of their own destiny.

The engagement of that silence included **inter alia** armed resistance as a major manifestation best evidenced in the Haitian Revolution. This great event in the history of liberation struggles actually abolished slavery, and by extension the trade, before the historic enactment by the British Parliament on March 25, 1807. US President Jefferson did likewise with a similar Act meant to become effective on January 1, 1808. Yet, it took Britain another thirty years to get rid of the cancerous system of slavery itself. It took the United States another sixty, and through a bloody civil war.

The engagement of such silence has long been an imperative of survival since the tangible dimensions of an enslaved colonial society often meant social

death for the African in exile. It threatened the zombification of a people who, thanks to the retreat into that zone of silence, have been able to stand on the ridges of the creative imagination and function effectively in the world through memory, myth, mask and metaphor.

The damage wrought by the *Slave Trade and Slavery*, according to the distinguished Caribbean Journalist John Maxwell, *"is not to be measured simply by the millions slaughtered by slave hunters in Africa, thrown overboard on the Middle Passage, or beaten to death in Jamaica or Haiti, but in the destruction of important lines of human development, in the triumph of the parasite over the producer, in the historical truth and human development to advance the interests of small groups".*[3]

"The real results of slavery and its child, capitalism", Maxwell further insists, *"cannot be measured in damages assessed on some highfalutin actuarial basis, they are rather to be counted as losses to civilization itself as degradations of the common heritage of humanity".* He concludes, as if to defy all who would think otherwise, as follows: *"the parasitic exploitation still remains [and] it removes us from consideration as a real people".* Eric Williams would not have disagreed.

Some twenty five or more years ago, I had reason to quote a Caribbean bard who sang the following:

"You stole my history
Destroyed my culture
Cut out my tongue
So I can't communicate
Then you mediate
And separate
Hide my whole way of life
So, myself I would hate....

This, according to Jimmy Cliff, the lyricist, musician and evergreen reggae superstar, is the price Caribbean brothers and sisters have had to pay to guarantee to themselves "peace" and stable living. However, it is only on the surface! Underneath the seeming compliance with a heritage which comes in the symbols, myths, stereotypes and institutional and operational frameworks

[3] "The Real Costs of Slavery," *Sunday Observer* (Jamaica, April 15 2007 Section 3) 5.

of those who control, govern, subjugate and denigrate, lie a bed of preserved cultural phenomena. They deserve to be *"safeguarded"* if only because such phenomena have long brought meaning to lives lived and have remained significant buffer-zones saving so much of humanity from the tsunamis of ignorance, intolerance, discrimination and dehumanisation.

That such intangible heritages have all made their own distinctive contribution to the formation of a Caribbean ethos, there is no doubt. Throughout the region sense and sensibility are peppered with the consequences of the tension-filled struggle that has lasted for some five hundred years between Europe and Africa on foreign soil. The peculiar nature of that engagement is signified by the attempted total control of hordes of chattel slaves by a dominant minority. They were armed not so much with guns and bullets, though there were those as well, but with the authority of law, religion and a philosophy of superiority, with the intellectual support of philosophers Hume and Montesquieu and the historian, Edward Long, residing in Jamaica. This bred, among the enslaved and colonized, a culture of resistance, much of which took the form of *armed* resistance but most importantly, of psychic control by the resisters themselves over inner spaces protected, paradoxically, by the very imposed silence which such oppression bred. Mask, myth and metaphor seemingly thrive best in such zones of silence.

It is through the exercise of the mind in its intellectual and imaginative modes that the survival of the oppressed was guaranteed. It is this area (this zone of silence) that the intangible heritage of the involuntary arrivant found ideal, form and purpose duly transmitted orally and via non-verbal communication (as in body language) from one generation to the next and maintained over time. From a 'Trini wine' -- to a 'Jamaica screw-face' one gets more than a thousand words.

Such cultural apparatus covers **story-telling**, the formulation and judicious use of **proverbs** as part of a dynamic and creative orality - stories brought in from West Africa, adapted to the new environment in which the bearers found themselves, and re-worked and varied in transmission. There resulted

the *les contes* tradition of the Eastern Caribbean and the **Anansi** stories of Jamaica with traceable ancestry of an enslaved people. Such a people were separate and apart from the *"tangible"* heritage enjoyed by European masters in their written poems, laws and novels which are all in the public domain and all-powerful in the shaping of perceptions, rules of representation and of engagement. Vampire stories of blood sucking demons abound in the Caribbean as if to relate, through a mnemonic device, the suffering of demonic slavery. There are in the Caribbean, from Jamaica to Guyana, such vampire mythical creatures as Ole Hige, Soucouyant, Firerass and Chupucabra.

The intangible heritage of the oppressed was to find further form in **religion** - in acts of worship which facilitate communion with the *"gods"* of African homelands and adapted in the host society if only to bring zones of comfort to the suspicious and often fearful masters. The Christian saints of the European overlords were to find parallels in the deities of Haitian **vodun** which the Fon arrivants from Dahomey (now Benin) brought with them. The complex structures of the metaphysics of belief-systems persist to this day and thrive on the arcane symbolisms to be grasped only by the serious devotees of the religion. **Santeria** of Cuba and its counterpart **Shango** of Trinidad have much in common as a medium of communication with the spirit-world independent of the more tangible heritage of Europe's Christian migrants. They have transmitted and maintained their myriad Christian denominational practices throughout the Americas and fully in the public domain. Jamaica and the Bahamas reputedly have more churches per capita than elsewhere in the world. They have more rum-shops as well, as if to remind humanity that Christianity is a Manichean enterprise: Lucifer thrown out of Heaven maintains his existence if only to prove what Good, as in God, is about. Such dialectical indulgences inform all of Caribbean life, or most of it, as an inheritance from a past which dictated creative responses to the challenge of Evil trumping Good in a heinous slave system.

I am reminded that mas culture throws up "dragon and devil mas characters [which] conjure up imps with horns, beasts wearing dragon masks, glamorous lady devils, Lucifer, Satan Beelzebub, the Prince of Darkness and Jab Molassie".[4] It is the intangible heritage of the Yoruba-derived shango, santeria and

[4] Ballahar, "Transmitting the Mas Tradition," Lydians Brochure for Gluck's Orphens and Euridice, (Port of Spain: 2005).

candomble (of Brazil) that continues to attract scholars to deep investigation and analysis in order to bring meaning and understanding to the lived realities of millions of people in the Americas. The arrivants from the Congo brought, transmitted and maintained the ancestral Kikongo rite of **Kumina**, still practised in eastern Jamaica and is the source for artistic creativity among persons in the performing arts. The maintenance of the heritage is hardly ever in pure form and the syncretised expressions to be found in **zion revivalism** and **pocomania** (largely found in Jamaica) continue to define the sense of being and worldview of people who have long migrated from their ancestral homelands.

The most recent of such innovations in struggle, within Caribbean history, is the Rastafarian movement with its powerful, if insolent, assertion that God is really in Man's image and not the other way around. The creation of a Black God without claiming ethnic superiority, the Rastaman's presumed divinity of all living human beings as basis for such values as the brotherhood of Man, and universal human rights, get lost in the outward signs of dreadlocks, and the brightest liberation colours of black, green and gold in art and dress, in defiance of race and colour, though admittedly not need. I am yet to meet a Hindu or a Muslim Rasta though a Hindu colleague of mine insists that shared values between ex-indentured Indians and ex-slave Blacks constitute the basis for inter-faith peace, wherever that is found. The inward grace of belief in self and an assertive anti-racism is more than amazing. All such creative acts inspired by the African Presence in the lands outside of Africa have been dismissed either as superstitious indulgences or, as Edmund Burke said of the rights-of-man advocacy in the French Revolution, *"metaphysical nonsenses"*.

These latter-day *"Saints"*, having been hi-jacked by the popular music industry of the Caribbean, have even attracted more designer-dreads than many vintage Rastafarians are comfortable with, though the recent entry on to the scene of a Miss Jamaica Universe Beauty Queen, who is a Rasta, is flattering to many a Rastafarian I have met, in their continuing need of recognition and status.

Embedded in such religious practices, and maintained and transmitted are so-called **folk philosophies**. These help to define interpersonal relations and to describe rites of passage from one phase of life to another, as well as to delineate kinship patterns. They are all cross-fertilized in the new soil of the Americas

with its disparate elements, but maintained with pristine energy brought in by the arrivants from Africa South of the Sahara. The cyclical construct of contemporary life representing that which is already lived, that now being lived and that yet to be lived (i.e. by the yet unborn) serves as a promise of hope.

Such a celebratory incantation of human reality speaks to the refinement of ideas about individual rights and collective freedom, giving rise to civil society and democratic governance. They also speak to the exploration of the learning process to produce in the human being higher levels of tolerance in dealing with each other, manifested in mutual respect, human dignity, forgiveness, caring and compassion, despite temptations on the part of so many of us to embrace selfishness, dissembling and even strong doses of mean-spiritedness. We are even known to use the benefit of our 400 years' apprenticeship in sabotage. We know how to make things not work. Yet, the contribution of the African Presence to all the suffering in enslaved exile is without hubris or rancour. It is deserving of bold acknowledgement supported, to be sure, by painstaking investigation, critical analysis and decisive programmed dissemination which are all part of the mission of Unesco's Slave Route Project and would have been welcomed by Eric Williams, especially since it places great emphasis on research and dissemination of findings.

Intangible heritage(s) also find form in the methods of healing that are critical to staying alive and the African slaves were not slothful in invoking the memory of the migrant to maintain health and transmitting the knowledge down the generations. What is now referred to as **ethnomedicine** or alternative medicine throughout the Caribbean is rooted in great part in the knowledge of traditional cures using *"bush medicine"* to cure fevers (through bush-baths) or cankers through home-made ointments made from boiled leaves, which are used as well to combat hypertension *("high blood pressure")* or diabetes, another debilitating chronic disease to be found among Caribbean people of African ancestry, venereal disease, arthritis, head and chest colds, headaches and stomach ailments. The invocation of ancestral spirits is also part of the repertoire of cures that remain the intangible legacy of African migrants to the Americas over the past 500 years. The Maroons of Jamaica, like their "Bush Negro" counterparts of Suriname, pride themselves in being the guardians of such bodies of knowledge in plant medicine and herbal healing jealously protected

even from some trusted researchers and scholars, thus keeping much of it out of the public domain. The memory of healing among later Asian arrivants is no less powerful in preserving their intangible heritage.

The units of production (that is, the exploited enslaved labour) had to be systematically maintained. Neither total physical expulsion as the Moors and the Jews suffered in 1492 in the Iberian Peninsula, nor ethnic cleansing was ever an option since both modes of liquidation would have been unprofitable for slave owners and metropolitan masters. Therefore, the African Presence has been able to continue making the impact where it most matters, namely in the enduring areas of language, religion, artistic manifestations and even kinship patterns, as well as in areas of ontology and cosmology, rooted in the creative diversity that is now the global reality of our Third Millennium. Of course, it has been the lived reality of the Caribbean since 1492, and the wider Americas of which the Caribbean is an iconic and integral part.

However, what remains more open and enough to be freely transmitted to wider and varied publics which become the guarantors and guardians of the maintenance of the heritage, is the range of **festival arts**. One of the most prominent of these is the **jonkonnu** (goombay or masquerade) still reminiscent of West African masquerade and still to be found among the descendants of slaves in Bermuda, Bahamas, Belize, Jamaica, the Leeward Islands and Guyana. It is, however, the Trinidad pre-Lenten **Carnival** (counterpart to Brazil's inflammable version and the relatively more sedate Mardi Gras of New Orleans or Rara of Haiti) that fully demonstrates the interlinking of migration, transmission and maintenance of the intangible heritage of a people in a **globalised** world that has long been a reality, at least to the colonized, enslaved and indentured. The maintenance or safeguarding is assured through cross-fertilization, adjustments and adaptations over time with the resulting products taking on indigenous characteristics but by no means obliterating the influences from the arrivants' place(s) of origin.

The intangibility in this lies as much in the spirit of the Carnival as in the continuities evident in the mask and myth from ancestral hearths. The transmission and the maintenance manifest themselves yet further in the Caribbean Diaspora which has grown since the mid-20th century on both

sides of the North Atlantic where the Trinidad pre-Lenten carnival is annually re-enacted among Caribbean migrants in Brooklyn, Miami and Boston (USA), Toronto (Canada) and in Notting Hill, London (England). The calypso and the steelband are in full accompaniment, but the migrant music making the most impact in the recent past is the **reggae** of Jamaica which has followed Jamaican migrants all over the world. In Rotterdam, Holland, migrants from the Netherlands Antilles have transported their version of the carnival to that city as well. Here the intangible becomes *"tangible"*. 'Zouk', the popular music of the once French-settled islands of our region, has Netherlanders hooked on the "beat". They are also hooked, it is alleged, on a certain other Caribbean product which shall be nameless.

It is Derek Walcott, the St. Lucian Nobel Laureate, who in his Acceptance Speech at the Award Ceremony noted that the deep-delved prejudices against the creative products of so-called lesser races carry tenacious potency. Therefore, the music composed by West Indian peoples for their enjoyment is never considered to be profound, though they may enjoy temporary glamour as exotic curiosities to others.

The arrivants' preservation of the intangible heritage through memory, myth, mask in host habitats is a clear means of coping with and surviving new environments especially if they are hostile. It also serves to build zones of comfort rooted in what is known even while one assimilates the unknown. All the more reason why such intangible heritages must be facilitated, safeguarded and better understood through education, if only to gain both from ourselves and others the respect due. The African-derived heritage clearly presents problems owing to the legacy bequeathed by the slave trade and slavery.

Our textured, complex (and should I add cantankerous?) Caribbean has a way of doing textured, complex and cantankerous things. Dr. Williams, as a true Caribbean man was not immune to complexity, contradictions and seemingly unpredictable, cantankerous reactions to his people's indulgences. 'Get the hell out of here' is hardly the sane advice from a caring father and 'one from ten is nought' is hardly the calculus expected from a gifted, albeit witty, scholar. He would be no less surprised by the fact that something as serious as that constitutional crisis of 2001/2, was not allowed to interfere with Carnival.

Dr. Williams himself had once entertained the thought of suspending if not banning the pre-Lenten festival. Part of his genius was to realise before the thought could even gel that such a blasphemous act could well have meant his political demise. Admittedly, on his own account, he used the time while the nation lived it up to do some *"serious writing"*.[5] Dr. Williams was a reluctant retiree from formal academic work. Yet he was seen at a couple of 'last lap' street marches.

He allowed the Trinidadian impulse to take its course and himself to see the deeply cultural significance of this great festival art. For all its seeming minstrelsy, and although to him a waste of valuable energy, Carnival was too much a weathervane of Caribbean identity and Trinidadian psychic stability to dismiss. Nor did he dismiss the calypso which became an important vehicle, if we are to heed Gordon Rohlehr, for serious dialogue between citizenry and the wider society, between Williams the Governor and Trinbagonians, the governed.[6]

The Asian arrivants who migrated in the nineteenth century to the Caribbean have done no less with their ancestral memories in the new climes they chose to inhabit. Divali has gained strength since Independence. The Indians of the Deccan plateau who entered the Americas as free men and free women while not facing, as the Africans did, any deliberate efforts at radical cultural uprooting, have been able to defy much of the efforts by the masters in indentureship to convert them to Christianity - the religion of social and political power. Hinduism and Islam have remained not as intangibles but as overt religious practices – thanks, in part, to the increasing ecumenism that has gripped the Western world since the mid-20th century. Although it was not always like that, the transmission of the Muslim festival of **Hosay** found willing devotees in Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad where indentured Indians had reason to feel wronged and deprived during their indentureship and after. This festival art persists to this day, with people of African ancestry participating just as (East) Indians of the Hindu and Muslim faiths are integral to the pre-Lenten carnival that is understandably regarded as a predominantly Afro-Caribbean event.

[5] Eric Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies* (NT African, 1966), 11.

[6] Rex Nettleford, *Eric Williams – The Legacy Continues* (N.Y.: Schomburg Centre for Research for Black Culture, 2002).

To a lesser degree, the intangible heritage of other arrivants into the Caribbean is evident. The very tangible and visible synagogue of the Sephardic Jews, who were among the earliest arrivants to the Caribbean after their expulsion from Spain, is underscored by a keen sense of *"Jewishness"*. This is transmitted sometimes intangibly from one generation to the next throughout the Americas, even while accommodations with the Gentile West remain a reality. The Chinese who came much later have integrated no less, but the intangible heritage of a brand of Confucianism, strong family values and a diet which is jealously maintained despite the adaptations to Western taste, add to the diversity of contemporary life in the world which Columbus called *"New"*. This has breathed new life and challenges to humankind's self-perception and self-actualization.

The homogenisation now threatened by **globalisation** will have its fiercest opposition from the intangible heritages of migrants who came to make up the vast majority of the population of that *"New World"*. Dr. Pat Bishop, the Trinidadian musician and choral director, stated that *"one of the great fears today is that globalisation will extinguish those aspects of our culture which are special to us and which give us a particular identity. For the Trinidadian, this is particularly complex since our reality has always been culturally multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. Globalisation merely intensified our cultural callaloo and in the Lydians [the group she directs] we simply pray for the will and strength to live out our human possibilities, whatever they may be"*. I can only say to Dr. Bishop in the spirit of the late Beryl McBurnie, "press on regardless: let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Globalisation, as a new name for old obscenities, will be resisted as old imperialism was. From the grave, Dr. Eric may well call out, *"educate, educate, educate!"*. Art, as Dr. Bishop herself knows, is a state of encounter and *"encounter"* is at the heart of our existence. The phenomenon is, of course, not restricted to the world of the Americas (which includes Latin America and the Caribbean). The Old World of Europe and of the East in their modern forms are themselves undergoing the kind of transformation that is bound to come from migrants through the transmission and maintenance of what immigrants bring in enduring strength – namely, those parts of their heritage deemed intangible, and not readily

accessible to all others but which stand reinforced and safeguarded by the ancestral certitude of ages.

Here, UNESCO has scored again in giving an iconic place to yet another manifestation of the force and power of the intangible heritage. I refer, of course, to a creative cultural diversity which is bound to make sense through a thorough grasp and understanding of the force and power of each ingredient's intangible heritage, respected and duly safeguarded!

We in the Caribbean have to be careful not to make exaggerated claims for the experience we have had through slavery and its aftermath in the form of such cultural diversity which we embrace with ease. A British MP not so long ago expressed his darkest fears about the "mongrelisation" of his verdant isle with the migration into its shores of a migrant too many from the non-Caucasian segments of the former Empire. 'Non-Caucasian' here means the hundreds of thousands of Indians, Pakistanis, Caribbean people and their ancestors from south of the Sahara. Bryan Appleyard, the English literary critic, later provided an answer to that by way of a welcome reminder.

In a review of David Miles' 2005 publication, **The Tribes of Britain**, Appleyard wrote, *"It is of course inevitable that any history of Britain should come to the conclusion that we are indeed, a mongrel breed. These islands have perpetually been subject to invasion and waves of immigration that have, at times, seemed to swamp all previous identities ...In fact", Appleyard went on to say, "our essence, if we have one, is ...rather a palimpsest composed of all of them"* – **them** meaning Celts, Anglo-Saxons and Normans. Britain also accommodated Jews and French Huguenots and is nowadays forced by its EU membership to accommodate the people (admittedly largely of Caucasian stock) from Eastern Europe. What is the problem, then, with an ease of accommodation of people from the melanin-doused parts of the old Empire, one is forced to ask. The Bicentenary Abolition Observance forces many to ponder on these difficulties and for scholars to ask serious questions about perceptions of cultural diversity and the principle of heterogeneity guiding social and political organization all over the modern world. What is it that has come into the mix to contaminate it beyond its assumed pristine purity?

The history of the future may well record the 'mongrelisation' of all of Planet Earth as a unique phenomenon of the Third Millennium. All of the Western Hemisphere – the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean – have been pioneers in this process. It is only for the entire 21st century Western world to now stand on the right side of history and come to terms with the diversity which the old Roman Empire's motto – *"e pluribus unum"* acknowledged eons ago. In modern times, certain ones of us have wanted the *"unum"* rather than the *"pluribus"*. A high price is being paid for this defiance of commonsense. The defiance has even led to more than rumours of war as that conflict in Iraq now signifies the fundamentalist claims made on all sides to divine hegemony, positioning Muslim Arab or Christian Caucasian at the top of some cultural totem pole. This disastrous war has become not only a weapon of mass destruction but also one of mass distraction.

Allow me to share with you something I said in New York on March 26, while addressing the Special Meeting of the UN General Assembly engineered by the Caricom Caribbean.

"The gift of the grasp of the plurality and intertextuality of existence, though not exclusive to African diasporic experience, is the primary feature of that experience. The 21st Century and the new millennium, which through the accessibility by each segment of Planet Earth to every other at a moment's notice by way of internet, e-mail, (and electronic media), could benefit tremendously from such sense and sensibility to get the millennium's hopes for peace, security and the improvement of the social capital fulfilled. Can the world, without anguish, accept itself as **part this, part that, part the other** but totally **human** without one part of it trying to dominate the other? The idea of the Caribbean person being part-African, part-European, part-Asian, part-Native American but totally **Caribbean** is still a mystery to many in the North Atlantic. It has been spoiled by the very hegemonic control it has had for half a millennium over empires and far-away real estate (as well as the psychic spaces of millions) and much of this with the [supportive] indulgence of a trade in slaves, slavery and colonialism acting in tandem.

"It is the full grasp of the creative diversity of all of humankind that [can really] provide the source for tolerance, generosity of spirit, forgiveness, respect for the

Other, which the new millennium will require if it is to house the brave new world with the human being as centre of the cosmos. It is the source, as well, of the patience which is needed for the human-scale development which all the grand objectives of United Nations declarations envision. That patience is honed in the habit of the African diasporic tenants who have had to negotiate their space over time and to find form on a playing field that has not been level -- not since 1492 when Spain's Cristobal Colon lost his way to Japan; not since 1562 when England's John Hawkins traded some surrogate beasts of burden (enslaved Africans) to the Spanish West Indies; not since 1807 when a mix of capitalistic self-interest (as Eric Williams was not loath to remind the world!) and humanitarian impulse [thanks to ones from William Clarkson through Granville Sharpe to William Wilberforce] drove the British Parliament to enact the first step on the journey to restore decency to human life and living.

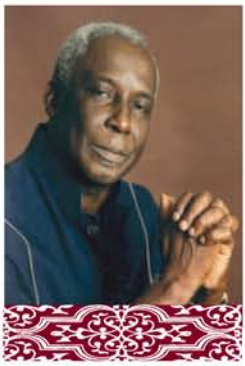
"The African Diaspora [and especially the Caribbean segment of that Diaspora] is for this reason more than equipped to enter the dialogue among civilizations having seeded the germ of a civilization itself, as if with the beneficence of retributive justice. [Mask, myth and metaphor continue to inform the engagement of the aftershocks of slavery and its handmaiden, the Slave Trade. Many descendants of slaves are now literate in the masters' means of communication].

"Such dialogue, after all, is all about the quest for peace, tolerance, justice, liberty, sustainable development, trust as well as for respect and human understanding. It should not be seen as a threat but rather as a guarantee for peace and reconciliation.

"Yet, even while I recommend this to the African Diaspora, and the wider world as the guarantee of a safe and meaningful future, the experience of ages drives me back to some wise words uttered on February 28, 1968 which have been immortalised in the Bob Marley musical setting, and ironically entitled *"War"* even while hankering after peace.

"Until the philosophy which holds one race superior
and another is finally and permanently discredited
and abandoned,
.....
Until the colour of a man's skin is of no more
significance than the colour of his eyes,
Until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed
to all without regard to race...
Until that day....
The dreams of lasting peace, world citizenship
and the rule of international morality will remain but a
fleeting illusion to be pursued but never attained!"

"Such, [as I said to the distinguished delegates, attending the UN Assembly Special Session prompted not surprisingly by the Caricom Caribbean] are the many boundaries, left by the Slave Trade and Slavery. Many rivers are indeed yet to be crossed, to take us all over to the right side of history and away from the obscenities of that Trade and of Slavery, as well as from the vile consequences that continue to plague far too much of humankind, depriving us all of decency, and threatening our innate humanity." Dr. Williams would have agreed.



BIOGRAPHY

Professor the Honourable Rex Nettleford,

O.M., F.I.J.
Vice Chancellor Emeritus
The University of the West Indies

Rex Nettleford is a well known Caribbean scholar, trade union educator, social and cultural historian and political analyst. A former Rhodes Scholar, he is a Vice Chancellor Emeritus at the University of the West Indies, Jamaica. After taking an undergraduate degree in History at the UWI, he pursued post-graduate studies in Politics at Oxford. He is also the founder, artistic director and principal choreographer of the internationally acclaimed National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica and is regarded as a leading Caribbean authority in the performing arts.

Outside of the Caribbean, he has served on several international bodies having to do with development and intercultural learning. He was a founding governor of the Canada-based International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and International Trustee of the AFS Intercultural, based in the USA, and former Chairman of the Commonwealth Arts Organization. He is a director of the London-based News Concern and a former member of the Executive Board of UNESCO. He served as one of the Group of Experts (ILO), monitoring the Implementation of Sanctions and other Actions against Apartheid and as member of the West Indian Commission. He is a member of the Castles and Fort Trust Fund – Ghana (Central Region).

He has served as a consultant on cultural development to UNESCO and OAS and Cultural Advisor to the Government of Jamaica, and was Rappoteur of the International Scientific Committee of UNESCO's Slave Route Project, as well as Regional Coordinator for the Caribbean and later, the Chairman of the restructured, revitalized Project Committee for UNESCO. As an authority

on development and cultural dynamics, he has lectured in many countries of the world including the USA, Canada, UK, India, Israel and South Africa. He headed the National Council on Education and has served on numerous other commissions in his native Jamaica.

He is editor of Caribbean Quarterly and the author of: "The Rastafarians in Kingston, Jamaica" (with F.R. Augier and M.G. Smith); "Mirror, Mirror: Identity, Race and Protest in Jamaica"; "Manley and the New Jamaica"; "Roots and Rhythms"; "Caribbean Cultural Identity"; "Dance Jamaica: Self-Definition and Artistic Discovery"; "The University of the West Indies: A Caribbean Response to the Challenge of Change" (with Sir Philip Sherlock); and "Inward Stretch, Outward Reach: A Voice from the Caribbean".

In 1992, he edited a collection of essays entitled, "Jamaica in Independence: The Early Years", and has co-edited (with Vera Hyatt) "Race, Discourse and the Origins of the Americas", a publication for the Smithsonian Institution. He has numerous articles published in scholarly journals and is also the author of major national reports on Cultural Policy, Worker Participation, Reform of Government Structure in Jamaica, National Symbols and National Observances, and Local Government Reform in Jamaica.

He is the recipient of the high national honour of Order of Merit, the Gold Musgrave Medal (from the Institute of Jamaica), the Living Legend Award (Black Arts Festival, Atlanta, USA), the Pelican Award (of the UWI Guild of Graduates), the Zora Neale Hurston-Paul Robeson Award (from the National Council for Black Studies, USA), the Pinnacle Award from the National Coalition on Caribbean Affairs (NCOCA), the Second Annual Honor Award from the Jamaican-American Chamber of Commerce in 1999, and was made a Fellow of the Institute of Jamaica in 1991. In 2003, the Rhodes Trust of Oxford established the Rex Nettleford Prize in Cultural Studies and the Government of Jamaica made him an Ambassador-at-Large/Special Envoy the following year. He is a Distinguished Fellow in the UWI School of Graduate Studies and an Honorary (Life) Fellow of the Centre for Caribbean Thought. In 2004, he was made an Officer in the Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the French government and received the Pablo Neruda Centenary Medal from the Government of Chile.

Honorary doctoral and other academic awards have been given him on both sides of the Atlantic:

1994	D.Litt.	St John's University (USA)
1995	LHD	University of Hartford (USA)
	Presidential Medal	Brooklyn College of The City University of New York
1996	LHD	John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York
1997	D.Litt.	University of Connecticut (USA)
	LLD	Illinois Wesleyan University (USA)
1998	Honorary Fellow	Oriel College (Oxford)
1999	LLD	Queens University (Canada)
2000	LHD	Emory University (USA)
	LHD	Grand Valley State University (USA)
	D.Litt.	Sheffield University (UK)
2001	LLD	University of Toronto (Canada)
2003	DCL	Oxford University (UK)
2004	D.Litt	University of Technology (Jamaica)
2005	DFA	State University of New York, Brockport
2006	DFA	North Carolina State University USA
2007	D. Soc. Sc.	Université des Antilles et de la Guyane (UAG) – French West Indies

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